

Waiting Time is Working Time...

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[0 : 0 0] Please have a seat and let's pray together. Father God, thank you for the joy it's been this evening to be together. Father, to sing praises that you alone are worthy of.

Lord, I pray they would have been authentic. Lord, I pray they would have been true. And Lord, I pray that as we now come to study your word, Father, you might speak to us that you might be glorified, that we might be challenged and changed.

So bless us and help us in Jesus' name. Amen. It really has been such a privilege to be here for the weekend. It's been nice to be in a city with clean air. It's been lovely to walk along pavements that are not full of people.

And it's lovely to have been amongst old friends. Some of you are actually looking younger than when we left at the end of last year, which is quite amazing and a real tribute to Scottish living.

It has been a wonderful weekend. Reconnecting with old friends. Reminiscing about past events. Being re-familiarized, reacquainted with old songs.

[1 : 1 2] I got to go to a nervous passenger gig. Something that I never managed being down in the south of England. But my wife was a groupie. So I felt privileged to have been here.

Now just for a few moments, I want us to have a look at a story. I don't want us to focus on time that has passed. I want us to focus on the time that is left.

The time that is left. So please grab a Bible and turn with me to Luke chapter 19. Luke writes this.

While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable because he was near Jerusalem. And the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. He said a man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then return.

So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten miners. Put this money to work, he said, until I come back. But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, We don't want this man to be our king.

[2 : 1 6] He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money in order to find out what they had gained with it. The first one came and said, Sir, your miner has earned ten more.

Well done, my good servant, his master replied. Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities. The second came and said, Sir, your miner has earned five more.

His master answered, You take charge of five cities. Then another servant came and said, Sir, here is your miner. I have kept it laid away in a handkerchief.

I was afraid of you because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow. His master replied, I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant.

You knew, did you, that I was a hard man taking out what I did not put in and reaping what I did not sow. Why then didn't you put my money on deposit? So that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest.

[3 : 21] Then he said to those standing by, Take his miner away from him and give it to the one who has ten. Sir, they replied, he already has ten.

He replied, I tell you that to everyone who has more will be given. But as for the one who has nothing, even what they have will be taken away.

But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them, bring them here and kill them in front of me. It is a kind of very famous story.

And you'll see the context there in verse 11. Jesus is on the very outskirts of Jerusalem. He is about to triumphantly enter. It will be the beginning of the most harrowing week that any individual has ever witnessed on the surface of the earth throughout all of history.

And many of his followers thought that once Jesus rolls into Jerusalem, the kingdom of God will come in all its fullness. Jesus will kick out the Romans, unite the people.

[4 : 26] The nation state of Israel will rise to its former glory that they saw under and read about under David and Solomon. It says because some people thought the kingdom of God was going to appear at once.

They thought they were on the cusp of happy and heady days. You can understand why this is the case. They've read the Old Testament. They've read Isaiah and about how this child will be born, this Messiah king who will establish justice.

Who will rule with mercy. They've seen it happen all the way running up to this story. The rich ruler has just been challenged about selling everything and giving to the poor.

The blind and destitute man has been healed and restored. The corrupt tax collector Zacchaeus just before this moment has been completely turned around and salvation has come to his house.

It seems that this kingdom of righteousness and justice established by King Jesus is just about to go global. And so Jesus tells them this story to reorientate their thinking.

[5 : 44] And his message is very simple. He borrowed it from the London underground. His message is mind the gap. That I will go to the cross and I will inaugurate this kingdom.

But there will be a gap. There will be a gap between the kingdom being established and the kingdom coming in all its fullness. Mind the gap. Mind the gap.

And what's our message this evening? Mind the gap. We have celebrated 50 years gone by. 50 wonderful years of God's faithfulness, his grace, his gospel being powerfully at work in our lives, in our community.

But the job is not done. We're not here to reminisce about reminiscing. It's not time for nostalgia or rose-tinted spectacles as we look back on different stories and events and wonderful workings of God.

The message today is mind the gap going forward. The London underground is very deceiving. You don't have to be there very long before you're all kinds of nonchalant. The first few weeks I was in London, I just went around the platform.

[6 : 58] Phone, watch, keys. Phone, wallet, keys. Phone, wallet, keys. Now, I don't care. I leave my phone on the seat. I've got my headphones on too loud to entertain my other passengers with my wonderful music.

They used to say, mind the gap. And you take this huge step. Now I have every chance of falling between the train and the platform. Because I'm so familiar. And what Jesus is saying to us tonight is, mind the gap.

Don't be complacent. Don't be notchalant. Don't be cruising. Don't be playing at this. He tells this story to tell his servants to mind the gap.

They are to work hard. There will be this gap between the kingdom inaugurated and the kingdom consummated. And that waiting time is working time. Waiting time is working time.

This concept of waiting is all over the end of Luke's gospel. All his parables talk about a king going to a faraway country. And there being a long delay. Why is that?

[8 : 02] Because Jesus is on the cusp of dying on the cross. 40 days spent with his disciples having been raised. Then going back to heaven. There will be a wait. There will be a wait between the kingdom inaugurated and the kingdom consummated.

And he wants to prepare his disciples and us how we wait well. And the way we wait well is to work while we wait. And let's be honest, we're still waiting.

Been waiting 2,000 years. Audrey, if you're over 40, please could you stand up? You see, 2,000 years to us seems like a really long time.

Whereas 2,000 years is simply 50 of the people standing up. It's not that long, is it? We've got well over 2,000 years of wisdom between us.

Please have a seat. Psalm 90 says that 1,000 years is like a day and a day in God's kingdom. So we've been waiting 2,000 years.

[9 : 06] But for God, it's like when you knocked off work on Friday evening. It's not that long at all. But waiting time is working time. We must mind the gap.

Waiting time is working time. So I just want us to see four things. Four amazing orientating facts from this story. Here's the first. The king is delayed.

The king is delayed. A noble man goes away to a faraway country to receive a kingdom. This would be very pertinent for people in Israel at the time. Because the puppet king is Herod.

And whenever the next Herod is needed, because the previous one dies or is killed, he has to go on a boat journey to Rome so the Caesar can say, You're now the king. This is a very pertinent journey.

The people that Jesus is speaking to will know all about a noble man going to a faraway country to be named a king. The essential message is that the master is going away.

[10 : 05] He won't be there. He won't be at the end of the phone. He won't be picking up emails. He won't be textable. No one knows how long the king is going to be away.

It's an indefinite period. But he's preparing his servants for an indefinite length of time. And notice the parameters. He's going to receive a kingdom, a ubiquitous kingdom.

A kingdom of all kingdoms. This is not the kingdom of Saudi Arabia or the kingdom of Tibet. It's not even the kingdom of Fife. This is a kingdom he's going to receive, a kingdom that will be an unprecedented and undefinable kingdom.

So the big question is, what will the mice do while the cat's away? And the king tells them exactly what they're to do. The king is delayed, but secondly, the servants are entrusted.

The servants are entrusted. He calls to himself ten servants, and he gives them massive responsibility over his affairs. He gives them some seed money to put to work.

[11 : 12] They each presumably, as there are ten servants and ten minors, they all get a minor each. A considerable sum of money. Money that they are to put to work to invest. Money that they are used to conduct business on the king's behalf while he's away.

The instruction from the king is really simple. As they receive the minor, he says this. Engage in business until I come. Job description, engage in business.

Timescale, really simple, until I come. The king is entrusting the servants to put the money to work to increase his portfolio. To increase his rule and reign.

To increase his market share while he's away. Use these resources to increase my stake in the world while I'm gone. And when I come back, we'll see what happens.

This is an astonishing scenario. The king is away, and he entrusts his servants to conduct business on his behalf. And let's be clear, that's exactly our job description.

[12 : 20] We have each been given resource by the God of the universe. And our one sole responsibility is to engage in business on his behalf. To increase his rule and reign while he's gone until he comes back.

To get his kingdom to grow. This unshakable kingdom. This kingdom that starts out as a little seed and will take over the whole world.

In which all the birds of the air will find their rest. This is what the Lord Jesus has given each of us to do. To use our time, our talents, our money, our resources.

Our very lives to work unequivocally for him. To engage in his business. Until he comes. What is Bruntsfield Evangelical Church to do tomorrow and the day after?

And for the next 50 years if the Lord doesn't come back? We are to engage in business. For his glory. Until he gloriously comes.

[13 : 20] To further the rule and reign of Christ in the world. In order that God will receive the glory that he alone deserves. That will look different from each of us. That will look different depending on where we find ourselves.

What responsibility God has given us. If we're a mum working hard. So that our children would know. What the rule and reign of Christ looks like.

Maybe it's in businesses to conduct ourselves in such a way. That it provokes people to ask questions. Say what is the reason for the hope that you have? To engage in business.

To engage in business. Until the Lord comes. He says to each of us. Engage in business until I return. He says to Bruntsfield Evangelical Church.

You're one job. You have one job. Engage in business until I come. Thirdly the king will reward. And what rewards there are for faithful servants.

[14 : 22] Suddenly the noble man arrives back. And his first course of action is. That he's going to get down to business with the servants that he's left in charge.

Well income servant number one. He cracks open his iPad Pro. And he breaks down the numbers for the king. He says well king. You gave me one minor.

I've got ten more for you. And a thousand percent increase. There are people in the city of London. Who would love those kind of returns. They would be the hedge fund manager par excellence.

Every year. He says well we engaged in a gig economy camel taxi service called Slober. It went well.

We did a coffee company called Star Miners. It's gone global. We took all your money. We put it to work. It was hard. We engaged in good business.

[15 : 20] And now he stands before the king and says. Here's your eleven minus. Well the king is overjoyed. Promotion is on the cards.

Well done good and faithful servants. Because you've been faithful in a very little. You shall have authority over ten cities.

Faithful servants get paid massive bonuses in the kingdom of God. King is overjoyed. Well done. Well done. Well servant two has been pacing around outside.

He's a little bit nervous about this business meeting. So he comes in. Plugs in his laptop. After some work. He finally gets it to project properly. And he says we made some good investments.

Others stalled. Some really struggled. We made a takeaway delivery service. A fish and chips. It went well. We made some good property deals.

[16 : 19] And when all the dust settles. 500% increase. You gave me one. Here's five more. It's gone well. The profit's been excellent. And again the king is overjoyed.

Delighted at the servant's efforts. Well done good and faithful servant. I'll put you in charge of five cities. A wonderful thing. Faithfulness in the present pays massive eternal dividends in the future.

Servants have been faithful. The king says you're hired. Servant number three however has been biting his nails nervously in the corridor.

He's clutching a rather dirty handkerchief and muttering excuses under his breath. He enters the room. Walks up to the king. Opens the disheveled handkerchief and out rolls one rather dirty looking miner.

The king looks up quizzically. Well the servant said. I was afraid of you. I know what sort of king you are.

[17 : 22] I know how you conduct your affairs. Well the rewarding king now turns into the auditor. Whilst never agreeing to the man's description of him.

He says. You didn't do it out of fee. You did it out of laziness. You could have gone down to TSB and opened an ISA and put my miner in there. And then at least I would have got four percent back when I arrived.

But you've actually been lazy. Your wickedness wasn't out of servile fear. It was out of pure laziness. You had all the resources and you didn't put them to work.

Not industrious but lethargic. Servant three is the sluggard from the book of Proverbs. Well he's declared bankrupt. His mind is taken away and given to the good servant number one.

As an additional bonus for his efforts. Now be clear. This is not a salvation story. The salvation story came just before where Zacchaeus. Salvation comes to Zacchaeus' house.

[18 : 23] Salvation is brought about by Jesus seeking and saving us. This story is how to be about a faithful servant working during the waiting time.

This is very clear. That one day we will give an account to God at the end. And he will weigh our efforts.

He will see how we've worked while we've been waiting. He will see how we've taken our resources and opportunities. And whether we invested wisely and engaged in business before he came.

Using this life. This one life in this one world. To gain treasure in heaven. Is our job.

It's incredibly sharp. Jesus comes very close and he asks each of us. What are you investing in? How are you investing your lives? Are you putting it to work for my glory?

[19 : 23] Or are you putting it to work for your own? One day, maybe soon, I will meet people in eternal glory. Who gave their lives as martyrs in service of the Lord Jesus.

And I will tell them how I didn't tell my mates. About the gospel because I was frightened they would laugh at me. I'll meet people who gave everything in sacrificial service.

People who went without in order that people might hear about Jesus. And I'll tell them about my holiday and how quickly my tan faded afterwards. Just along the river from us in London is the Financial Times.

People read the Financial Times religiously. They're normally the ones wearing a three-piece suit with a pocket square. And matching tie. They're trying to find the inside track.

Where to invest their money in order to get the greatest yield in the shortest time. I want to say to each of us today, this is our Financial Times. And it's going to tell us where to invest all of our money, all of the time, for all of our lives.

[20 : 30] Not for a quick buck, but for an eternal dividend. This book reminds us that when the world says, put your money here, put your time here, put your resources here.

This book says, no. It's foolishness. It's just moths and rust. It says, invest in the kingdom of God, which will pay an eternal dividend.

I need to. We need to make better investments for the kingdom of God. We need to make better deposits for Christ Jesus in and through our lives.

Soon he will come back. And I don't want to be holding trinkets. Surrounding myself with vaporous vanity. Or showing him my collection of moths and rust, which really won't be that exciting.

My issue is the complete opposite of these people at the start of this parable. My issue is not, I think the kingdom of God is going to come tomorrow. My problem is I don't think it's going to come at all.

[21 : 35] And I get all kinds of distracted and all kinds of deflected by all kinds of things which will ultimately come to nothing. George Whitefield was asked what he would do if he only had one more month to live.

And he got out his diary and he just read his diary out. He said, I would go here. I would do that. I would say this to them. I would travel there. He suggested that I would do nothing different, that he lived every day like it was his last.

And I wonder how many of us will be able to do the same. You have a great team here. Graham and Alistair and Peter and Simona and Tim and Hazel and Fraser and David and Ian.

Paul. Paul. And their job is they're your hedge fund managers who are going to continually tell you keep investing in this. Because this is what will count in the end and nothing else will.

Engage in business until I return. Let's just finish off. Last message is that the king will destroy his enemies. See in verse 14. There was a group of subjects that hated the king.

[22 : 48] And they went and they said, we don't want you to rule over us. This has particular pertinence because in 4 BC, the next Herod off the rank was a guy called Archelaus.

He was a space cadet. And a group of Jews went to the Caesar and said, we don't want him to be king. So he returned as ruler of Judea, but he was never called king. This story happens in a complete opposite way.

The king comes back and those servants that would not have him as king were killed by the king. Destroyed by him. They're brought to him and they're killed in front of him.

This is a terrifying but true story. It's a real warning that if we're servants of the king, we're in as those which have the Lord Jesus as our king.

If we will not have Jesus as king over us, we will not be welcome as subjects of his eternal kingdom when it comes. If we will not receive him as king now, we will meet him as judge then.

[23 : 48] If we reject Jesus, he will banish us when it really matters. Jesus tells the story on the outskirts of Jerusalem. He will go in.

He will spend a week hanging out with his enemies. And in the end, he'll be betrayed, mocked, shamefully treated by a brutal coalition of people who will put him to death on a cross.

Because they would not have him to be king over them. What they did not realize is the cross was not their republic. It was his coronation. It was the inauguration of that kingdom.

That kingdom being started and open to all of his subjects. And so it's a great story and it's one to focus our minds. And it asks us, are we minding the gap?

What do we say when we need to give an account before God for how we've invested our lives? Here in Edinburgh, at Bruntsfield, you've been given great responsibility. Great resource.

[24 : 50] The amount of talent and time. The amount of skill is unbelievable. It's about investing it all in the same direction for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Engaging in his business until he comes. That all of us would be living for that one sentence from the Lord Jesus. That when we meet him, he would say, well done, good and faithful servants.

That is all that we're living for. We've had 50 great years. But the only way we'll get to 60 or 70 or 80 or 100 is if we keep now engaging in business for Jesus' glory alone.

That's all it is. If we're not going to do that, we may as well just close the doors and have more posh flats in Bruntsfield. But if we engage in business, it will be of an eternal reward.

And it will be eternally significant for those who stand to be destroyed by Jesus. Now don't coast. Don't cruise. Don't bumble along.

[25 : 52] Don't be playing at this. Say each and every day, Jesus, I want to invest in your kingdom. Father, and would you help me do it for your glory alone? Let's pray. Father God, we want to be living all of our lives for one sentence from you.

We want to be good and faithful servants. Lord, help us invest well. Help us be about your business. Father, so use our lives that we would be storing up great treasure.

Father, in heaven. That we would be shown to be those that have been faithful in small things. So that in the eternal world to come, you would give us responsibility for many.

Father, I pray that our eyes would be fixed on Jesus Christ, our King. That we would be expectantly waiting for him. And Lord, that we would be here and now seeking to make a difference.

To be furthering his rule and reign. Father, do this for your glory alone, we ask. Amen. Amen. Amen.