

Recognising the King

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Preacher: Andrew Price

- [0 : 00] Well, it would be great if you turned back in your Bibles, although I'll have the verses on the screen as usual for those online as well. But I wonder whether you've ever failed to recognize who someone is.
- I remember when my brother was dating this girl, whom we'll call Cassie. We were both living at home some years ago. And she phoned our house one day and I answered the phone back in the days where there was only one phone that looked like this, right?
- Do you remember those days? But apparently she didn't recognize who I was by my voice. She thought she was talking to my brother, her boyfriend. And so she just launched into her day telling me about all these things, which I wasn't particularly interested in actually.
- But I thought, oh, I'll just play along. And so I asked some more questions and things like that. But despite me talking more, she still didn't recognize who I was. And so I thought for a bit of fun, I'd say, Cassie, I think we need to talk.
- But then I realized the phone went silent. I thought, oh, no, that's a bit me. I quickly said, it's Andrew, not Matthew. Let me go and get Matthew. And off I went. But I wonder if you've ever failed to recognize who someone is or perhaps what someone does.
- [1 : 17] Someone said to me, oh, you're a minister? You only work Sundays, right? You garden every other day. They haven't seen my garden. So I clearly don't garden every other day. But the point is we can fail to recognize who someone is or what they do.
- And today we see some people fail to recognize who Jesus is and what he will do, like recognizing he will return.
- So we're at point one in your outline. This will be the longest point. And verse 11 in the Bibles or on the screen. So verse 11, while they were listening to this, we didn't read this in the Bible reading.
- So we're kind of going back to the first part of our passage for today. 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.
- At last week, we heard about Zacchaeus or as my kids call him, zucchini, remember? And at the end of that episode, Jesus said that he came to seek and save the lost.
- [2 : 20] And people were listening to this. And so they thought, well, maybe he's come to save Israel by kicking out the Romans and establishing God's kingdom fully at once.
- But as we also heard last week, that's not the case. He was actually on his way to Jerusalem, not to establish God's kingdom fully, but partially by his death and resurrection.
- By dying for our sins and rising again such that God would declare him to be the king. And that we might be able to enter in to willingly live under his loving rule.
- He would only establish his kingdom fully where the world would live under his loving rule when he returns. And so he tells this parable to make this point and what we're to do while we wait.

And so verse 12, he said, A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return.

[3 : 21] The words have himself appointed are literally to receive for himself a kingdom. Jesus receives a kingdom from his father because of his death and resurrection.

As you know elsewhere in the Bible, because he humbled himself to death, therefore God exalted him to the highest place, gave him all authority in heaven and earth.

Those phrases should ring some bells. In other words, Jesus receives a kingdom. And as I said, we can be part of that kingdom now living under his loving rule with help and hope and a community of believers to share life with.

Plus every spiritual blessing if we trust in Jesus. But it's only after giving more people more time to trust in Jesus, to not miss out on a place in his kingdom, that Jesus will then return to establish God's kingdom fully on earth.

Where all people will live under his loving rule, where there'll be no more sin or suffering, no more cyclone or disease or disaster or death, no more war or threats of war, which would be a welcome relief to our world right now, wouldn't it?

[4 : 37] But before he goes, we meet two other groups of people. Firstly, his servants, verse 13. And so before he leaves, he called 10 of his servants and gave them 10 minas.

Put this money to work, he said, until I return, until I come back. Now, one mina was about three to four months worth of wages.

And so it's a pretty generous gift, right? But they're to use that gift to serve him, to put it to work for him. After all, that's what servants do, don't they?

They serve. Unlike the subjects in verse 14. Hate is a strong word, isn't it?

But that's how strongly they oppose him. And so they sent a delegation to prevent him from becoming king. Like the Pharisees will try to prevent Jesus by trying to have him killed later in verse 47, which is next week.

[5 : 47] But ironically, it was because Jesus was killed, because he was crucified, remember, that God raised him and exalted him to the highest place, declaring him to be the king.

And so verse 15 simply says, he was made king, however, despite all their attempts to prevent it. In other words, nothing could stop Jesus becoming king, which implies nothing will stop Jesus returning either.

I mean, if Jesus can rise from the dead, which is not normal, right? Then he can return from heaven, can't he? And when he does, he will reward his servants, verse 15 and onwards.

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 mina has earned 10 more. Well done, my good servant.

His master replied, because you have been trustworthy or faithful in a very small matter, take charge of 10 cities. The second came and said, sir, your mina has earned five more. His master answered, you take charge of five cities.

[6 : 58] Here are two servants of the king, those who already have faith in him. And so this is not about earning our salvation. And I know it's about serving in response to receiving our salvation, as we saw a couple of weeks ago.

And Jesus's point here is twofold. Firstly, all who serve him will be richly rewarded by him. For both these servants are rewarded generously with whole cities, aren't they?

Second, the more faithful our service or trustworthy, it says, the more rich our reward. And that's the difference between 10 and 5.

It's not so much about the quantity of service, but the quality of service. The number represents how much faithfulness or trustworthiness. Either way, the reward is a rich one.

I mean, one mina was worth three to four months wages. So can you imagine working for your boss and after three or four months they say, oh, well done, you've been doing a great job. Let me give you Cairns as your reward.

[8 : 04] Or Paris. Or New York. Or Monte Carlo. Or even Hobart. Of course, these cities are given to rule on behalf of the king.

He says, take charge of these cities. And so the reward really is about being gifted with more to serve him more. It's about having the honor of being entrusted with more.

When I was a primary school teacher, I sometimes had to send kids out of the classroom on errands to take something to another classroom. And when I asked for volunteers, they'd all put up their hands because they all wanted to get out of work, right?

But also because it was an honor. It was special. You got to do this kind of special thing. So here, being entrusted with this privilege is an honor.

All those servants who serve will be rewarded with great honor. And the more faithfully we serve, the even more greatly will be rewarded. But if we don't serve at all, if we don't use what he's given us at all, then perhaps we're not really servants after all.

[9 : 16] So verse 20. Then another servant came and said, Sir, here is your mina. I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. I was afraid of you because you are a hard man.

You take out what you did not put in and you reap what you did not sow. His master replied, Well, I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant. You knew, did I, 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 come back, I could have collected it with interest? Here, this third servant doesn't use his gift at all.

He claims the king is a hard man who takes and reaps what he doesn't put in or sow. And so he's afraid of what the king will do if he lost his mina.

And so he hides it away in a piece of cloth. Verse 22 sounds like then the king admits that he's a hard man. But he doesn't, actually.

[10 : 18] Notice in verse 22, the king says he will judge the servant with the servant's own words. And so the king's not admitting he is. He's just using his own words to judge him.

And so he's saying them back to him. He's saying, if you thought, if you knew I was a hard man who takes and reaps, why didn't you at least put money in the bank where it would both be safe, you wouldn't lose it, and it would earn interest so that I could reap it?

In other words, the servant's actions aren't even consistent with his claims. He claims the king reaps. And so why didn't he have something for the king to reap?

What's more, his claims aren't true either. For this king is actually a generous man, not a hard man. He gave them all a gift of four months' wages at the start, didn't he?

And then rewarded the others generously with whole cities. These are not the actions of a hard man, are they? And so it seems this servant doesn't really recognize or know this king, nor serve as a real servant of the king.

[11 : 30] He's called a wicked servant because he doesn't serve, which actually makes him a fake servant. I mean, a servant who doesn't serve, by definition, is no servant at all, right?

And so the servant loses what little he thought he had in judgment. Then he said to those standing by, take this mina away from that third servant and give it to the one who has ten minas.

So 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.

Verse 26 is a proverb, which means in this context, the more faithful we serve him with what he's given us, the more faithfulness we have, the more we'll be given or rewarded.

Which is why it's the one with ten who has given them extra mina. I mean, it sounds a bit unfair to us. He's already got ten, that's what they say. And what about the one with five?

[12 : 34] But again, the number represents faithfulness. And so the one with ten has been more faithful, so he's rewarded with more. But the one who has nothing in terms of service, doesn't serve at all, then even what he thinks he has, like a place in the king's kingdom, will be taken from him.

And so this is really a warning to those who think they're in the kingdom, but because they don't really recognize the king or serve him at all, well, what they think they have will be taken from them.

For us, it's perhaps those who call themselves Christians or servants of Christ, but they don't actually serve Christ. You know, they might, for example, turn up at Christmas and Easter because that's their tradition.

But then they don't know Christ as their king the rest of the year because they don't serve him as king the rest of the year. So they may not be a servant to start with, and they may not have the eternal life they think they have.

Last week we saw that real faith repents. Well, this week real faith serves, or real servants serve with whatever he's given us. And so what has he given us?

[13 : 55] Well, for starters, the gospel, which is a great gift, a precious pearl, as Jesus says elsewhere. And we're going to put it to work for our king, to multiply it rather than to hide it away, whether that's sharing it or supporting the proclamation of it or praying for others to believe it or encouraging one another to continue in it.

And we're going to do so also with whatever other gifts or abilities or circumstances or opportunities we've been given, which, of course, will look different for each of us.

For one person at our church, one time I asked them if they would be happy to read the Bible for us, and the blood just drained from their face. The very thought of standing up here terrified them.

I mean, I prefer to be down there too, actually. But it just terrified them. It's not where their gifts are. But I tell you what, almost every Sunday I notice them looking out for newcomers to come and say hello, to welcome them, that that new person might be encouraged to continue in the gospel or meet Jesus if they haven't already.

Or a mother at my old church had three young kids, two with learning difficulties, and a husband with chronic pain. So she didn't have much time or energy, yet she deliberately made sure she read the Bible to her kids as many nights as possible before they went to bed.

[15 : 19] Here is someone using the opportunities that they have and the gospel to encourage their kids to know Christ. Later on, when the kids were a bit older as toddlers, most Tuesday mornings she would help at our church playgroup, using the kids God gave her along with their difficulties to connect with other mums whose kids had difficulties and build relationships and introduce Jesus.

Or an elderly husband I know of, whose wife was suffering dementia, he would visit her every day of the week and play some hymns to her.

Because music is a great mnemonic, a great memory aid, isn't it? I've seen it when I've visited aged care homes myself. They can't remember names, but they remember hymns. And he did this, and her face would light up, and it would remind her of the promises she had in Christ and encourage her to keep trusting in Christ.

And then on the weekends, he didn't visit, he took the weekends to recharge and go to church himself. It's not the amount of gospel service or even the type of gospel service that matters, it's faithful gospel service.

He did that for three years. And it's worth serving faithfully, for the king will return to reward us. And to judge those who fail to serve him, and especially those who refuse to serve him, like the subjects, verse 27.

[16 : 51] Now that's pretty harsh, isn't it?

But it's kind of just because it matches the harsh language of hate back in verse 14. While the third servant fails to serve the king, fails to recognize him, he has some judgment, but those who refuse and try and prevent, it seems like they have even worse judgment.

And I wonder if this suggests that judgment in hell will vary in severity depending on the level of rejection. Like in heaven, rewards will vary in enormity.

They'll all be enormous, but they'll vary in enormity depending on the level of faithfulness. Either way, we're to recognize the king will return to reward and judge, and so serve him faithfully with whatever he's given us.

But in the parable, the king is not named, is he? I mean, we know it's Jesus. Thank you. I've got three people who don't know. Yes, excellent. We know it's Jesus, right?

[17 : 59] But Luke now makes it clear for his first readers. For what follows are people who now recognize Jesus as the king, and those who don't. So more briefly, point to verse 28.

I'm not going to read the verses now. We had it read to us before. So in verses 28 to 35, we see that Jesus is declared king, firstly, because he rides on a colt, a foal of a donkey.

Now, realize that he's not riding a colt because he doesn't like camels, right? He's riding on a colt to fulfill our first reading. Do you remember from Zechariah chapter 9?

The king comes to you riding on a what? Donkey or an occult, the foal of a donkey. You see, his mode of transportation declares him to be God's king.

You know, when you see this mode of transportation, you know who's going to be inside, right? The king. Also, when you see Jesus, after all the miracles he's done, riding on a colt, he must be the king.

[19 : 11] But he's also riding on a colt because he is a lowly, literally humble king.

He doesn't ride on a massive war horse, you know, to show off his prowess. No, no, he rides on a lowly colt because he's humble. If only our world leaders were more humble like him, right?

Yet he's still sovereign or rules over all. In fact, the next verse of our first reading said, his rule will extend from sea to sea.

That's everything. He rules over all. And we see it by the way he knows all. So, for example, in verses 28 to 32, did you remember how he knows there was a colt in the village up ahead?

Can you remember that from the reading on the screen? He knows that it's never been ridden before. How did he know? He didn't have his iPhone with a find my colt app.

[20 : 11] He just knows, right? And verse 32, they found it just as they, as he had told them right at the bottom of the screen there. He knows all.

And he directs all in verse 33 to 35. When the owners ask the disciples why they're untying the colt, they're told the Lord needs it. And so the owners let it go. No questions asked, which again is not normal, right?

I mean, imagine someone was unlocking your car and you said, what are you doing to my car? And they said, well, the Lord needs it. Do you go, okay, then the Lord didn't tell me, but somehow he told them, perhaps in a dream or perhaps by the spirit who convicted them.

Either way, Jesus directs all and he knows all. In the words of Zechariah, he rules over all, sea to sea. And yet he's not just the sovereign, he's the humble king who comes to proclaim peace to the nations.

Peace between us and God, peace between us and others, a peace our world needs and a peace it can have.

[21 : 27] If it believes in Jesus, the king who offers it to them, which it seems some do because some not only put Jesus on this colt, but in verse 36, 36, they then spread their cloaks along the road to make a kind of royal red carpet, you know, again, indicating that he's king.

Then in verse 37, they praise God for him and all the miracles they've seen. And in verse 38, they say, blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord.

In other words, they greet him as the king who comes with the Lord's approval in his name. All these actions by the people show they recognize that the king is Jesus.

Though it's not all the people. In verse 37, we are told it's just the crowd of disciples. While the Pharisees refuse to recognize him.

Verse 39, some of the Pharisees in their crowd said to Jesus, teacher, rebuke your disciples, stop them from declaring you to be the king. King. Here are those subjects in the parable who try and prevent Jesus from being the king.

[22 : 46] But like in the parable, nothing can stop him from being declared king. And so in verse 40, Jesus says, look, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out. In other words, I am going to be declared king no matter what.

But this humble king longs for a people to recognize him and receive the peace he offers them. Because he doesn't want them to face judgment.

Which is why in verse 41, when he approaches Jerusalem, he knows that they've kind of failed to recognize him. He weeps over them.

And says, if you, even you, had only known or literally recognized on this day, what or who would bring you peace.

He performed miracles. He taught, he gave them every opportunity, but they still didn't recognize him as the king. And now it's hidden from them. And the city itself will face judgment.

[23 : 50] Because verse 44, they did not recognize the time of your visitation. That is the time your king came to you. And so the first application for us this morning is, do you recognize the king is Jesus?

By trusting in him. It's may not be mattered too much. If you fail to recognize the voice of your boyfriend on their phone, when their brother answers, but it will matter if we don't recognize Jesus.

And he's worth trusting in for he only rules over all. And he's humble more than all to the point where he bled for you, took God's judgment for you.

And so do you recognize Jesus as your king? And the second application is, do we recognize the king will return from the first part of the passage and so faithfully serve him?

It's worth serving him because he's a humble king who died for us. I mean, that ought to be enough reason, wouldn't it? But then we're given the added encouragement that he will generously reward us to.

[25 : 07] I mean, don't you want to hear those words? Well done, good servant, because you've been faithful with what I've given you in this life. Come and take charge of all these cities in the next life.

Even Hobart, which is an amazing city. Let's pray. We would do that. Let's pray. Our gracious father, we thank you for the reminder of who our Lord Jesus is, a sovereign yet humble king who bled for us.

Help us, we pray, to remember that and that he will return to reward and judge, that we might continue to faithfully serve him with whatever you've given us.

Help us in this, we pray in Jesus name. Amen.