Old Tom's Mina

So, He said, "A nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself and then return. And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas and said to them, 'Do business with this until I come back.'" (Luke 19:12–13, NASB)

On the wall in my bedroom is a large, framed photograph of Old Tom Morris at St. Andrews. In the photograph, Morris is in a wool suit—hey, Peter Millar had not even been born yet—club in hand, prepared to hit a bunker shot. In the distance, the iconic Royal and Ancient Clubhouse appears faintly in the fog.

When I bought the photograph, I knew little about Old Tom Morris beyond his four Open championships, that he was the head pro at St. Andrews, and that he was the father of Young Tom Morris. I bought it because it reminded me of St. Andrews. I've since learned there is more to the man.

Morris apparently read the Bible every day, was an elder in his local church, and even represented the Presbytery of St Andrews at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

By all accounts, he was a man who loved and was deeply devoted to God. But it wasn't just these things that demonstrated his faithfulness to God.

By the standards Christians sometimes use, Morris's work may not have seemed particularly important. He wasn't a theologian. He wasn't a missionary. He hadn't been given a church to lead. Instead, he was entrusted with a golf course and a game still in its infancy.

In the Parable of the Minas, the master entrusted ten servants each with a mina and told them to do business with it until he returned. A mina was worth approximately 100 days' wages.

When the master returned, he called each servant to give an account of what they had done with what they had been entrusted with. How well they had done determined how much authority they were given in their master's new kingdom.

What's interesting is that the master calls the responsibility he gave each servant "a very little thing" compared with the reward for handling it well. Three months' wages were not insignificant, but the mina's true value lay not in what it could purchase, but in what faithfulness with it could produce.

Tom Morris was given a primitive golf course and a nascent game—his mina. But Morris didn't just punch a clock as the greenskeeper; he developed new maintenance practices that transformed the

quality of the course. He even closed the course to golfers on Sunday. Like man, the course needed one day a week to rest and regenerate. That practice continues to this day.

Morris also became a clubmaker, ballmaker, and course designer. He was given responsibility over one course, but he designed or remodeled approximately seventy-five courses throughout the British Isles, many of which are still played today.

He advanced golf course architecture through strategic hole routing and placement of hazards. He set golf on the modern trajectory we all know today.

Morris did all this while suffering the tragedies of life in a fallen world. His son Tommy died at the age of 24, and his wife and three other children also preceded him in death.

They say a parent should never have to bury a child—Old Tom buried four of them. Yet Morris kept doing business with the mina God entrusted to him. He worked until the day he died, at 86 years of age.

The Master entrusts different things to different servants. The question isn't whether what He entrusted to us looks important. The question is what we do with it. Old Tom Morris did well with what he was given.

So, now when I look at the photograph on my bedroom wall, I no longer just see St. Andrews or a major champion. I see a faithful servant of King Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be faithful with what you have entrusted to me. Amen.

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Scott Fiddler
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