

WHERE THE HEART IS

THE RISING // DARK

Luke 19:11-27 // Craig Smith

April 04, 2017

I BELIEVE IN CHRISTIANITY AS I BELIEVE THAT THE SUN HAS RISEN, NOT ONLY BECAUSE I SEE IT BUT BECAUSE BY IT I SEE EVERYTHING ELSE. - C.S. LEWIS

CRAIG: Good morning. Welcome to Mission Hills and week number two of our six-part Easter series. We actually have three stages to the series, there's dark, dawn and day. We're kind of in the middle of the dark. Because as we follow along in the Gospel of Luke in the key events that led to the crucifixion, what we see is that the crowds who used to be chanting and cheering for Jesus kinda turn on him a little bit. As we saw last week, the crowds that used to be cheering are now grumbling about Jesus particularly because of his mission. They were happy with what he had to offer them but not so happy with who else he was willing to offer it to.

But as we continue on this week in the Gospel of Luke and, in fact, if you want to go and start turning to Luke chapter 19, what we're gonna see this morning is that it's not just that storm clouds are gathering because the crowds are unhappy with Jesus, Jesus is actually not so happy with the crowds. And we're really begin to see that intensify this morning. So, we're gonna pick up in Luke 19:11. Where Luke says this, "While they were listening to this, He went on to tell them a parable because He was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once." Couple of things there first, just notice how closely connected this piece is to what we saw last week. Luke says, "While they were listening to this." In other words, the crowds had grumbled about Jesus because He was willing to hang out with somebody like Zacchaeus and Jesus has said, "Hey, he's the reason I'm here, I came to seek and to save the lost."

And now Luke says, while they were listening to this, while they were kind of processing His understanding of His own mission He went on to tell them this. They're closely connected, it's the same crowd it's the same setting. Luke also tells us exactly why He told this particular parable, He says He told it because the people believed or people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once, that it was going to appear instantly. That's the reason why He told this particular parable.

Now, if you're not familiar with the kingdom of God it bears a little bit of sort of kind of pushing into it so we make sure we're on the same page. Jesus loved to talk about the kingdom of God. In fact, He talked about the kingdom of God more than He talked about anything else. What exactly is the kingdom of God? Well, just think about what any kingdom is. I mean in a very real sense a kingdom is the place, the territory where a king reigns, right? It's the place where a king's authority is recognized and respected that's what a kingdom is, a place where the king's authority is recognized and respected.

And the kingdom of God is no different, it's the territory where God's authority is recognized and respected. Now, that was supposed to be all creation, that was the original plan, that was Plan A. The thing is that when Adam and Eve rebelled when they rejected and resisted God's authority and decided we will be the ones who called the shots, the kingdom of God essentially disappeared from earth. There was not a territory in creation where God's authority was recognized and respected.

But God doesn't have plan B, I don't know if you've ever heard that before but you need to understand it. There's no plan B in God's economy. God was not surprised by the wrinkle we introduced and so His plan from the beginning has been the plan that He's been on ever since that, which is to reestablish and bring creation to the point where all of creation is a place where God's authority is recognized and respected. But what He's chosen to do is He's chosen to do it by stages, He started small. He called a man named Abraham and Abraham, when he was given a revelation of who God was, Abraham began to recognize and respect God's authority.



So, the kingdom of God began to dawn again in creation and Abraham gave rise to the 12 tribes of Israel, larger territory where they recognized and respected the authority of God. And the 12 tribes gave rise to the nation of Israel, the territory where God's authority was recognized and respected. And scripture is very clear, there is a day coming when all of creation will once again recognize and respect the authority of God.

And what Luke is telling us is that the Jewish people thought they were at the last stage. They had thought there was only one more step for that. They thought that there was gonna be a Messiah, a king who would come and he would take up a sword, he would defeat Israel's enemies and then he would establish a kingdom, not only there in Israel in Palestine but really around the world. And God's authority would once again be universally recognized and respected. They thought that was the next stage. And what Jesus is saying is, "It's not." The kingdom of God is still in process, there's still another stage to go.

And in this stage, what Jesus is trying to help them understand is in this stage, Jesus isn't fighting His enemies with the sword. He's buying His people with the sacrifice, that's what the stage is all about. It's to find the lost and to purchase them back from sin and death and darkness with the sacrifice of His own body, His own blood. He's not fighting His enemies with the sword, He's buying His people with the sacrifice. That's the stage we're in and that's the reason He told this parable because they didn't understand that.

And on some level their inability to understand where the kingdom of God was in its process, was what was creating this misalignment between Jesus's mission and their's. This is the reason the storm clouds are gathering. He tells in this parable to basically invite them to reflect on a question which is, "How are we supposed to respond while we wait for that final stage? How are we supposed to live here and now in this stage of the kingdom's coming so that we're ready for that last stage when it finally does burst on the scene once and for all" and so he told this parable.

Now, if you're not familiar with the word parable, don't let it trip you up. A parable is just a story that teaches spiritual truth, okay? It uses everyday language to talk about non everyday things, bigger things. And probably the key to interpreting parables is to look for the lesson that's intended to be associated with each of the main characters. That's probably the key to interpreting parables, look for the lesson associated with each main character. And Luke describes that Jesus went on to tell them exactly what the characters were as he starts. He says this, "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. And so he called ten of his servants and he gave them ten minas," that's one mina a piece. "Put this money to work he said until I come back."

But his subjects hated him and they sent a delegation after him to say, "We don't want this man to be our king." So, there's our main characters, you see them. We've got a king, we've got some supportive servants and we've got some rebellious subjects, those are the three main groups of characters. And it doesn't take a Bible scholar to make some immediate connection, some obvious connections between those characters in some of the circumstances that Jesus is speaking the story into. When we see the king, we're supposed to understand something about Jesus. There's some lesson associated with the king that tells us about Jesus. And the supportive servants, there's a lesson there that's connected to the people who claim to be followers of Jesus, his disciples. And when we see the rebellious subjects, there's some connection there, there's some lesson to be learned there that relates to the grumbling crowds.

So, the question is what exactly are each of these lessons? And he begins with the supportive servants. "He was made king, however, and he returned home and then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money in order to find out what they had gained with it. And the first one came and said, "Sir, your mina has earned 10 more." "Well done my good servant" his master replied. Because you've been trustworthy in a very small matter, I want you to take charge of 10 cities. The second came and said "Sir, your mina has earned five more." And his master answered, "You take charge of five cities." And then another servant came and the servant said, "Sir, here's your mina back, I've kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. I was afraid of you because



you're a hard man, you take out what you did not put in and you reap what you did not sow."

So, his master replied, "Okay, I'm gonna judge you by your own words you wicked servant. You knew did you that I'm a hard man, taking out what I do not put in and reaping what I did not sow. Why then didn't you at least put my money on deposit so that when I came back, I could've collected it with interest?" And then he said to those standing by, "Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas. " But sir," they said, "he already has 10." And he replied that, "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." A couple of observations that I think will help us to zero in on what truth he's speaking to us who claim to be followers of Jesus.

Observation number one is, did you notice that he said that there were 10 servants that were each given a mina? He called 10 servants and he gave each one of them a mina, but we only get details about three. Why is that? Well, 10 is a nice round number, basically it's the same as saying he called his servants to him. We only get descriptions about three because three is enough to illustrate the principles, three is enough to help us understand how the king is gonna respond, okay? But the reason he mentions 10 upfront is because he wants us to make sure that we don't make the mistake of thinking that he only called in an elite group of servants or only a very small and select group of servants, 10 is a round number.

And spiritually speaking, what Jesus is saying is this, is that Jesus has made an investment in each of us. He's made an investment in each of us. So if it were only those three, we'd be tempted to go, "Okay, Jesus makes investments in people but it's only special people. It's only, you know, it's only pastors or missionaries or elders or, you know, super spiritual people. Those are the ones that Jesus makes an investment in," but that's not the point Jesus was making. The point is that He makes an investment in all of those who call themselves His servants, His followers. Jesus has made an investment in you, if you're here today and you consider yourself a follower of Jesus, understand He hasn't just saved you, He's also made an investment in you.

Second observation is that a mina is not chump change. This mina that he's investing, that's a basically three months wages for a first century person, three months wages, that's not insignificant. And the spiritual point of this is that Jesus has made a significant investment in each of us. He's made an investment in you and He's made a significant investment in you, it's not small. And we struggle with that because we have a tendency to play the comparison game, right? We tend to look at some person's gifts or whatever, you know, ability or talent or gift that they have and we go, "Well yeah, I mean they're this...that's a great gift, that's a great investment Jesus made in them but, you know, I don't have that. Like that person's a teacher but, you know, I have the gift of hospitality." And they just don't even compare, and you need to understand that's not how Jesus sees it at all. Jesus does not go, "Teaching, that's a great investment but hospitality, that's a minor investment." No, he's made a significant investment in each of us, they're different, but there's no difference in their significance as far as Jesus is concerned.

Paul, writing to the church of Corinth says that, "There are different gifts, different kinds of gifts but there is one spirit who distributes them" and the spirit doesn't distribute junk. The spirit does not gift anybody with worthlessness. We're supposed to make sure that we avoid this temptation of comparing whatever gift or talent or ability or resource that God's invested in us with other people and think that there's more or less significance to it. No, he's invested in each of us a significant investment.

Third thing that we need to notice is that it's an investment, it's not a gift. When the king comes back, what does he want to know? He wants to know what the return on his investment was. He wants to know what happened when they leveraged it. And it's very obvious that the two servants who were able to say, "Yeah, I leveraged your investment and here's a return for it." They delight the king, he's thrilled with it. The one servant who says, "Yeah, I hid it away," that he didn't leverage the investment, the king is not happy with. The first two receive praise, the second receives a rebuke and a discipline.

Spiritually, what we're supposed to understand is, Jesus has made a significant investment in each of us that we are expected to put to work while we wait, you hear me? Jesus has made a significant investment in you. He actually made multiple significant investments in you and you are expected to put those to work while you wait for His return for the kingdom's final coming. And there's a day coming when you're gonna be called to account. There's a day coming when I'm gonna stand before Him and He's



gonna go, “I invested this and this and this in you, what’d you do with it?”

And what we need to understand, fourth observation is this: This investment that Jesus has made in us, this investment this king makes in his servants, it’s really a test of faithfulness. It’s not a test of their financial wizardry, okay? He’s not trying to find out which ones of them are able to pick the best investments and make the most money back. No, no it’s a test of faithfulness. The point is, “I gave you this to do this with, did you do it? Did you use the gift for what I intended it be used for? Did you use it in spiritual terms to bring me glory and to bring people good?” It’s a test of faithfulness. The two are praised because they were faithful which is why he says not only, “Well done, I mean you leveraged it, that’s great but I’m gonna forget money, forget money, let’s move away from that. I’m gonna put you in charge of cities, I’m gonna give you greater responsibility.” Why? Because they had proven that they were faithful servants.

Don’t get caught up in the numbers. He’s not saying that the greater your return from my investment means the greater response, that’s not the point at all. The point is that faithfulness is rewarded and faithlessness is disciplined. To the one who hid it away he said, “You got nothing.” You notice that he said that, “Those that have, more will be given and those who have nothing, it’ll be taken away.” Have what? And the answer is faithfulness. To those who have faithfulness, even more responsibility will be given, even more investment in what we’ve made. For those who are faithless with the gifts that I’ve given, even those gifts will be taken away. You noticed, he wasn’t kicked out, that servant wasn’t kicked out of the house. He wasn’t sent off to the streets to beg, but he clearly experienced something different than the other two did at the king’s return.

And I think spiritually speaking, what we’re supposed to understand is this, that our faithfulness while we wait, will impact our experience when the King returns. Does that make sense? That our faithfulness while we wait for Jesus to come back will impact our experience when He comes back. There’s really two options, there’s the moment when we stand in front of Jesus and we go, “I see that you invested this and this and this in me, here’s what I did for your sake.” And Jesus snatches it up and goes, “Well done.”

In fact I suspect, I suspect that, you know, that we’re gonna focus on, you know, “I leveraged what you gave me and accomplished this and this and this” and Jesus goes, “You’ve got no idea. That’s only the stuff you saw, you saw this return but you did not see how your faithfulness in leveraging the investment I made in you actually reverberated around the world, that reverberated throughout eternity. Let me pull back the curtain, why don’t you come over here. You think that was return on your investment, let me show you what else. Let me show you these people, that were touched in ways that you would never have dreamed, but would never have happened if you hadn’t made that attempt to leverage the investment I made in you. You think you had a return, you have no idea.”

And our experience of that is going to be joy. We’re gonna be, “I was excited to give you what I got, I had no idea” but that he goes, “Yeah, well done.” On the other hand, if a response when He returns is, “I hid what you gave me. I tucked it away and kept it quiet and kept it nice and safe.” His response is gonna be, “That’s not why I gave it to you. It’s not why I gave you that gift, it’s not why I gave you those resources, it’s not why I gave you that ability or that talent.” And our experience at that point is not going to be joy, there’s gonna be sorrow in that and I think we’ll get passed it.

But the point is that our faithfulness while we wait will impact our experience when the King returns. Which I think makes it really important that we ask the question, what went wrong with this other servant? What kept him from leveraging the investment that had been made in him? And he says it pretty clearly, doesn’t he? He says, “I was afraid, I was afraid of you.” Which is interesting to me because he says, “I was afraid of you because you’re a hard man.” And yet that’s not really the evidence we get here, is it? I mean this guy seems pretty generous, doesn’t he? I mean not only made a significant investment in each of his servants, but when he calls them back in those are able to say, “Yeah, I saw this return and that return.” He delights, he praises them and he gives them even greater responsibility, he didn’t have to do any of that. This guy didn’t strike me as a hard man but here we had the servant going, “Yeah, I was afraid of you because you’re a hard man.” In other words, I’d say his fear was misplaced, he was afraid of the wrong thing.



And here's an interesting truth that we need to wrestle with. What we fear determines how we act. I mean, have you ever thought about it in those terms? But it's true, what we fear determines how we act. Think about it like this, it's a baseball game and you're up to bat. You're ready and the pitch is coming and it's coming in fast, what do you do? The answer is it depends on what you're afraid of. See, if you look around and you say, "Oh, there's a big crowd watching, I could really screw this up and they're gonna laugh at me." And if you're afraid of what the crowd thinks, you're not gonna swing at all, you're gonna pretend like, "That wasn't a very good pitch, I'll wait for the next one." And you're gonna keep on not swinging until your turn of bat is over and you're walking back to the dugout muttering about the pitcher because you're afraid of the crowd.

On the other hand, if you're afraid of disappointing your coach whose been giving you some instruction on how to do this well or if you're afraid of missing out on an opportunity you have, you're gonna swing and you're gonna swing hard. And you know what, you might look silly, "I'm missing the gene that connects baseball bats to balls coming at me." Like my first reaction is to drink back when I do swing, I'll be honest, I kind of know in my head what it's supposed to look like, here's what I actually look like. Like, the back foot is not supposed to come around like that I'm pretty sure, I look kind of silly."

And if my fear is my crowd's impression of me, I'm not gonna do that. But if my fear is missing an opportunity, I'm gonna swing and I'm gonna swing hard. And you know what, here's the thing, you've probably heard this truth before. We miss 100% of the pitches that we don't swing at. But if you swing, if you swing you might just hit one out of the park that you never thought would have been possible. Here's the thing, God wants us to swing. God is pitching us opportunities to leverage the gifts, the talents, the abilities, the resources that He's invested in us. He's pitching opportunities for us to swing, He expects us to swing.

I don't mean swing at every pitch, but swing at some of them. Here think about this, if God's invested finances, if God's given you access to significant finances, He expects you to leverage those finances with generosity. If God invested an ability to teach, He expects you to leverage that by finding opportunities to teach. If He's leveraged the ability to do web design, He expects you to leverage that in a way that brings him glory and people good. If He's invested in you the gift of hospitality, He expects you to be hospitable. If He's invested in you the gift of serving, He expects you to leverage it by serving. It doesn't mean that every single opportunity that comes along, if you get the gift of generosity, it doesn't mean that every single time you see those people at the off ramp that you stop and give them money.

It doesn't mean you answer every single letter where somebody says, "I'm going on a mission trip and I need money." It doesn't mean that you swing at every single opportunity but it does mean that you got to swing at some of them. Because the faithfulness that God is looking for, the faithfulness that Jesus calls us to...Listen, faithfulness is the daily choice to walk the line between foolishness and fear. Foolishness is we swing at every opportunity, we take every chance. Jesus himself said, "That's not what I'm calling you to, I want you to count the cost before you build the tower. I want you to consider what you're doing but I don't want to live in fear." Don't be a fool but don't be somebody who lives in fear. Faithfulness is demonstrated in that daily choice to walk that line between foolishness and fear.

So, my question to you this morning is this, what fear is keeping you from leveraging the investment that He's put in you? And honestly, it's not right to talk about the investment. Jesus has made many significant investments in you, they are spiritual gifts, ways that the Holy Spirit shows up through you, everyone of us has one of those, He expects you to leverage it. There are abilities, skills that you have, He expects you to leverage those skills. There are resources He's put in your life, He expects you to leverage those resources.

The reality is that most Christians, it's not that we swing at too many pitches, it's not that we live foolishly. The reality is that most of us live fearfully. We're too afraid to swing at the pitches that we're given. And God called us to walk that fine line and so I think we have to identify, what fear is driving me? What fear is determining how I act that's keeping me from leveraging in these investments that Jesus has put into me, these significant investments that Jesus has put into me. And honestly that would be a good place to stop because that's a question worth wrestling with for the rest of the week, isn't it?



Because it's by a lot of different fears that start to come to mind that we need to kind of...we need to deal with. And take control of and figure out should I really be driven by this fear? That would be a great place to just stop but I can't because Jesus didn't stop there, there's still another group that this parable addresses. In verse 27 He says this, "But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them, bring them here and kill them in front of me. And after Jesus had said this he went on ahead going up to Jerusalem." Anybody else uncomfortable? Yeah, I think you should be. This is a total mic drop moment here, isn't it? I mean it's like the original mic drop moment. I mean picture the scene here right, He's been talking to the crowd about His mission to seek and save the lost. And He's been talking about His willingness to hang out with Zacchaeus because that's the very reason He came. They're grumbling about it, they're frustrated with them. And maybe the conversation among themselves, maybe the grumbings sound a little bit like this, "What's this guy doing? You know, this is really disappointing. I really thought this might be the one. I really thought this Jesus guy might be the king we've been waiting for. But you know what, if He's gonna hang out with people like that, if He's gonna be that kind of king, I don't want him to be my king. And it's into that situation Jesus shares some stuff with His disciples. And then He turns and He looks at the crowd and He says, "And you know what that king did when He got back to those people who didn't want him to be king? He hauled them in the streets and murdered them, see ya." He just walks away.

Okay, let me help you out here. Jesus isn't making this whole story up. In fact, a lot of the elements that He's involved in the story that He's telling were actually very familiar to the people already. A few years earlier, most of this had been done by a man named Archelaus. Archelaus was a man of noble birth as Jesus describes this king. Archelaus was the son of Herod the Great. You may remember Herod the Great as the man who tried to murder baby Jesus. Archelaus was his son. Now Herod was not a king, he was more of a governor which meant that his sons weren't kings, but Archelaus really, really wanted the title of king.

And so, he actually went to Rome to petition them to be named king over of this area of Palestine. And the Jewish people hated Archelaus and for good reason. So, they sent a delegation after him to try to convince Rome to not make this man the king. Archelaus is not what we would call a patient and gracious man and his response to that delegation was violent, to the people that knew this part of the story. And what we need to understand is that Jesus isn't saying, "I'm gonna do the same thing that Archelaus did." He's reminding them of the truth that they need to take seriously and the truth is basically that when people rebel against the authorities placed over them, there are consequences.

He's not saying, "I'm gonna murder people in the streets," that's not His point. His point is you already know what I'm saying, you already know what I'm talking about. You know what happens, you've seen it, you've experienced it. When people rebel against the authorities placed over them, it does not go well, there are consequences. What He's doing is He's pleading with them to not walk that road with Him. Now, it's not gonna end up in exactly the same actions. But this idea that there are serious consequences for rebelling against authority placed over you, He says, "You've got to pay attention to this. Do not forget this lesson that you learned the really hard way and don't make the same mistake with me."

What He's saying is basically this, "I am a king." You know, His similarity to Archelaus had nothing to do with their cruelty but there were certain points of similarity. He said, "I'm going away, I'm gonna die and I'm gonna rise and then I'm gonna be gone for a little while. But I'm coming back and when I come back, choices are kind of off the table. When I come back in my full glory, when the kingdom of God is made universal, it's kind of too late. So, now is the time that you get to make your decision. You're not happy with the kind of king that I am, the kind of people I hang out with? It doesn't change the fact that I'm king and you know what happens when you rebel against the kings that have been placed over you. Don't make that mistake again, don't walk that road again."

But you understand that their rebellion against Him centered around His mission, His mission to the lost is exactly what they were rebelling against and that's where He says, "Watch what you're doing, look at what you're doing. Do you not see the road that you're walking?" What He's really saying is this, He's saying that to rebel against Jesus' mission is really to rebel against God himself. These people are longing for the kingdom of God to be reestablished, to have that final stage where the kingdom of



God, the authority of God, is recognized and respected everywhere. And what He's saying is, "You do not want that yet because that's not how you're living now." When that happens, if you are not in a place of alignment with God's mission which you're seeing demonstrated through me, there are going to be consequences.

Now, you know my hope is that not many of us fit into that category. There's not many of us here who would play the part of the rebellious servant. But you know it's interesting how often we tend to read something like that and go, "Oh yeah, yeah, the rebellious servants or the rebellious subjects, he's talking about non Christians. He's talking about people who haven't received Jesus, you know what, people outside the church, that's the one's that's are gonna have these consequences. And it's true when Jesus returns, if they have not submitted to his authority, there are gonna be consequences.

But you notice Jesus is talking to a crowd of people who thought they were God's people. He's talking to a crowd of people who said, "Yeah, we're all for the king, just not that kind of king." And it's to those people that Jesus says, "You might need to wake up. You may not be as anxious for the king's return as you think you are because you're not in alignment with the king in the way that you like to think that you are." Which I think even as believers we have to wrestle with, we have to go, "Am I on board with Jesus' mission because if I'm not, on what basis do I say I'm one of his loyal servants?"

Hopefully that doesn't strike too many of us to the quick, but certainly this other lesson that we learn is something that none of us can walk out of here without wrestling with. That if we're gonna call ourselves his servants, we have to understand that He's made investments in us, not gifts, investments. And maybe more than anything else, what we have to walk out of here wrestling with is this idea that Jesus expects us to leverage the investments He's made in us. Jesus expects us to leverage the investments He's made in us, again, making us look at it. You have investments made in you, spiritual gifts, abilities, talents, resources and He expects you to leverage those investments. And there's a day coming when He's gonna want to see the return on the investment He made. And that day will either be a day of tremendous joy or sadness and I think even whether it's sadness, we'll get passed it. But let's not shoot for sadness, let's shoot for rejoicing.

So let me give you three steps I think that will help us to begin to live in light of what He's called us to. Step number one, identify your investment. Identify your investment and I'm specifically talking about one investment. The reality is He's made lots of them, but I want you right now to identify one investment God has made in you, a spiritual gift you're aware of, an ability you have, a resource that God's placed in your life. I want you to identify one of those investments. And the reason I say one is because when we think about all the investments, chances are we're not doing anything with any of them.

So, let's just narrow it and let's get really practical, let's think about one investment. In fact, let's take 10 seconds here and let's ask God to bring to each of our minds one thing that He wants us to focus on. "God would you please bring to our mind that one of many investments that you've made in us that you're calling us to concentrate on today and in the coming days, amen." Maybe, you've gotten something, don't worry about whether it's the right one. If it's an investment and it came to mind, go ahead and write it down, jot it down in some way and remember it, okay? That's the one we're gonna work with.

Step number two, you need to ask God how He wants you to leverage it? Start asking God how He wants you to leverage it. And I want you to dream big, okay? Don't go for, "I'm hoping to have a little return on the investment." I want you to shoot for the moon, okay? I mean if you feel like I have a gift of teaching, I feel like God's given me a gift of teaching, great. I want you to imagine teaching tens of thousands of people. And we imagine that when Jesus returns you're able to go, "I was able to leverage the investment you gave, I was able to teach tens of thousands of people how to understand your word better and to see what you're calling them to do and to put it into practice in their lives, 10,000, think that.

If your gift is generosity, I don't want you to think little return. I want you to dream big. I want you to imagine...because you're able to give hundreds of thousands of dollars that build orphanages or hospitals in places where they're needed. And people get to hear the good news because they're loved in practical ways which opens their road to the gospel. I want you to imagine that hundreds of thousands of people are impacted by your generosity, that's what I want you to dream about. I want you to dream



big.

If you paint, I want you to imagine painting in such a way that people come to see your showings. And they ask you what's going on in this picture and you go, "Well, there's some good news in that picture" and you begin to unpack the gospel in a way that grabs them in some way. And you understand what I'm saying, I don't want you to dream small. I want you to take whatever that small thing is, that investment, and I want you to dream big.

And then step number three is I want you to commit to a small discipline that will take you in the right direction. If you try to imagine what it's gonna look like for me to speak to 10,000 or to give millions so that I can build orphanages, you never gonna get there. Listen, small steps in the right direction take us to undreamed of destinations. Commit to one small step that you're gonna do daily in the right direction. If you believe that you have a gift of teaching, then what I want you to do is to commit to something like, "I'm gonna read the Bible every single day so I find my way around God's word and I'm gonna write down a few sentences about how I would explain what I read to somebody who doesn't know the Bible as well and I'm gonna do that every day. It may be only take me five minutes, 10 minutes but it's a small step in the right direction." And God will begin to give you more opportunity from that.

If your gift is generosity, then I want you to make a commitment that you're going to give something away every day. A small amount, small steps in the right direction because if you imagine what it would look like to write a check for millions even if you have it, you're probably not ready for that. But commit to a small step every day that takes you in the right direction. If you have the gift of hospitality, I don't know, commit to dusting the guest room every day. Okay, that's a terrible example.

How about if you have a guest room and you feel that call to the hospital, how about if you put fresh flowers in that guest room every day. In anticipation of the moment that God brings somebody who's in desperate need of that but I don't know, I'm making this stuff up. I hope the spirit's leading, I'm never quite sure. But you understand what I'm saying, commit to a small discipline that takes you in the right direction and see where you end up. Because you have a king who's coming back, you have a king whose made an investment in you that He wants to do great things through.

Not so that he can judge the quality or the quantity of your return, but so that he can say to you, "Hold on, you were faithful and that's all I was looking for." "Jesus, thank you that you not only love us but you trust us. You made investments in us in so many ways. And thank you that we have the privilege of leveraging these investments you've made for your glory and for people's good. Not just in this place in these walls but in the world, outside of the territory where your authority is recognized and respected. But by our leveraging the investments you've put in us, it may be that they come to understand your authority, to recognize and respect it. And not just your authority, your love and your hope and your grace. And Lord, no matter what else we might focus on, we have all been given an investment of grace.

So Lord, make us people who leverage grace into others lives. We look forward to that day that we lay it all at your feet in anticipation, in confidence that you'll smile, maybe even a little bit of a sly smile. Because we think we're able to give this great return and yet you're ready to tell us about all the return on our investment that we didn't even know about yet that reverberates throughout all of eternity.

So Lord, speak to us about our one investment that we're supposed to be focused on. Give us the courage to dream big for what you want to do is we leverage it. Give us clarity about that one small discipline, that one small step that we're gonna take daily that takes us on that road to your feet where we lay it all before you and see your glorious smile. It's for your glory and it's in your name. Amen.

