

Mind the Gap

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[0 : 00] Amen. Please do have a seat and let me invite you just to turn back to those words that Corey read for us earlier in chapter 19 of Luke's Gospel and verses 11 to 27 is where we're going to be this morning. And as Alistair's already prayed for us, why don't we just get straight into these verses this morning, everything that God has to teach us. The man on the screen is a man called Phil Sayre. And I want to hedge my bets and say that you've never probably seen his face, but I also want to hedge my bets and say that you've most likely heard his voice. So Phil died this time last year, but in his life he was a voiceover artist. And amongst many of his jobs, he used to work for the BBC on radio. But also he did a bit on the side for the railways. So he was the voice of the railway. Certainly down south, his was the voice that you heard on every single train announcement. Just think about those train announcements in your heads. We are sorry to announce that this service terminates here. That was Phil. Please stand clear of the doors. That was Phil.

But probably the most famous phrase of his is the one that you hear regularly on the London Underground. It's this one. Mind the gap. That was Phil. Mind the gap. If you wanted a phrase that gets us to the heart of what Jesus is saying this morning to his disciples, it's this one. It's mind the gap.

Mind the gap. Now if you've got your Bibles here, let's do some work in verse 11. Because if we miss verse 11 then we'll miss the whole point of what Jesus is doing here and what he's saying to his disciples. Verse 11. Let's do a little bit of digging here. Who is Jesus speaking to? Well, he's speaking to the crowd. These people, including his 12 disciples, who are following him on his journey. And where is Jesus? Well, he's near to Jerusalem. The city that will be the setting for the climax of his life's work and ministry. Now here's the million dollar question. Or as we'll come to see in a minute, here's the million minor question, okay? Why? Why is Jesus speaking to his disciples? He's speaking to them because they thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately. So Jesus tells this parable to set expectations of what's going to happen when he gets to Jerusalem and to set expectations of what's going to happen after. Now he's told his disciples before, hasn't he? We've seen this all the way through this gospel, that he's going to be killed. He's going to be killed. And his disciples just don't get it.

He says, I'm going to be killed. And they say too, right, you're going to kill it, Jesus. You're going to smash it when you get to Jerusalem. They just don't get it. And their response shows they just haven't understood what's going on. So there's an expectation in the air from what they've seen and what they've heard of Jesus, that when he gets to the city, he will set up his kingdom, he will crush his enemies, and every knee will bow, and his will be the crown. And all of that is going to happen now. I mean, it's imminent, it's tangible. We can feel it.

It's going to happen now. And Jesus wants them to know that yes, that day is going to come. Yes, that day is going to come. But first, he's got business to do in Jerusalem.

[3 : 38] And that business is cross-shaped. See, before the crown comes the cross. He will be killed. This is what Jesus said. He will be killed, but he will rise, and he will ascend, and one day he will return. But between his going and his coming again, there's going to be a gap.

There's going to be a gap. The now and the not yet, there's going to be a gap. In fact, in God's grand story of redemption, that's the place, the gap. That's where the disciples will soon find themselves. And so what does Jesus want his followers to be? Mindful of the gap.

And if you think about it, that's the exact place in the story, God's grand plan of redemption, that we find ourselves this morning. We too are in the gap. And that's why what Jesus says to his disciples here is not only so instructive to us, but it's so challenging to the way that we live our lives as followers of him. Because Jesus doesn't just tell them that there will be a gap. He tells them how he

wants them to live while they're in the gap. Well, what are they to do?

Well, they are to invest themselves in the business of the king. This is what they've got to get busy doing. They've got to invest themselves in the business of the king. Which begs the question, does it not? What is the business of the king? Well, if you look back to verse 10 of chapter 19, where we left off at the end of Zacchaeus last week, we see Jesus outline his business. This is what he's all about. This is why he came. To seek and save sinful and lost people and bring them back to God, to reconcile them to their creator. This is what Jesus is all about. This is his business.

And so he says to his disciples, my business has to become your business. Between my going and my return, that is the business I want you to be investing yourselves in. Now, to get them to understand his commission there, what he does is he tells them a parable. He tells them the parable.

[5 : 51] It's a parable about a king. But before we get to the parable, I had never seen this before this week. There's a historical backdrop to the parable, which makes sense of it all. He's not just plucked this story from midair. What actually happened is 30 years or so earlier, Herod the Great, remember the guy at Jesus' birth, he killed all the babies, that Herod. Herod the Great has split up his kingdom. And he's divided it amongst his sons. And what he's done is he's given the Judea and Sumeria part to his son Archelaus. And that did not go down well with the Jews. They did not want Herod, and they certainly did not want his son Archelaus, especially because to flex his muscles, what he had done is he just killed 3,000 Jews for rioting. And so while Archelaus is journeying to Rome to rubber stamp his appointment, the Jews send a delegation after him to Rome to appeal to Herod to say, we don't want this man to be our king. And that did not go down well in Rome, and they lost their appeal. This is the historical backdrop to what's going on here in this parable. So do you see what

Jesus is doing? He's tapping into recent history. These people that he's speaking to, they feel this parable in a way that maybe we don't today. But this is live, this is real. What Jesus is doing is he's hitting and touching a truth nerve that these people know all too well.

They feel this parable. Center stage in Jesus' parable is a king. So let's see firstly what the departing king instructs. This king is about to set off on a journey to receive his kingdom.

And after he's received his kingdom, he will return to rule over it. Now let me just pick out two words in this first little section that I think we're supposed to see and hear. Here's the first one.

It's the word gave. So the king calls 10 of his servants, you see it there, calls 10 of his servants to him and he gives them each a mina. Now a mina in this day is equivalent to three months wage.

Now you can do the maths in your head as to what that works out for you. Three months wage.

We're supposed to see it's a significant amount of money, right? Significant amount of money. And the king is his and he has given it to his servants. At this point in the story, I was reminded of the stage of life that I'm at.

[8 : 29] Because our little girl, she's almost three, she's going through a terrible my stage at the minute, right? It is exhausting. Everything is mine. Mine, mine, mine, mine. Takes toys off her sister, mine.

I just split up a few fights this morning before we came out. Mine. Put her at the wrong end of the bath. That's not my end of the bath. Do you know what she did the other day? We were walking home from nursery and she said, Daddy, I'll be going back to my house. And I thought to myself, is it your house?

Are you picking up the rent this month? Are you doing that? Is yours the name that's on the council tax bill that's coming in? Is yours the name on that rising gas and electricity bill that daddy had to negotiate to get a better deal? Is your name on that? And this house that you're living in, is your name the one on the title deeds? As I was watching her do this, it so often happens, doesn't it, that we see ourselves.

I saw myself because I do that all the time. All the time I do that. Because what would happen if the stuff in my life, you were to peel back? Do you know what the name and the title deeds would be?

It wouldn't be Graham. It would be God's. It would be God's. He owns everything. He's the possessor of heaven and earth. Everything I have, my money, my flat, my family, my time, my gifts, my abilities, they are not mine. They're his. How gracious a God do we have? How good a God do we have that he graciously gives us things made in his image, no accident, given stuff to use for his glory?

[10:13] Everything I have is his. Everything I have is his. You know what my problem is? And one of you identify with this, is I'm just like that three-year-old girl. Just like Chloe. I take my mina. And do you know what ice cream? Mina. It's what I do. I take my mina and I say, mina. But the truth of it is, it's all God's. It's all God's. Former Dutch prime minister and theologian, Abraham Kauper. Now, can you believe there was a day when you could be a prime minister and a theologian? I love that. This is what he said. There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Jesus Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry mine.

It's all his. It's all his. First word, give. Here's the second word, work. What does the king expect his servants to do with his mina? Invest it. Put it to work until he returns. Put it to work. Do you see that everything that God has given us? And I think particularly the gospel message about his son, we are to invest for his glory and for his renown so that many more men and women would come to meet Jesus for themselves and be saved. Give and work. Give and work. You'll see at verse 14 that this king is not everybody's choice. The confession of some of his subjects, you'll see it there, is this. We don't want this man to reign over us. We don't want this man. He's not our king. We don't want him to be our king. Let me ask you, is that your confession towards the king who's telling this story this morning? Is this your attitude towards Jesus? Are you opposed to the rule of this king? Friends, if that's you this morning, then can I encourage you just to hold that thought and we'll see Jesus return to consider the opposition at the end of this parable. But in the meantime, this now appointed king, you see, he returns from the far country. And secondly, verses 15 to 23, we find what the returning king finds. Calls the servants to him to find out what they've been doing while he's been away. Verse 16, the first servant comes to him. What has he done? He's taken his mina, his one mina, and he's made 10 minas more. He had one and now he has 11. Now you do the maths there.

Maths is not my strong point, but I can work in ones. That's an incredible 1000% profit that servant has made on that mina. And because he's shown himself to be what? Trustworthy, he's given 10 cities.

Now the second servant comes to him and he's turned his one mina into what? Into six. A 500% return. And he's rewarded with five cities. You see, these two model sermons have invested what they've given in the business of the king. Why? Because they love their king. They want to worship their king. They want to please their king. What they're after is the affirming words of their king that they have done well. And you see how they are entrusted with something far more valuable.

[13:55] Now there are many sweet words in life. You're hired. I love you. I do. Words that are worth living for.

I wonder as you consider your own life this morning, what words are you living for? I suggest for the Christian that actually there will be no more sweeter words for us to hear than those from our Lord on that last day than we read and find at verse 17. Well done, good servant.

Wonderful, wonderful words. And so we must ask ourselves this morning that if our king was to return today was to return today and give his honest assessment on how we've used his things, would those be his words to us?

Maybe this morning, by God's grace and as his spirit works in our lives, today is the day when our hearts become set on those words, using our money for those words.

It's not true that our giving is just as much part of our worship as our singing. It's not so much that we have to give, we get to give.

[15:15] And in actual fact, anything that we do give, it's God's all along. We're just giving back to him the things that he gave to us. You see, if you've never thought about it before, can I encourage you to think about giving to the work of the church here so that we can do more things, so that we can train more people, so that we can support more missionaries, both local and global.

And ultimately, we pray so that we can see more people come to meet and know Jesus Christ as their Lord and their Savior. That's where you are this morning. Can I encourage you to grab one of those giving slips on the way out and just prayerfully consider it?

How can I use my money? How can I use the things that God has given me for his glory? And how can I invest them in his business? Let's use our money for those words.

And let's use our gifts for those words. Let me ask you, what has God given you? What has God given you?

How has God wired you? What do you love doing? Using and investing the things and the talents and the opportunities that God has given us for his glory.

[16:26] Maybe even as you heard Tim Hazel and Simona earlier, maybe the thought came into your mind. Maybe that's something that God is calling me to do, to set myself aside to serve him in full-time Christian ministry.

I just say as one who has left secular employment to take up full-time Christian ministry, that there is no greater privilege. There is no greater privilege.

And I could not have done that without the support, the generous support of people in this church. And I look out and over the years, I've been so, our family have been so blessed, not just by your financial support, but by your prayerful support, and just by your friendship as well.

We can all get involved in this project. But maybe that's you this morning. Maybe Christian ministry is for me. What a great calling. You know, William Taylor, who's the rector down at St. Helens Bishopsgate Church in London, it was this parable through which God spoke to him and said, William, I just want to set you aside for Christian ministry.

Will you do it? Will you do it? Invest the stuff that I've given you that way. Maybe that's you this morning. If that is, listen, I would love to talk and pray with you. Even if it was just a formal chat, we'd love to talk and pray with you.

[17:36] In the early 1500s, God raised up a man called William Tyndale. William Tyndale was a learned man. He was fluent in three languages, probably four, English, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.

Learned man. And God put it on his heart to translate the Bible, use his gifts, translate the Bible from Latin into English. It had never been done before. He had a passion for it.

But there were two big obstacles in the way of William Tyndale. The first one was it was highly illegal. Highly illegal, highly risky. If he was going to go for it, he was putting his neck on the line. And that meant that anybody who associated with him was also putting their neck on the line. That was a big problem. Second problem was financial. He couldn't afford the financial power to set himself aside, to take up the task, such a big task of translating the Bible.

So what did he do? He prayed. And lo and behold, he bumped into a man called Henry Monmouth. Henry Monmouth was a wealthy trader. He had a lot of ships.

[18:39] He used to trade cargo up and down the English coastline. And he met Tyndale. And Tyndale shared with him his passion for translating the Bible from Latin into English.

And Tyndale was gripped by the passion. Tyndale bought, sorry, Monmouth bought into the vision. And what he did is that he took Tyndale and housed him.

He took Tyndale and fed him. He took Tyndale and set him apart financially so that he could do the work of translating the Bible from Latin into English. And it was one day finished.

And what did Monmouth do? He used his business connections. He used his ships to take Tyndale's English translation of the Bible and transport it up and down the length of our country. Wonderful thing to do.

But at a big cost for both those men. Monmouth ended up in prison. And Tyndale ended up dead for what they had done. But if it wasn't for two men who lived for the words, well done, good servant, then a whole generation of this country would not have the Bible in their language.

[19:48] And who knows what might have happened. Maybe even today we would be sitting here without the Bible in English. Two men who lived for the words, well done, good servant.

Servants number one and two in our parable, because they live for those words, and because they worship their king with their work, they're declared to be trustworthy. And then we meet the third servant in verse 20.

What has he done with his minor? He's done nothing with his minor. He's stored it away in a handkerchief. Now why has he done that? We'll see his excuse at verse 21. First glance, it looks like the servant has underperformed, and it's the king's fault that he's underperformed.

What does he say? I knew you to be a severe man, says the servant. I was afraid of you. In other words, the fault's not with me. The fault is with you. If you weren't such a cutthroat dealer, if you weren't such a cruel taskmaster, then maybe, just maybe, things would have worked out differently, and I would have behaved differently.

But the king sees straight through those words, and he turns those servant's words back on themselves. Because if that is what you truly believed, then you could have nipped down to RBS and any other bank, you could have opened a savings account, you could have put the minor in there, and at least you would have made some money.

[21 : 17] You wouldn't have even needed to lift a finger to make some money, because I would have made money off the interest. You see, this third servant, most likely, is just making an excuse for the fact that he did nothing with what the master had given him.

And it's interesting that the king doesn't say, ah, well, you win some and you lose some. You might not have gained anything, but at least you didn't lose anything. No, whereas the servants before him were met with the words, well done, good servant.

This man is met with the words, you wicked servant. See, when it comes to his relationship with the king, this third servant's heart is all wrong.

If servants, number one and two, their hearts are marked by adoration for their king, then servant number three, his heart, is filled with apathy towards his king.

At the end of the day, he never really knew his king. Never really knew his king. Let me ask you this morning, and as I was praying about it this morning and last night, this is what was coming to me.

[22 : 22] When it comes to your relationship with the Lord Jesus, what is the temperature of your heart this morning? Is it warm? Is it lukewarm?

Or is there a flame in your heart that has long been snuffed out? Please, can I encourage you to speak to somebody before you go? Maybe there was a friend that dragged you along this morning. Why don't you just pray with them before you go? Pray that this love for the king would be a reality in your life. And see thirdly, verses 24 to 27, what the ruling king orders.

So he orders that the third servant's mina be taken from him and be added to the first servant's ten minas. Why? Ask the onlookers. Because this first servant has proved himself trustworthy.

And he loves me. And those are the kind of servants that I'm after. And those are the kind of servants that I want looking after my affairs. You see, the ruling king, he judges and declares the first and second servants to be trustworthy.

[23 : 28] And he declares the third servant to be wicked. And he declares those people who are rebelling against him to be his enemies. You see, this king, he will return.

And when he does, he judges the opposition for the rebellion against him. Let me ask you this morning, are you in rebellion against this king? Are you opposed to his rule and his reign?

Well, here's what you need to know. That the king who's telling this story is good. The king who is telling this story is compassionate. The king who is telling this story, the one who says to his servants, invest my mina for my mission, is on the way to the cross to give his whole life for his mission.

He goes to the cross, Jesus, this king, to take God's judgment, the one that should have rightly fallen on his enemies. He takes it on himself. Jesus goes to the cross to be slaughtered in our place so that enemies can be forgiven and be welcomed as sons.

That's the kind of king we're dealing with here. There's a former archbishop of Canterbury called Donald Coogan. And he used to tell a story about a sculptor who sculpted a painting, I'm sorry, a statue of Jesus.

[24 : 47] And people flocked around to see this statue. What they used to do is they used to get to the statue of Jesus and walk all the way around it slowly and slowly and slowly until they got the best view. But the statue's beauty always seemed to elude them.

And so they inevitably, they would go to the sculptor who was sitting there and they'd say, where is the best place where I can get the best view of this sculpture? And the sculptor always used to reply to them that he deliberately designed the sculpture so that the best place to view its beauty was when you were on your knees looking up.

So Jesus is calling us to do this morning, to bow the knee to him and to look up to him and say, Jesus, you are king and I am not. Is that you this morning?

Will you bow the knee to him? Will you declare him to be your king, Lord and savior? This is no cruel king we're dealing with here. This is a good king. You know, just as we close, one of my summer jobs that I had while I was at university was that I used to work as a teller at a bank.

And before they let us loose on the public, what they did is they took us aside for a two-week training course. And as part of the two-week training course, they tried to teach you two things, how to work the computers, and second of all, how to speak to customers.

[26 : 07] And when it came to speaking to customers, they always said there was two questions that you needed to ask when they were coming to take out money. The first question was, how would you like your cash? You had that one before? Which I always thought was a strange

question.

How would you like your cash? Kind of like it's cash, please. But the second question was, would you be interested in speaking to one of our financial advisors? Thought behind the question. We want you to be investing here. We want you to take everything that you have and invest it here. It's exactly what Jesus is saying to his disciples this morning.

He wants us to be investing here in his mission to seek and to save the lost. And so the question for us is, will we as a church this year, with our lives, will we invest it in his mission?

Jesus says to his disciples, mind the gap. He's going, but one day he will return. And until then, with the stuff that he's given us, we have to get working, investing it in his business.

[27 : 17] And what's his business? The seeking and the saving of the lost. Let me just finish with these words of Christian missionary C.T. Studd, which just captures so beautifully a heart that's been won by the words, well done, good servant.

This is what he said. If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him.

And just before we close, why don't we just have a moment's silence? A moment's silence. And if God has been speaking to you this morning through his word, by his spirit, then maybe now is the time to do business with God.

Jesus, all for Jesus. All I am and have and ever hope to be. All of my ambitions, hopes and plans, I surrender these unto your hands.

Dear Father, thank you for your goodness to us, that everything we have is from you. Dearest Father, would you help us this week by your spirit at work in us to be those good servants who seek first your kingdom and your righteousness.

[28 : 37] And so, Father, this is our prayer. We make it in Jesus' name. Amen.