

“For I Was Afraid...”

Luke 19:11-27; 2 Timothy 1:1-7

Study Questions

25 August 2024

Read Luke 19:11-27

1. According to verse 11 what were the reasons Jesus told this parable at this time? *Because they were nearing Jerusalem as Passover (the celebration of their liberation from Egyptian slavery) approached, throughout his ministry Jesus had been preaching the advent of the new kingdom, and in the story of Zacchaeus immediately preceding our reading, Jesus had said “Today salvation has come to this house,” a phrase loaded with messianic significance.*

2. When the king returned, how did he commend the servants who turned a profit (vs. 17) & what does that imply about the purpose of the exercise? *“You have been faithful” rather than productive or profitable. What the king was looking for was for those who were willing to be about the business of that Kingdom, readily identifying with that Kingdom in the face of a world that was hostile to the king and the kingdom - before the Kingdom was fully established. These servants believed that the King would receive his kingdom and that the work they were doing would be a part of that kingdom once it was fully established. They had faith so they were faithful.*

3. What is the key contrast in our story? *It is between faithfulness on the one hand, and fear on the other. The faithful servants took what was given them and went about the business of the coming Kingdom in the face of genuine hostility, confident that the King would return and the Kingdom be fully established. The one who did nothing with what was given him was stopped, by his own admission, by fear.*

4. What kind of fears might limit our ability to go about the business of the coming Kingdom? You may or may not wish to share this part, but what fears limit you in your Kingdom calling and purpose? *Do we fear God? A harsh and judgmental God, or a distant God unconcerned with our troubles? Or maybe that he never will return to establish the Kingdom. Do we fear the world? Either its opposition to us or simply by the sheer magnitude of the chaos, violence, hate & death with which we are confronted on a daily basis? Do we fear our own darkest desires? Do we have fears based on a model of scarcity? If I give anything away will there be enough for me? Do we fear making a mistake, looking the fool?*

Read 2 Timothy 1:1-7

5. Many of our fears leave us feeling powerless, perhaps even a victim. What does Paul’s counsel to Timothy tell us about how to overcome the “spirit of fear”?

- a. What kind of “power” is Paul talking about?

The power is the power of the Spirit in our lives. This is a spiritual matter about which we speak.

- b. What is the nature of this love? How is it effective in our lives?

6. *The love is God’s love - Agape. 1 John 4:18: “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.” It is effective in our lives as we are able and willing first to receive God’s love for us, into all the nooks and crannies of our inner being and then to extend that love to all those entrusted to our care. We are never powerless because we can always love those around us.*

- a. How do we learn self-control when it comes to our thoughts? You might want to look at 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 as well.

Self control is one of the manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit. As followers of Jesus we have the authority and responsibility to become increasingly self-controlled in all areas of our lives. In this context in particular, the self-control is in reference to our thoughts. We are meant to learn to be in control of what we think about, what thoughts we entertain. So we can learn to discern the negative, destructive and fearful patterns of thought that can seem at times to come unbidden upon us and we can reject those fear inducing patterns in the name of Jesus and the power of the Spirit. And we can consciously choose to think about something different. As the Apostle Paul nears the end of his letter to the Philippians he encourages them - and us - with the words: “Finally, sisters and brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

7. In the sermon James asked a question for ongoing reflection and it might be a good place to end. “As followers of Jesus, each one of us is given a life of indeterminate but definitely finite duration; in that life we’re given abilities, material resources and spiritual gifts with which to go about the business of the coming Kingdom. How are we doing at this stage of our discipleship? In what ways and with what resources are we faithful?”