Thanks be to God for all He is.

*Sing praise to the Lord, you His godly ones, And give thanks to His holy name.*

 Psalm 30:4

With Thanksgiving coming up, it is a good time to consider how much God is worthy of being thanked.

We tend to focus on ourselves, and so, we thank God for all His blessings. We thank Him for all the good gifts He has given us and we thank Him for His provision. We thank Him for the comforts we have in life and we thank Him for bringing us through the tough times and the obstacles we face. It is good to thank Him for all these things and we ought to do so.

We thank God for salvation in Jesus Christ. By Jesus’ work on the cross the price of our sins are paid for. By His work we have access to the throne of God; we can approach Him in prayer. Jesus has made it so that we are adopted sons and daughters of God and we can call Him Father. These are also things that it is good for us to thank Him for.

But because He is God, we must also focus on Him. As the Psalm says, “*Give thanks to His holy name*.” He is worthy to be given thanks simply for who He is; for His power; for His glory; for His holiness; for all His attributes.

It is difficult, but it is best for us to take our eyes off ourselves and look to God. Just contemplate His magnificence. And thank Him for it.

In Christ’s love

John

 11-20-22

Luke 19:11-27

We have considered this parable of Jesus in the past. The main point of the parable is that Jesus is the nobleman and the slaves He leaves with work to do are Christians. We see this because the slave who did nothing with his mina was rebuked but was not cast into outer darkness. He was still part of the Kingdom but he received no reward. Each slave was given an equal amount to work with. I believe that the mina represents the Gospel. All Christians have the Gospel equally and the duty to spread it. Spreading the Gospel increases the Master’s holdings and some of our heavenly reward will be based on what we do to increase the Kingdom.

With the coming season of Advent and Christmas, I wanted to focus on another part of this parable. Advent is a time to celebrate both the past and the future coming of Christ. Christmas, of course, celebrates the birth of our Saviour, Jesus. This is when God became a man, just as the Old Testament said He would.

We have to be careful that we don’t read too much into parables. They are generalized stories that get a point or two across. So, they don’t tend to have a hidden meaning behind each and every word. At the same time, we don’t want to miss anything either. With that in mind, in this parable, we see hints of the presence of, and future return of, Jesus the King.

It is obvious to us that Jesus is the nobleman mentioned in verse 12. He did not come to earth as a man to obtain a Kingdom. He came here to preach the Gospel and make salvation possible for mankind. So, we know that Jesus hasn’t left a distant country, heaven, in order to come here and receive a Kingdom. He is indicating that He must leave the earth at some time in the future.

It is important to understand that Jesus was physically there when He told this parable. The first coming of Jesus to this world manifested as a man had already occurred. Mary gave birth to Him as a human baby and He grew into an adult. In adulthood, He carried out His ministry.

This is the first advent, the first coming of Jesus to His people. We celebrate the day of His birth and call it Christmas. The Bible is clear that Jesus would make His first appearance as a suffering servant to the people of the world. He served us by suffering for our sins. He took the punishment that we deserve in order that God’s justice would be satisfied, so we could be forgiven.

In Isaiah 7:14, we hear a prophecy from the Lord God: *Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.* Immanuel means “God with us”, and that is exactly what we have in Jesus. While Jesus is fully man, He is also fully God. We have to understand that He is not half and half, but complete in both Godhood and manhood. This is a mystery for us, we cannot comprehend how this can be. But that is a demonstration of God’s power. He is far above us in all things. And it is wonderful that we can come to Him through Christ and call Him Father.

While the Old Testament prophesied that the Saviour would come; the New Testament testifies that He has come. John 1:14 says, “*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.*”

The Word is the word of God. When God speaks to us He reveals to us who He is; and Jesus is the revelation of God. To know Jesus is to know God. We are told specifically that He became flesh, which means He had a human body. Jesus became a human-being just as we are. He also dwelt among us; in other words, He lived a life here on earth and interacted with people because He is a person.

At the same time, some of His apostles were able to have a glimpse of His Godhood. Jesus was transfigured before them so that His brightness and power were displayed. The wording is important here: the only begotten. Although Adam and the angels are called sons of God, they are called that because they were created by Him. The nation of Israel is called sons of God because God chose them as His special people. We Christians are called sons of God because we are adopted by Him through Jesus.

But Jesus is the only *begotten* Son of God. Jesus was not created. God the Son existed in eternity past with the Father and the Holy Spirit. God the Son was manifested as Jesus, yet the manifestation took place as a begetting. By supernatural means; by the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit; Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary. This is beyond our ability to grasp; but God Himself is beyond our ability to grasp; which is why He is worthy of worship from us.

Later in the New Testament, Paul tells us in the words of 1 Timothy 3:16, “*By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness:*

*He who was revealed in the flesh,
Was vindicated in the Spirit,
Seen by angels,
Proclaimed among the nations,
Believed on in the world,
Taken up in glory.”*

What took place with Jesus is a great mystery for us. God became a man so the we could see Him. The works He performed by the Holy Spirit testified as to who He was. He was seen by angels because He started off in heaven. By the time Paul wrote this, Jesus had been proclaimed and believed on in much of the known world. This knowledge continues to increase today. Jesus was taken up in glory. His disciples watched Him rise into the clouds as He went back to His Father in heaven.

Or we might say that this nobleman went to a distant country. And the Bible tells us that Jesus currently resides in heaven, but He is waiting for the time that God has chosen to give Him a Kingdom.

The God-man Jesus has come, preached the Gospel, defeated death and satan, and made a way for us to be saved if we choose to take it. But He has many enemies. As verse 14 of Luke chapter 19 says, “*But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to reign over us.’*” Obviously, no delegation is going to heaven to stand before God and voice their opposition to Christ reigning over the earth. But there are many who do not want Him to.

John 1:11 says, “*He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.*” Moses testified that God would raise up a prophet like himself from among them and that the people of Israel were to listen to Him. But these people rejected Him instead. Jesus Himself said that the road was broad that leads to destruction and many will follow it. Psalm 2:1-3 talks about the nations and governments of the world seeking to rid themselves of Jesus and of God.

*Why are the nations in an uproar
And the peoples devising a vain thing?
The kings of the earth take their stand
And the rulers take counsel together
Against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying,
“Let us tear their fetters apart
And cast away their cords from us!”*

We can see this throughout the world. People want to control their own destiny and refuse to believe in absolute truth. They try to break away from the “cords” of truth and righteousness. Governments are making more laws that support these ideas. It is a shame, because it is the truth that will set one free. To deny the truth and rule one’s own life, led by one’s own desires, only leads to bondage. And that is bondage to a cruel taskmaster: satan.

Nonetheless, the world, such as it is, does not want to be ruled by Christ. However, here in verse 15 it says, “*When he returned, after receiving the kingdom*”. The nobleman, Jesus, does receive the Kingdom. Again in Psalm 2, verses 7-9 God speaks with Jesus:

*“I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord:
He said to Me, ‘You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance,
And the very ends of the earth as Your possession.
‘You shall break them with a rod of iron,
You shall shatter them like earthenware.’”*

God does rule, no matter what any person wants to hear. And Jesus will receive this world as His Kingdom. God has ordained it and He has been kind enough to let us know; it will be so much better for we who go ahead and accept Christ as our King now, instead of waiting until we have no choice and come under that rod of iron.

God has made a specific promise to Jesus as to when He will receive His Kingdom. In Psalm 110:1 King David prophesies: *The Lord says to my Lord: “Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.*” This is what Yahweh says to Jesus. Jesus is to stay at the place of honor in heaven until the time for His enemies’ rebellion comes to an end. At that time, they will be utterly defeated by almighty God and submit to Christ’s authority.

Notice also in Luke verse 15 it says, “*When he returned*”. The nobleman came back, and He came back as King. Jesus is coming back. When He comes back it will not be as a baby in a manger. The second advent of Christ will be in power and in glory. Everyone will know it. He will be King and He will set up His Kingdom on this earth. He will be holding that “rod of iron” mentioned earlier.

It is so important for the Christian to understand that Jesus was not simply a man who died and that was the end. Jesus died, but He was raised from the dead and He ascended into heaven. That’s where He is now. Jesus is still a man, but He exists now as we who believe in Him will one day exist. Jesus is alive and He will live forever and He is coming back to this earth to gather His church and rule His Kingdom. Jesus Himself said, “*I go away, and I will come to you.*” He is coming back and like the nobleman’s slaves, we must be ready.

So, as with the nobleman in the parable; we see that Jesus came to the earth and lived here. He really existed and He has those who belong to Him; those called slaves in the parable. He did leave this earth to go to a distant land; but He will have a Kingdom granted to Him there. He will come back to this earth, and when He does, He will have the full authority of a sovereign King and He will reign over His Kingdom.

But lastly, we must consider verse 27. It’s easy to gloss over this verse as a dramatic ending to the parable. But it is a mistake to do so. It reads, “*But these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence.*” This is harsh and unsavory to us. Does this apply to Jesus?

The answer is very straight forward in Revelation chapter 19. Verse 11 speaks of His return: *And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.* Then in verse 15 it says: *From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.*

In the Old Testament we see how much our almighty God loves His people. He wants to do them good; He wants to bless them. He is kind and gracious to them. But this same God is a warrior who will pour out His wrath when the time comes. As we considered earlier, Jesus is God. He is kind and loving, gracious and gentle; He wants to care for His people. But when the time comes, He will distribute the wrath of God in absolute justice.

Be sure you are a servant of Jesus now. Accept Him as your Saviour. When He comes back, it will be too late. Jesus will be good to His servants. Those who do the work He has for them will be rewarded in His coming Kingdom. Even those who are poor servants might receive shame but will not be subject to wrath. But woe to those who reject the rule of King Jesus. They will bear the full punishment for their rebellion.

Prayer

King Jesus, we Your people pay homage to You now. We recognize You as the only Saviour and the rightful ruler of the world. We take heed to Your words: *Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!* We take refuge in You, knowing that You are a strong tower; that You are the sturdy foundation.

We ask for the constant help of the Holy Spirit. May we not be ashamed of our work when You return. It is our desire to be good and faithful servants of our Lord, Jesus. There are so many on that broad path that leads to destruction. Help us to be faithful in using that Gospel message You have left us with, so that when You return, we have increase to offer You.

We profess that You came to this earth manifested as a man, so that You could carry out the saving work of the Father. You became the perfect sacrifice to atone for our sins. You were resurrected and ascended into heaven where You continue to intercede for us as High Priest. You will come again in glory, as righteous and rightful King. We await Your coming.

It is in the mighty name of Jesus we pray

Amen