

Recognizing the King

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[0 : 00] Here we go. But I wanted to start with a question. I wonder if you've ever failed to recognize who someone is. This happened kind of to me way back when I was still at home. I remember my brother Matthew had a girlfriend whom we'll call Cassie and Cassie rang our house and back in those days we only had one phone that looked like that. Do you remember those?

Yes. Okay. All who said yes, we're old. Anyway. But that's the phone and I answered it and she failed to recognize it was me and thought it was my brother Matthew. And so she just kind of launched into telling me about her day and what was going on, which I didn't particularly care about. But I thought, well, I'll just play along. And so I asked some more questions about this or that. And she still didn't recognize who I was. And so I thought this was a bit mean, I must confess. And so I said to her, Cassie, I think we need to talk. The phone went silent and I thought, oh, no, this is a bit me. It's Andrew. I'll go and get Matthew.

And it was all over. But we can fail to recognize who someone is or even what someone does. And so I've had people say to me, oh, you're a minister. You only work Sundays, right? You garden every other day. They clearly haven't seen our garden. The point is we can fail to recognize people for who they are or what they do. And in today's passage, we see both. We see some people fail to recognize Jesus for who he is and what he'll do. And some people get it.

So at point one, which will be the longest point where people fail to recognize the king will return. So point one, verse 11. So while they were listening to this, that this refers to last week, Jesus went on to tell them a parable because he thought as because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. We're told these people following him were listening to what happened last week where he was at Zucchini's house, remember?

And he came, he said, I've come to seek and save the lost. And it seems some thought this meant he was traveling to Jerusalem to save Israel by overthrowing the Romans and establishing God's kingdom fully at once. But as we heard last week, he was actually on his way to Jerusalem to die for our sins and rise again. And to save people, not from the Romans, but from the punishment, our sins deserve to establish his kingdom partially now where people willingly live under his loving rule. He would only establish his kingdom fully when he returns, where the whole world then would live under his loving rule. And so he tells them this parable to make that point as well as how we're to live in the meantime. So verse 12, he said, a man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. And to have himself appointed is literally to receive for himself. Jesus receives a kingdom from his father because of his death and resurrection. That is, because he humbled himself to death. God exalted him to the highest place. That should ring a bell, as it says elsewhere in scripture. Declared him king, gave him all authority in heaven and on earth.

[3 : 46] That might ring bells as well, that phrase. In other words, Jesus receives a kingdom. And we can become part of that kingdom now, living under his loving rule with hope and help and part of a community belonging to a people with purpose and meaning plus every spiritual blessing or by trusting in Jesus.

But it's only after giving more people more time to do this, not to miss out on a place in his kingdom that he'll return and establish it fully on earth, where all will live under his loving rule, where there'll be no more sin or suffering, no more cyclones or disease or disaster, no more war or threats of war, which would be a welcome relief to our world, wouldn't it? But before he goes to receive a kingdom, we meet two other groups of people. Firstly, his servants in verse 13. So he called 10 of his servants and gave them 10 minas, put this money to work, he said, until I come back.

Now, one mina was worth about three to four months worth of wages, depending on how you do the maths. And so it's a pretty generous gift, right? But they to use that gift to serve him, to put it to work for him.

After all, that's what the servants do, don't they? They serve, unlike the subjects in verse 14. But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, we don't want this man to be our king.

Hate is a strong word, isn't it? But that's how strongly they oppose him, such that they try and prevent him from becoming king. Like the Pharisees who hated Jesus and later on in verse 47 next week, we'll see, look for a way to kill Jesus. That's one way to try and prevent him from being declared king.

[5 : 46] Ironically, though, it's because Jesus is killed or crucified that God raised him and exalted him and declared him he is the king. And so verse 15 puts it rather simply, despite their protests and prevention attempts, he was made king, however. Simple as that. And returned home. In other words, nothing could stop Jesus being declared king, which implies nothing will stop Jesus returning to earth again. I mean, if Jesus can rise from the dead, which is not normal, right? If he can do that, then he can return from heaven. And when he does, he will firstly reward. Verse 15. So when he returns home, he then sends for his 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 in a very small matter, trustworthy or faithful, literally in a 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. Here are two servants of the king, those who already have faith in him. And so this is not about earning our salvation. Rather, it's about serving in response to receiving salvation. Just like we've seen over the last couple of weeks, receiving the kingdom. And Jesus' point here is twofold. First, all who serve him will be richly rewarded. For both servants are rewarded generously, aren't they? They're given whole cities, actually.

And second, the more faithful our service, the more rich our reward, it seems. That's the difference between 10 and 5. It's not so much about the quantity of service. It's about the quality of service. It's about being trustworthy or faithful. That's why the 10 guy gets 10, right? The number is about faithfulness. But either way, this is a rich reward for service. I mean, one mina, remember, was worth four months' wages. So can you imagine working for your boss for four months? And the boss says, look, you've been doing a really great job. Let me give you a reward. Here's Cairns. That'd be nice, wouldn't it? No, no. How about here's Paris? Here's New York. Here's Monte Carlo. Here's Hobart.

No, maybe not Hobart. No, I'm just staring. Bull's not here, is he? Oh, of course, these cities are given to them to take charge of. That is, rule over for the king, on behalf of the king. And so the reward is about being gifted with more in order to serve the king more. It's about having the honour of being entrusted with privilege and responsibility. When I was a primary teacher, I sometimes had to send kids out of the classroom on errands to take something to another classroom and that sort of thing. And when I asked for volunteers, everyone put up their hands because they wanted to all get out of work, right?

But there's another reason. They wanted the honour. They wanted that privilege. They wanted to be special. The point is, all those servants who serve will be rewarded with great honour. And the more faithful we serve, the more greatly we'll be rewarded with honour. But if we don't serve at all, if we don't use what we've been given at all, then perhaps we're not really his servants after all.

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

[9 : 48] You take out what you did not put in and you 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 am 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 in the bank so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest? This third servant doesn't use his gift of the mina at all, does he? 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 the mina. And so he hides it away in a piece of cloth. At verse 22, sounds like the king admits that he's a hard man. But actually, I don't think he does. Because in verse 22, notice the king says, I will judge you with your own words. He's just using the servant's own words as a level of judgment, saying, well, if you're thinking this, I'll judge it by your own standards, whether it's true or not.

The king is simply repeating the servant's words back to him and saying, if you thought, if you knew in your own mind or thought I was a hard man who takes and reaps, then why didn't you at least put the money in the bank so it would be both safe, you wouldn't lose it, and it'd earn interest, give me something to reap? In other words, the servant's actions aren't even consistent with his claims. He claims the king reaps, then why didn't he get some interest for the king to reap? He doesn't even act according to his own claims, you see. What's more, his claims aren't true either. For this king is actually a generous man, not a hard man. I mean, he's given them all four months worth of wages for free. That's pretty generous, right? And then rewards others generously with whole cities.

These are not the actions of a hard man, are they? And so it seems this third servant doesn't really recognize or know the king, nor certainly serve the king. And so he's called a wicked servant because he doesn't serve at all, which really makes him a fake servant, doesn't it? I mean, a servant who doesn't serve, by definition, is not a servant, right? So this servant loses what little he thought he had in judgment. And so the king said to those standing by, take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has 10 minas. Sir, they replied, whoever these people are, he already has 10. The king 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 bit of a tricky proverb, but it means in this context, the more faithfully we serve him with what he's given us, the more we'll be rewarded, which is why the one with 10 gets the extra mina. I mean, it sounds unfair to us. He's already got 10. What about the guy with five? But remember, the numbers are about faithfulness. And so the one with 10 has been most faithful, and so he'll be most rewarded. That's how it works. But the one who has nothing in terms of service, even what he thinks he has, like a place in the king's kingdom, will be taken from him. And so it's a warning to those who think they're in the kingdom, but don't really recognize the king and don't serve him at all. It's a warning to them that they may think they're in the kingdom, but actually they're not at all. It's perhaps like those who call themselves Christians or servants of

Christ, but don't actually serve Christ. You know, they might come at Easter and Christmas time because it's their tradition, but the rest of the year, they don't acknowledge Jesus as their king at all, because they kind of forget about Jesus and certainly don't serve Jesus at all. They may think they've got eternal life, but in the end, they never had it to start with. And what they think is taken away. Last week, we saw real faith repents, or this week, real faith serves, or perhaps better, real servants serve with whatever he's given us. And so what has he given us? Well, the gospel for starters, which is a great gift, a precious pearl, as Jesus calls it elsewhere. And we're to put it to work for our king to multiply it rather than to hide it in a piece of cloth, whether that's sharing it or supporting the proclamation of it, you know, supporting missionaries or church or whatever, or praying for others to believe it, or encouraging one another to continue in it.

And we're to do so also with whatever other gifts and abilities or opportunities or circumstances he's given us, which of course will look different for each of us. For one person I know, I asked them one time, this was some time ago, to read the Bible in church. I needed a Bible reader, and the blood just drained from their face. The thought of being up front horrified them. But I noticed over time that they deliberately looked out for others at church to welcome them, that those new people might be encouraged to either meet Jesus or to continue with Jesus. Or a mother at my old church had three young kids, two with learning difficulties and a husband with chronic pain. And so she didn't have much time or energy, yet she deliberately made sure she read the Bible with her kids every night before bed to help them know Jesus. And when the kids were a bit older as toddlers, most Tuesday mornings, she would help out at our church playgroup, using the kids that God had given her along with their difficulties to connect with other mums whose kids had difficulties, to kind of share life with them.

[16:14] And over time introduced Jesus to them. Or an elderly husband I know of, whose wife was suffering dementia. He visited her each day of the week, usually in the morning, because that's when she was best, and would play hymns to her, because music is a great mnemonic. And I've seen it before, when you play hymns, people might not be able to remember your name and things like that, but the hymns with the music, they just kind of brings it all back to them. And this, the eyes of his wife would light up, she'd remember the promises she had in Christ and be encouraged to keep clinging to Christ with whatever mental capacity she had. And then on the weekends, he took off to recharge and go to church himself. He did that faithfully for three years. It's not about the amount of gospel service, or even I think the type of gospel service that matters, it's that it's faithful gospel service with whatever he's given us. And so perhaps we could ask ourselves, how am I serving the king with what he's given me?

Because it's worth serving faithfully. The king will return to reward us and to judge those who fail to serve him, and especially those who refuse to recognize him like the subjects, verse 27.

Those who hated him, those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them, he says, bring them here and kill them in front of me. And that sounds pretty harsh, doesn't it? It's pretty full on. And yet it's just because these are the same ones that hated him, which was also harsh and strong, wasn't it? And I wonder if it suggests just by the by that judgment in hell will vary in severity depending on the level of rejection. You know, the servants who fail to serve are still judged, but not as harshly, it seems, as the subjects who hated the king. Perhaps like in heaven, rewards will vary in enormity, that will still 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. I mean, you know who the king represents, right? Can someone just tell me, just so I know you're with me, starts with Gs, ends with us.

Thank you, Fiona, I have one person that's a star person. No, Jesus, yep. But Luke now makes it clear to his first readers. And so what follows is the reading that we had where people, some recognize him as king and some don't. Because we've read it, I'm just going to move quickly through it and just highlight some points as we go. So verses 28 and following, Jesus is declared to be the king, firstly, by riding a colt.

You see, he doesn't choose to ride a colt in these verses because he hates camels, right? It's to fulfill our first reading from Zechariah, where it says, see, your king comes to you riding on a what?

[19:37] Yeah, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. You see, his mode of transportation, if you like, declares that he is king. When you see this mode of transportation, you know the person inside is the king, right? The king of England. Well, after all the miracles he's done, when they see Jesus riding on a colt, you're meant to know that he is the king of God's kingdom. But he's also riding on a colt to show that he is a lowly or humble king. He doesn't ride on a massive war horse with chariots, but a lowly baby donkey to show that he's lowly in attitude, humble in character. If only our world leaders were more humble like him, right? And yet, he's not just humble, he's sovereign or rules over all. And so the next verse of our first reading talks about him ruling from sea to sea. I mean, that's all, everywhere, everything. And we see his sovereign rule over all by the way he knows all. And so verses 28 to 32, did you remember how he knows there's a colt in the village up ahead that's never been ridden before? How did he know that? He didn't have an app on his iPhone called Find My Colt, right?

He just knows. And verse 32, at the bottom of the screen, they found it just as he had told them. He knows all. Plus, Jesus directs all. And so in verses 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. That's not really normal. I mean, imagine someone unlocking your car. And you say, what are you doing with my car? And they say, well, the Lord needs it. Do you then go for it? No, no, I'd be saying, well, the Lord told me nothing about it. But somehow he told them, whether in a dream or perhaps the spirit convicted them, we don't know. Either way, the Lord Jesus directs all and knows all. In the words of our first reading, his rule extends over all, sea to sea. And what's even more than that? He proclaims peace to the nations, peace between us and God, peace between us and others, a peace our world needs now desperately and can actually have if they recognize that the King is Jesus. Believe in him, which it seems some do. Not only by putting Jesus on this colt, but in verse 36, by putting their cloaks on the road, making a kind of royal red carpet if you like. And then in verse 37, they praise God for him and his miracles. And in verse 38, they declare, blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord. In other words, they greet Jesus as the King with the God's approval. You know, he comes in God's name. All these actions by the people show they recognize that the King is Jesus. Though it's not all people.

Verse 37, it says it's the crowd of disciples who recognize him. While in verse 39, the Pharisees refuse to recognize him. They actually tell Jesus, look, tell your disciples to stop calling you the King. The Pharisees are like the subjects in the parable who try and prevent Jesus receiving a kingdom. They're trying to stop Jesus being declared the King here. But also like the parable, nothing can stop Jesus being declared King. So verse 40, Jesus says, well, look, if the disciples stop, even the stones are going to cry out because nothing will stop me being declared the King.

But this humble King longs for people to recognize him and receive the peace he offers them. He doesn't want people to face judgment for their sin. In fact, he weeps over the thought of it. And so in verse 41, we seize Jerusalem. Instead of our first reading rejoicing with the disciples, they've failed to recognize Jesus despite all the miracles. And so he weeps over them and says, if the people in the city only knew or literally recognized what or who brings you peace. You had your chance, you saw the miracles, you heard my teaching, but now because you failed to do it or refuse to do it, it's hidden from you. And you'll face judgment because of it. And the judgment there is probably referring to when the Romans sacked the city of Jerusalem 40 years later. But either way, it's because verse 44, they did not recognize the time of their visitation by the King. And so the first application for us this morning is really, do you recognize the King is Jesus by trusting in him? It may not be, may not matter too much if you don't recognize the voice of your boyfriend's brother when you phone their house. But I tell you what, it matters if you don't recognize that Jesus is the King who saves.

And by recognize, I mean trust in him for without this, we have no peace in life or in eternity. It's worth trusting him because he rules over all, but he's humble more than all to the point he bled for you. Took your judgment for you. And so do you recognize him as King? And for us who do, then it's what we've seen already in the first part of our passage today. Do we recognize the King will return so faithfully serve him? Knowing again that it's worth it. In fact, it's worth serving a humble King who died for us regardless, isn't it? I mean, should not his death for us be enough to serve him?

[26 : 03] But the added encouragement is he will generously reward us too. I mean, don't you want to hear those words? Well done, good servant. You've been faithful with what I've given you in this life.

Come and have the honor of taking charge of these cities in the next life. Even if it's Hobart. No, Hobart's a fantastic city. Why don't we pray though, that we would serve our King while we wait for his return. Let's pray.

Our gracious Father, we thank you for the reminder this morning that Jesus is the King who is sovereign and humble to the point of dying for us at a cross to save us from sin. And we thank you also that this King will return to both reward and judge. And so help us, we pray, to faithfully serve him with whatever he's given us, that the gospel may be multiplied through us for the sake of our King Jesus. We ask it in his name. Amen.