

January 22, 2017

## *I Want to Know Jesus*

*"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."*

Philippians 3:10-11

*"A man of noble birth went to a far country...he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.'...he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it."*

Luke 19:1-27

As Jesus approached Jerusalem for the last time he passed through Jericho and there he met a tax-collector named Zacchaeus. He invited himself to the tax-collector's house for a meal. The Master so impressed this man that he promised, *"Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount!"* Our Lord's response to Zacchaeus' repentant commitment was, *"Today salvation has come to this house...for the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost."*

The Pharisees, of course, did not focus on this changed life, but on the fact that Jesus ate a meal with a sinner. In the flow of the story our Lord told a parable about accountability, with a sharp little lesson within it for those same judgmental leaders.

In this parable he describes a scene where the servants of a nobleman are given the opportunity to make choices. He gives each one ten minas which was a small fortune and commands them to *"Put this money to work."* Upon his return he calls these servants in to give an account of what they had done with his money. Most of them had done well, but one servant hid what the master had given him away and did nothing with it, for which he was condemned.



The point of the parable is really very clear. Even though we don't always like to acknowledge it, each and every one of us has been given blessings from God. We have been given time to spend, talents unique to us, and treasures. These blessings are not all the same, but each of us has received them. Ultimately God will hold each of us accountable for what we do with what he has given us. We will answer to him for how we spent and invested our blessings in doing his will.

So, I have not been called to preach in a big city for a mega-church, but I have been called to preach in Anaconda to you all, and God will hold me accountable for what I choose to do with that blessing. Each of us has been blessed in similar ways. My call is to preach and to teach. Your call is your call. I will not be held accountable for what you choose to do and you will not be held accountable for what I choose to do. But, as Paul wrote to those in Rome, *"So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God."* Note: It is not our responsibility to judge others, but to prepare ourselves to be judged; to be held accountable.

Within this parable there is another lesson that is directed at those who condemned Jesus for eating with a sinner. The nobleman in the parable is going away to be made king, but not everyone wants him to be their king. When he returns as king those who rejected him were condemned. It might be easy to miss the connection that these two blended parables have.

Each of us has been given blessings and the power to choose how to employ those blessings and we will be held accountable for what we choose to do or not to do with what God has given us. There is another choice, however, that we have the power to make and for which we will be held

accountable. Jesus came into the world to become our Lord and Master, our King. We have the power to accept or to reject him and his role in our lives. But, know without a doubt, that each of us will be held accountable for what we do with Jesus. We may choose to surrender our lives to his Lordship, or we may reject him. We are free to choose, but our choice will have consequences. We will be held accountable.