

Resisting the Lull of Laziness

Luke 19:11-27

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What will you do with the time you have? How will you make the most of the talents God has given you? These are the questions Jesus puts to His disciples as he prepares to leave them. Using the example of a nobleman going away and leaving his servants to manage his affairs, Jesus helps the disciples understand what their responsibilities will be for the time between Jesus' first ascension and His second coming. To this day, we share the same responsibility as His followers.

Someone sent this to me the other day. Here's a list of disciplinary actions you might have experienced as a child—things your parents made you do—probably because you misbehaved all day and they just couldn't take it any longer.

Here's the list of childhood disciplines:

- Not being able to leave the house.
- Being forced to take a nap.
- Having to go to bed early.

This is a child's worst day! But then you grow up and these same things now become your grownup dreams.

- Not leaving the house.
- Taking a nap.
- Going to bed early.

Man, that's a great day. We didn't know how good we had it back then, even when we were being punished!

It's a great day now if you can get a nap.

It's one thing to take a nap, but it's another thing to throw in the towel. To say: I'm going to head for the sidelines; it's not worth the effort.

The older you get, the more that kind of thinking trickles into your heart and your work ethic and standards of excellence.

As you get older:

Tackling tough assignments gets tougher.

Working with excellence on the job site becomes harder.

Whatever it is in life, things become harder, especially the redundant things you've done a thousand times before:

- one more program to write;
- one more meal to prepare;
- one more contract to negotiate;
- one more sales flight to catch;
- one more set of papers to grade;
- one more homework assignment to finish;
- one more chore list to check off;
- one more load of laundry to fold.

The truth is, the longer you're at it, the harder it is to stay at it.

The older I've become, the more I'm encouraged by something William Carey wrote in his journal.

We know him as the Father of Modern Missions, a man who translated the Bible into several languages, wrote a grammar, started a university; he seemed to accomplish so much for the Lord.

But that wasn't how he viewed himself; he wrote this in his journal:

“If after my death, anyone should think it worth his while to write something about me, if he simply refers to me as a plodder, he will describe me correctly. Anything beyond that would give me too much credit. I have simply plodded my way through life—one task after another—and to plodding, I owe everything.”

William Carey (1761–1834)

It occurred to me that even when you're plodding along, there's one thing in life you don't want to see sitting idle. In fact, you want to see it moving forward.

And that is your investments in life.

If you've invested money in some kind of interest-bearing account, or some investment plan, you want to see that money go to work for you, not sit on the sidelines.

If you've invested time in discipling a new believer, you want to see that investment yield spiritual growth.

If you've invested energy in some job or hobby, you want something in return, even if it's nothing more than the satisfaction of something you were able to finish.

The trouble is, we rarely think of ourselves as God's investment, that God has invested Himself in us, that He has then invested us into the currency of life.

And He wants to see His investment at work.

Now that doesn't mean the Lord is against us taking a nap—He Himself did that—in fact, He took a nap and slept through a storm at sea because He was so tired.

But He wouldn't want to see us idle or lazy, but staying at it, plodding through it, using the investment God has made in us through life.

We're about to be given an incentive from a parable the Lord is going to deliver.

We're in Luke's Gospel now in chapter 19 and verse 11. Luke sets the stage for us by telling us here in verse 11:

As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.

Luke 19:11

This multitude thinks they're going to arrive in Jerusalem and watch Jesus use His miraculous power to overthrow the Roman government and usher in the glorious kingdom of God.

Yes, Jesus had offered the kingdom to the nation, but the religious leadership and the nation at large had rejected Him.

This parable isn't intended to suggest that Jesus hadn't offered the kingdom, or that the kingdom wasn't going to arrive in a future day. This parable is delivered to reveal the postponement of the kingdom, and what the followers of Christ are to do in the meantime.

Adapted from J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* (Zondervan, 1981), p. 367

There is going to be a delay in the coming of that kingdom and so far, that delay has lasted 2,000 years.

That delay is the opening point Jesus makes here in **verse 12**:

He said therefore, "A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return."

Luke 19:12

Now Jesus' audience would immediately have understood this illustration.

In the Roman Empire, when a man was going to become a king over some region in the empire, he would travel to Rome to receive his appointment from Caesar and then return to his land to begin his rule.

Bruce B. Barton, *Life Application Bible: Luke* (Tyndale House, 1997), p. 434

We know from history that Herod the Great traveled to Rome to receive this honor from the emperor, and Herod's sons had to do the same thing later.

So, in symbolic language, Jesus is the nobleman who is about to leave. He's going away to a far country; this refers to His ascension back to heaven after His resurrection where Jesus is then seated at the right hand of God.

Adapted from William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke* (Baker Book House, 1978), p. 859

He's not sitting on top of God's right hand, as one child misunderstood in Sunday School. Jesus isn't sitting *on* God's right hand, He's sitting *at* the right hand of God; that is, at the place of divine authority.

The Son of God has the right to rule the universe, as Ephesians 1 spells out.

Now pictured in this parable, before he leaves town, the nobleman makes an investment into the stewardship—the management—of his followers in **verse 13**:

"Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Engage in business until I come.'"

Luke 19:13

Literally, “Do business! Get to work with my investment. Put my money to work while I’m away.”

Jesus is effectively saying that He has made an investment in us as members of His household; He’s put something into our hands to manage, to steward, to use for the sake of His kingdom.

Now verse 14 adds some drama to the scene:

“But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to reign over us.’”

Luke 19:14

When one of Herod’s sons wanted to rule over Judea and traveled to Rome to meet with the emperor, 50 Jewish men went as well to argue against his appointment.

Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Courageous* (Victor Books, 1989), p. 75

Caesar Augustus basically ignored these Jewish men and gave Herod’s son the right to rule.

Jesus is hinting here at this crowd. He knows in a few days they will tell the Roman authorities that they do not want Jesus as their King; they will be chanting, “We have no king but Caesar.”

So tucked into this parable you find three responses to the nobleman’s investment and authority.

I’ll give them to you ahead of time:

- Diligence
- Laziness
- Defiance

First, here’s diligence in action; verse 15:

“When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business. The first came before him, saying, ‘Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.’ And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.’”

Luke 19:15-17

In other words, his diligence is now rewarded with responsibility in the kingdom. Now I know this might not sound appealing. It looks like his work is now rewarded with only more work.

But in light of that coming kingdom, imagine being able to work alongside of Christ in our perfected state and our immortal bodies, without sin, with unlimited energy and unhindered joy we are part of the royal court, co-laboring with our King.

Now verse 18:

“And the second came, saying, ‘Lord, your mina has made five minas.’ And he said to him, ‘And you are to be over five cities.’”

Luke 19:18-19

Keep in mind that this parable doesn’t focus on giftedness but faithfulness. Each of these servants were given the exact same amount.

R. Kent Hughes, [Luke, Volume II](#) (Crossway Books, 1998), p. 235

But none of them would receive a reward for sitting down and folding their hands and doing nothing—lazy idleness.

William Barclay, [The Gospel of Luke](#) (Westminster Press, 1975), p. 237

And that’s the next example. Following the example of **diligence**, we’re now given an example of **laziness** in **verse 20**:

“Then another came, saying, ‘Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief; for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man. You take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.’ He said to him, ‘I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?’”

Luke 19:20-23

Jesus is exposing this lazy servant’s cover-up. This was just an excuse.

Barton, p. 436

His excuse, in effect, was something like, “I know how demanding you are, but your investment in me put me in a no-win scenario; I might invest it, but I might lose it, so I decided to play it safe.”

Charles R. Swindoll, [Insights on Luke](#) (Zondervan, 2012), p. 442

I decided to keep to myself, stay out of harm's way, and not make a mistake by going out there and using your investment the wrong way.

He makes his laziness sound like common sense.

Of course, the Lord knows his heart and He takes his mina away and gives it to the servant who invested most diligently (**verse 24-26**).

Now be careful here:

Diligence and laziness are two responses of members of the nobleman's household. This lazy steward doesn't get kicked out of the household, but he does lose a full reward.

So also today, we as Christians can either be diligent or lazy.

If you've come to faith in Jesus Christ, your *presence* in the coming kingdom is guaranteed through *salvation*. But your *position* in the coming kingdom is determined by your *service*.

Adapted from Ivor Powell, Luke's Thrilling Gospel (Kregel Publications, 1965), p. 401

You're getting into the kingdom because you're saved. You will be honored in the kingdom because you served.

Your salvation is a gift from God; your service is your gift back to God.

Here's the incentive to resist the lull of laziness: your place of responsibility and honor in the kingdom will be a reward for your service to Christ.

Every day you plod through will only add to your privilege one day in the kingdom.

The nobleman, just like the Lord today, sees through this man's excuse for not doing anything that put God's investment in him to work.

And we battle our own set of excuses today; they might sound something like this:

- "I'm not really ready to serve in that way."
- "Someone else is more prepared to tackle that role."
- "I might not do the best job, and if I can't get it perfect, I'd rather someone else try."
- "Others are more gifted than me, so I'll let them serve instead."
- "I'm not really needed that much; there seems to be plenty of other people around."
- "I tried serving but wasn't appreciated for it."
- "It would seem proud to take the initiative, so if someone asks me, I'll serve."

- “I’d rather avoid conflicts with others and stay out of harm’s way.”
- “I’m not doing anything that important anyway, so why strive for excellence.”

Sometimes the difference between diligence and laziness is an excuse we’ve decided to believe, and then hide behind.

Now you might think that your service has to be something spectacular in order to make honorable mention in the kingdom.

Not at all. It goes back to that idea of plodding through the smallest task, attempting to honor God in the unnoticed acts of faithfulness to where God has placed you here and now.

How you tackled that laundry load, that homework assignment, that work project or that ministry task.

The Bible says:

For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name ...

Hebrews 6:10

It’s all going to be reflected in the reward Christ gives you one day. Imagine the graciousness of God who allows us to serve Him and then tells us that He will honor us one day in His coming kingdom.

So, **diligence** is shown here, **laziness** is shown here, and finally we see **defiance** here in **verse 27:**

“But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.”

Luke 19:27

In the context of this parable, a king would immediately move against a rebel presence that threatens his reign; kings in these days would eliminate their enemies when they ascended the throne.

This application of the parable refers to the final judgment against those who ultimately reject Jesus as King.

This is a timeless warning; this is a severe warning for those who defy King Jesus.

The apostle Paul picks this warning up and repeats it in **2 Thessalonians chapter 1:**

When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-10

The defiant unbelieving world is shown here, hating Jesus, hating His right to rule and saying they do not want Him, and He will give them their wish.

They will live forever without Him.

What about those of us who are members of His household by faith in Him alone?

Let me offer two timeless truths from this parable.

Let's develop a godly perspective of anticipation.

Resisting the lull of laziness is related to anticipating the reality of the kingdom.

You get to serve Him now and serve with Him—face to face—then!

And in the meantime, we are to engage in business today, we're to take the investment God has wired into us and given to us.

Jesus says back here in verse 13:

“Engage in business until I come.”

Luke 19:13

Put my investment in you to work, as if to say, don't let my money sit on a shelf somewhere; do something with it, great or small, appreciated or unappreciated, widely known or known only by God in your private prayer.

Engage in business until I come!

I love the way one author applied this text:

“To engage in business until I come”:

I need this verse etched into my desk at work, written on a sticky-note at the top of my computer, pinned to my dashboard, taped to my lawnmower handle; I need it everywhere, at all times.

God has given us each a mina: talents, responsibilities, families, neighbors, jobs, social platforms, ministries, hobbies. They are all divine investments. We are not just stuck between the resurrection of Christ and the rapture of the church.

Our little prayers, our little words, our little deeds may not seem to be accomplishing much in this world, but you will see they made a world of difference one day, when you see the King.

J. Seth Davey, "Engagement Rings/Divine Reckoning," (Heart to Heart Magazine, October 16-18, 2023) p. 23

Let's live with that kind of fresh anticipation.

Let's resist the gravitational pull of procrastination.

To sit it out. To disengage. To put it off.

In his last letter to Timothy, Paul delivers this challenge to young Timothy when he writes, ***"Timothy, let me remind you to fan into flame the gift of God which is in . . ."*** 2 ***Timothy 1:6***

What a challenge: Timothy, it's your responsibility to fan into flame what God ignited within you.

Fan it into flame, that was Timothy's responsibility and ours.

Add the fuel of godly anticipation and godly desire and godly self-sacrifice, stir the embers daily, live with a sense of kingdom anticipation, resist the gravitational pull of procrastination and the lull of a lazy life.

Leonardo Da Vinci was considered one of the most diversely talented individuals to have ever lived. An inventor, a student of human anatomy; an architect, engineer and, best known as an artist.

It's interesting that his output was tragically minor, less than 17 paintings are definitely attributed to him, several were left unfinished.

It was due in part, as one author wrote, to his chronic procrastination. He often had to be threatened by his patrons that they would withhold payment in order to motivate him to keep working. The Mona Lisa took 15 years for him to finish.

Another painting had been commissioned with a seven-month deadline. Da Vinci finished it 25 years later.

On his deathbed, Leonardo Da Vinci apologized for it all. He said just before he died that he wanted to apologize to God and to mankind for leaving so much undone.

Undone, not because there was so much he tried to do, but because he didn't finish what he had been given to do.

How do you avoid that deathbed regret?

By imitating Timothy who went on to fan the flame of service.

By imitating William Carey who decided to simply plod on, to finish one task at a time, to put God's investment to work.

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