

God won't judge people, he loves them. God is only going to hold us accountable for doing the best we can. Thoughts like those cross the mind of many different people each day. People buy into it because it makes them feel better or at least okay about their life. They don't concentrate so much on their failings if they think God isn't going to judge them. They want to believe we're actually doing the best we can and that'll be enough for God.

But that's not true. Its true God loves. But nowhere does it say love excludes judgment. It's also true God will judge. Yet people come up with so many wrong ideas about judgment from God on the Last Day. It won't be that big of deal; God will only judge us according to our ability. It isn't going to happen; judgment day is just something religious people make up to keep others in line. Others think they'll be able to pull off a deal to stay out of harm's way, as if God will negotiate.

This day is coming. The people of Jesus' day knew this day was coming. In fact they thought it was about to happen. Except they were confused about exactly what it meant. So Jesus told them a story to help them understand. Of course when Jesus tells a story we all learn a lesson. So it is with the gospel for today. An important lesson is learned.

**Last Judgment is surely coming  
With punishment for the wicked  
With rewards of grace for the faithful**

In a well managed classroom the teacher can step out briefly and things inside won't fall apart. Gethsemane's classrooms are well behaved when the teachers leave for whatever reason; at least most of the time. The class knows to do their schoolwork or sit quietly because the teacher is coming back. The nobleman from Jesus' story was leaving for a time to be made king. Like the teacher he would return. While he was gone the servants had their orders. Each was given a mina, three months wages, and one command, **"Put this money to work until I come back."**

Of course when the teacher does walk out there's the potential for bad things to happen. Bad behavior is addressed when the teacher gets back with punishment. While the master was away the servants reacted differently. When the king returned he came to find out what his money had accomplished while he was gone. **"He sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it."** Gain was anticipated, the amount of gain was not. The first two who came forward were eager to tell him what they had earned. **"Sir, your mina has earned ten more. Sir, your mina has earned five more."** They recognized the master's gracious invitation and so they recognized whose money it was. They properly gave credit to whom it belonged.

One servant came forward with something wrapped in the folds of a towel. It was the mina he had hidden away. Immediately he let the excuses fly. **"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 reap what you did not sow."** Listen carefully, it sounds like he's blaming the master. He had nothing to show for his time with the money. He had nothing to show even though he seemed to be afraid of the master and what he might do if he didn't earn anything. In anger and punishment the master took the mina away from the wicked servant.

It's time to admit, if you haven't already, that judgment is coming. It's coming and we have been given a mina. We each have the same, just like the servants. We've received the gospel and a command, put this to work until I return. But how realistic is it that Jesus will demand to know what we've done with the gospel? We don't have to so concerned with actually putting it to use? Telling our children the Bible stories, sharing Jesus with a friend in need, forgiving others as we have been forgiven, surely these won't be judged? God's pressure is too much sometimes; his threats too strong. But these are excuses. Jesus judges us by our own inaction. **"I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away."**

Once the teacher is back it's too late. Once the king was there it was too late. Once Jesus returns it will be too late to do anything with what he's given us. Our time to use the gospel is now. Now is when we need to hear about the Savior that's far off today, but will soon be very near. He is in heaven today being made king because of what he accomplished. Giving his life for ours makes him worthy of being called our king. Now is the time to believe in Jesus. We have everything we need. Using the strength he provides we can get to work.

Judgment Day is a scary thought for many people. Either they're thinking they don't want the end of this world to come too quickly because they still have things they want to do or they're thinking that God is finally coming to get them. For those kinds of people Judgment Day is something scary and something to worry about. But for us it isn't that at all. For us who are faithful to God's Word, for us who hear and believe God's Word are going to be rewarded on the Last Day. For us there will be a reward of grace.

When someone gives an offering to this church they are entrusting their money to us to put to general use. But if someone wants to know exactly what their offering is going for they might designate it for a special purpose. We prove faithful if we use that money accordingly. The two servants who came forward with more than they were given were considered faithful. They took the money entrusted to them by someone else and put it to use just like they were told. What they earned wasn't theirs because the money wasn't theirs to begin with. The original money was a gracious gift as was the money they earned. Now the king showed just how gracious he was. **"Well done my good servant! Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities."**

There's inherent danger in knowing we're part of the faithful. There's always danger that we're going to be ripe for Satan to target with his lies. "You've earned a night off. Let loose on Friday and Saturday nights. You work hard the other five. Today was a good day. That's payback for all those bad ones. Doesn't God owe you heaven? After all you have proven worthy by plenty of times not going along with the crowd when you totally could have."

Don't buy into the lies. Know the truth. Your master, the king, gave you gifts out of pure grace. And it's pure grace that he turns to you and says, "***Well done my good servant!***" It's pure grace based in something we know well. Our faithfulness was buried with Christ in his faithfulness. He faithfully made the payment in his blood that forgave our mistaken notions about the judgment to come. A payment that washed away any of the times we let the devil lie to us and we believed him. In a twist we didn't imagine Jesus switched spots with us so that we would be seen by God as faithful. Now rewards of grace pour out from God to you. Rewards you couldn't earn because they wouldn't be grace. Rewards that God could only give to you as gifts. Rewards that flow from the mighty hand of the one who saved you.

Judgment Day is coming soon. A terrifying thought to anyone who has been hiding their talents and treasures. Horrible to even think about for those that are rejecting Jesus today. But Judgment Day's coming doesn't scare us. We know who it is that returns. We know we're looking for our king, Jesus Christ. And we know we're working with his resources to do what he's asked us to do. Judgment Day holds no fear for those who are faithful. On that day, the day we're saved for good, we'll receive the final reward of God's grace.