

Works vs. Grace

Parable of the Workers of the Vineyard

Matthew 20:1-16

- "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise.

Matthew 20:1-16

- And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, "Why have you been standing here idle all day?" They said to him, "Because no one hired us." He said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive." "So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, "Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first."

Matthew 20:1-16

- And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, saying, "These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day."

Matthew 20:1-16

- But he answered one of them and said, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen."

Parallel to the Kingdom of Heaven

- **1** "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.
- Why did he go early in the morning?



The early bird...

- God calls us from the very beginning of our lives to follow and obey Him.
- He went to the designated place where workers wait to be hired.
- God calls those that have made themselves available to Him.

Agreed to a wage

- 2 Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.
- They negotiated a wage that was fair



Finds Idle workers

- 3 And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,
- Why did he go out again to look for more workers?

Whatever is right

- 4 and said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you." So they went.
- What is the right wage?



More workers called

- 5 Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise.
- Was more work needed?
- What was the aim of the landowner?

Eleventh hour workers

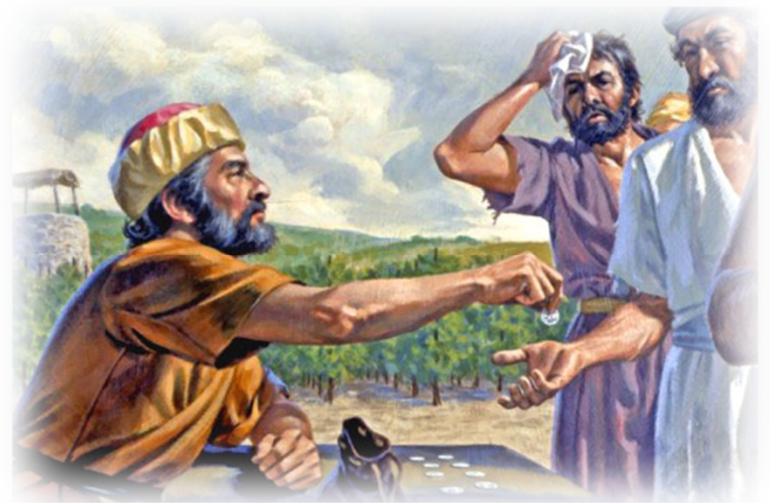
- **6-7** And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, "Why have you been standing here idle all day?" They said to him, "Because no one hired us." He said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive."

Too little too late?

- Landowner
 - The eleventh hour is at the end of the day! Is there any work left?
 - No mention of wage...they were thrilled to get anything at all.
- Workers
 - Maybe no one wanted to hire them.
 - Maybe not the most skilled or motivated group.
 - Maybe they wasted the whole day
 - Had a lot of faith

Clocking out

- 8 "So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, "Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.'
- What do you think was in the mind of the workers?



Last were paid first

- 9 And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius.
- Wanted to send a message to the morning workers



A denarius for all

- **10-12** But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, saying, "These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day."
- Should the morning workers be upset?
- More works means better pay, only if you are getting rewarded for works.



Landowner responds

- **13** But he answered one of them and said, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?"
- He paid them the agreed negotiated rate.

Landowner responds again

- **14-15** Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?'

Second Reality Check

- Why were the workers upset that the others were paid the same? In the end they got their pay.
 - They were jealous that the others got a free ride.
 - They felt like their work was not correctly appreciated by the landowner. (Similar attitude to that of the prodigal son's brother)

First will be last

- **16** So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen."
- What does this have to do with salvation? Whose salvation is in question here?



Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard [Codex aureus Epternacensis]

Uh oh

- Those who started work from the first hour could actually lose their salvation!?
- Weren't they most responsible and endured to the end?
- They lacked love for their brothers. They felt they were righteous and deserved the reward... (prodigal son)

Overview

- God was not interested in the work of the workers. The story does not go into any detail about the nature of the work or how much work there was.
- The landowner throughout the day called workers even when there was barely any time for them to work. Clearly he did not need to workers.
- Also he took ALL the workers that were standing idle each time. He didn't examine them to see which was able-bodied or had the skills he needed.

Overview

- He wanted to bless all of them.
- The workers from the beginning felt that their reward was based on the quality and amount of their work. That they were earning their wage.
- The landowner had a completely different agenda. He wanted to reward those who were ready, even those that came late in the day and did not “deserve” the wage of the early workers.
- The owner loved the workers, but the workers did not all love one another. They felt they were in competition.

What does this parable teach us?

- We cannot earn our salvation by works
- Those that come to Christ late in life are just as accepted.
- No envy when God blesses others
- God searches the heart. He is not interested in the outward appearances of service.

God's Grace

- **Luke 17:10** - So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'"
- **1 Corinthians 4:7** - For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

What we should pray for

- Doxology of the Great Fast
 - Make me like the publican, who has sinned against You, You had compassion upon him, and forgave him his sins.
 - Make me like the adulteress, whom You have redeemed, You have saved and rescued her, for she pleased You.
 - Make me like the thief, who was crucified upon Your right-hand, he confessed to You, and likewise said.

Conclusion

- If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where shall I, the sinner, appear? **The burden and heat of the day I did not endure because of the weakness of my humanity.** But, O merciful God, **count me with the fellows of the eleventh hour.** For, behold, in iniquities I was conceived, and in sins my mother bore me. Therefore, **I do not dare to lift up my eyes to Heaven;** but rather, I rely on the abundance of Your mercy and love for mankind, crying out and saying, **“God, forgive me, a sinner, and have mercy on me.”**