

God's Gracious Provision
Luke 19:28-35

A question as we begin our study of these words of scripture today . . . as you get up and head off to work each morning, do you sometimes, perhaps often, feel uncertainty, even fear, welling up within your heart and mind as you consider all the many difficult tasks that are awaiting you in your workplace?

I confess to you that for much of my working life I encountered those feelings, often on a daily basis. And why would that be?

It's because, for reasons I will probably never know or understand until I get to heaven, during most all of my years of employment, especially as a banker and then as a Business Manager for the ministry at French Camp, the Lord saw fit to place me within positions of management that, based on the usual industry standards, I was probably not qualified to do.

Yes, I did all that was required of me, and I am told that I did it well. But all the while, I knew that there were many other men and women who were far more qualified to do the work than me. And isn't the same often true for most of us as our Lord places us where He wants us to be.

And yes again, when I would pause to consider the responsibilities and requirements that lay in front of me each day, "fear" would sometimes seep in and begin to take control.

But thanks be to God, He would seem to turn my attention away from those "mountains of responsibility" to the work that needed to be done, and I would just get about it, completing it and then moving on.

And again yes, "fear", in all its many forms has been present within much of my life. But thanks be to God, He has been so very gracious to me, reaching into my circumstances and giving me the confidence and abilities that I needed for each occasion and effort.

For many people, as they work and as they involve themselves in all the many activities and circumstances of their day, "fear" can often be a powerful adversary, influencing, even controlling many of the opportunities and behaviors that take place.

And while yes, “fear” is psychological trauma that can “well up” within us personally, “fear” can also very often be more than that. “Fear” can work its way into our souls from the outside as a clever weapon used by the world, the flesh and the devil.

And while the secular psychologists can sometimes give some excellent suggestions as to how we are to work with and overcome those fears, for me, looking back over all the many years and my many circumstances, it was only the presence and the comforting guidance of the Lord that quelled my fears and brought any success that I might have achieved.

Today, as we consider these precious words of scripture given to us by the Lord Jesus, I'd like for us to consider the manner in which those “fears”, in all their many forms are able to very subtly insert themselves into the way that we think and the way that we go about many of the ordinary activities of our daily lives. And how they often impact our abilities and rob us of what might otherwise have been joy-filled and carefree daily lives.

And in particular, I'd like for us to consider where we have “fixed our eyes” during all that is taking place within our circumstances.

And as we consider these examples that our Lord Jesus presents to us here in this parable, I want us to see two of the everyday elements that seem to reinforce the subtle nature of those fears that rise up within us. First, the smallness of our provision, and secondly, the insignificance of who we perceive ourselves to be.

Let's pause and again read portions of today's passage and then we will talk about them. First, these words from the Parable of the Minas given in Luke chapter 19 . . . verse 12,

¹² . . . “A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. ¹³ Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Engage in business until I come.’ ¹⁴ But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to reign over us.’ ¹⁵ When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business. ¹⁶ The first came before him, saying, ‘Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.’ ¹⁷ And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant!

Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.' ¹⁸ And the second came, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made five minas.' ¹⁹ And he said to him, 'And you are to be over five cities.' ²⁰ Then another came, saying, 'Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief; ²¹ for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man. You take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.' ²² He said to him, 'I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? ²³ Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?' ²⁴ And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.' ²⁵ And they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten minas!' ²⁶ 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ²⁷ But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.' " (Luke 19:12-27)

And then continuing on in verse 28,

²⁸ And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹ When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰ saying, "Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say this: 'The Lord has need of it.' " (Luke 19:28-31)

In this Parable of the Minas that we have been studying, the third servant said that he was afraid and his fear guided his behavior.

As we said a moment ago, "fear" is such a clever weapon in the hands of the world, the flesh and the devil.

Because of its subtle nature, fear has the ability to interpose itself into our personality and into our thought processes in such crafty ways that we really are not able to recognize it for what it really is.

And again, two of the favorite weapons that "fear" is able to use within you and me, to rob us of what might otherwise be joy-filled and worry-free daily lives is

firstly, the “smallness of our provision” and then secondly, the seeming “insignificance of who we are”.

But God has given you and me a weapon of our own, one that, if applied rightly, can overcome all of the fiery darts of fear in whatever manner they might manifest themselves. And that weapon is “faith”, “faith”!

May I repeat some of the things that I have been saying over the past few studies, especially about “faith” and about how “faith” should be our stronghold in times of “fear”.

Recall that faith is the “substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen”! Faith believes that beneath the surface of the natural reality around us, God is at work, carrying out His plans and His purposes.

May I say those words again because it is so important that we understand and believe them to be true. Faith believes that beneath the surface of the natural reality around us, God is at work, carrying out His plans and His purposes.

Dear Christian, do you believe that to be true? You should, and you must, because faith can, if it be strong enough, give us special “spiritual eyes” to see on beyond all those many obstacles that try to ensnare us and keep us from God’s plans and purposes.

I love the words of encouragement given in Hebrews chapter twelve. There, God tells us

¹ Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2)

These weights and these snares that God speaks about here in these words very often have as one of their means of enabling, some form and measure of “fear”. Yes, sometimes it is the kind of fear that involves physical harm, and so we keep the doors of our house locked and we don’t venture into dangerous neighborhoods.

But much more than those kinds of fears, is the kind of fear that simply keeps the question revolving around in our mind, “can I handle this matter in front of me”, “can I do this thing”? Can I, with my meager finances, my size, my education, my position in life, can I do the task that lies in front of me?

These two scriptural contexts that we are examining here today, the Parable of the Minas and the useful purpose of a donkey colt, present us with the dilemma of things small and insignificant, similar in their comparison to many other things that are common to us in our daily lives, things that cause us to question, “can I take the small and insignificant provision that I have and can I use it to do mighty things to bless and to glorify God? Or will I be fearful? Will I see only the smallness and the insignificant nature of my provision and simply give up and go on about my own daily business as usual and forfeit the opportunity to “be about the business of our heavenly Father”?

In this Parable of the Minas that we have been studying for the past couple of weeks, the Master gave only a small amount of money, one mina, to ten of His servants and He instructed them to “do business with it” until He returned, a truly small and insignificant provision.

And then here, just a few days after He had spoken this parable, Jesus was continuing on towards the City of Jerusalem, and on towards the final days of His life and ministry on the earth. And, instead of choosing a grand chariot drawn by strong and powerful steeds for His entrance into Jerusalem, He chose an insignificant donkey to be His transport.

Too often, as we read words such as these in the scriptures, our minds are so intent on what we consider to be the “bigger points” that we pass right on by these seemingly lesser points. But we must not allow ourselves to do that. These words are intentional and purposeful.

Remember again the passage in 2 Timothy that we read often concerning these scriptures, that,

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man (or woman) of God may be competent, (fully) equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

These words have a promise rooted within them, a promise, that if, and as, we obey and follow the precious and powerful words of scripture, we will surely be competent and fully equipped to do any task that our Lord places in front of us.

And also, they reveal to us that an animal as insignificant as a donkey can have the grand privilege of carrying on his back the very creator and God of the universe.

And they also declare to us that a small amount of money in the hands of a trustworthy servant can be multiplied many times over.

And also, though we be insignificant in ourselves, if we remain faithful, diligent and trustworthy, we can achieve things otherwise unimaginable . . . the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.

Here, in this Parable of the Minas, when the Master returned and received a report from the first two servants, He blessed and rewarded their diligent efforts.

And then later, as He was preparing to enter Jerusalem, Jesus said regarding the use of this insignificant donkey colt,

³¹ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say this: 'The Lord has need of it.' " (Luke 19:31)

As I have looked back over the many years of my life, and considered the kind of wisdom that I have used within my daily opportunities and encounters, especially as it relates to my business career, I must confess, my wisdom has been mostly what these scriptures call, "the wisdom of this world".

In my position as the Resource Director, seeking to find and hire the best employees, I evaluated so many, many resumes and applications for employment.

And the value points that flowed through my mind often had to do with levels of education and personal achievement. I valued and counted those things highly.

And yes, often, a position did require a certain level of education, especially when hiring teachers to teach our students at French Camp. Our teachers are required to have certifications in their particular area of teaching.

And yes, were we to be speaking about a doctor, or a tax accountant, or an electrician, we really would want them to be well trained in their profession.

But beyond my consideration of the necessity for the basic requirements of education, training and experience, a sin often ensnared me, the sin of measuring people and their possible effectiveness by standards devised by the world. I often found myself placing a higher value upon those people who were highly educated or gave evidence of high achievements in past performance, which, by the way, was really very contradictory when compared to my own personal levels of education and achievement.

Both in my banking career and in my years of work at French Camp, I directed and managed people and business transactions well beyond my own educational enablement. Unbeknownst to many that I worked with and supervised, I had far less education and training than many of them.

But always, in the back of my mind, I knew it. And I confess that I would often battle with “fears of failure”. In my days as a banker, I was required to rub shoulders with highly educated, wealthy and successful business customers and Board members, a world filled with giants. But I, myself, was small and I was insignificant.

In many ways, my provision was much smaller than that “one mina”, and I was certainly no smarter than that donkey colt. If I allowed myself time to think, fear would ebb up within me. So, part of my survival kit was simply not allowing myself time to think about it.

Thankfully, it was during those early days of my banking career that God drew me to Himself in salvation. And slowly, I began to realize that I had not really been alone in my struggles to survive in that land of giants. But rather, throughout every step of the way, God had been enabling my senses and my knowledge and my abilities, to the extent that things often turned out phenomenally well, far beyond my expectations. As these scriptures word it, “He enabled the works of my hands”.

And consider all the many people and things that Jesus “had need of” as He ministered here on earth, beginning with this donkey colt, a lowly and unintelligent animal. And then on to the disciples that He chose, mostly

uneducated and certainly inadequate in themselves for the ministry they were called to carry forward.

And yes, Jesus did also call very intelligent and influential people, tax collectors and Pharisees and centurions and servant supporters like Mary and Martha.

But in reality, their wealth and their position in life, were not of big concern to Jesus. He knew that He Himself would be the one to give them all the equipping that they would need to fulfill the purpose that He was calling them to do.

As for this donkey, this little animal would not be asked to speak or to do anything else of noticeable significance. His task was simply to carry the Lord Jesus on his back as He entered into the beginning of His great triumph over sin and over the world, the flesh and the devil.

What a humble calling! No speaking, no singing, no bible teaching, no preaching, no acclaim or applause. Yes, the people would show adulation and praise and worship, but only for the Man on the donkey's back, nothing for the donkey.

May I declare to you and to me that that donkey's calling and purpose was one of the greatest and highest of honor? And that we ought also to aspire to such a calling and purpose, a lowly position, one where no one would even know our names.

Yes, they would know the name of the Man who rode on our back, but not ours.

It is a position that would not require the "wisdom of the world", no degrees, no titles after our names, no published papers in some academic or scientific journal, not even a building or a park named after us.

Folks, what I am describing for us is the one character quality that Jesus not only chose for Himself, it was actually the very foundation of who He was, "humility", "humility". Yes, He was the Lord of Glory, the one who at the beginning of time simply spoke and all the worlds came into being. But He chose for Himself the role of a lowly and humble servant. He had no earthly education to brag about, no degrees, no seminary training. He owned nothing, and desired nothing.

He gave up His regal majesty in heaven to come to earth, to ride on a donkey to His suffering and to His death on the cross, for one purpose, to provide salvation for lowly and sinful creatures like you and me.

And that ought to convince you and me that though we be lowly, and untrained, uneducated and unimportant by the world's standards, we have value and importance beyond anything we could ever hope or imagine.

And the lesson from these scriptures is this, that we must not love this world, neither the demands that it makes upon us. Nor any of its foolish value systems that renders every person either envious of others or else causes us to live lives filled with feelings of fear and of inadequacy.

We really do not need the world's lofty positions, its titles and its plaques on the wall. We are instead to be comfortable with the calling and the provision that God has placed upon our lives, His "gifts", His calling and His provision is all that we will ever need.

And again, if our calling be one that is no higher than the calling of a donkey, how blessed we will be for joyfully accepting it, to hear the words said of us, "The Lord has need of you", "well done my good and faithful servant".

May we close with these words from 2nd Timothy,

⁶ . . . I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you . . . ⁷ for God gave us a spirit, not of fear, but of power and love and self-control.
(2 Timothy 1:6-7)

Pray with me.