

The Kingdom Parable: The Workers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16)

“But many who are first will be last,
and the last first.” (19:30)

*“For the kingdom of heaven is like a
landowner . . . to hire men to work in his
vineyard. . . .”* (20:1-15)

“So the last will be first, and the first will be
last.” (20:16)

Introduction: Is God/Life Unfair?

- Kingdom Values: Christ vs. Culture
 - Divorce and the Rich Young Man (19:1-26)
- Grace and Reward in the Kingdom (19: 27-30)
- Peter: “Behold, we have left everything and followed you! What then will there be for us?” (19:27)
- Jesus’ Response (19:28-30): Yes, But
- Salvation and Rewards □ Faith and Works?
 - By God’s Sovereign “Grace” Alone (Greatness of Childlike Humility and Trust)

Laborers in the Vineyard (1-7)

- Opening the Parable of the Kingdom (1-2)
 - Sunrise-Sunset (6am-6pm 12 hour = 3 hour*4)
 - “Early in the morning” Workers [one denarius]
- 3rd; 6th & 9th hour Workers (3-5a, 5)
 - 9am; 12 noon & 3pm => “whatever is right”
 - “standing in the marketplace doing nothing”
- 11th hour [5pm] Workers (6-7)
 - Why idle all day? => “Because no one has hired us”

Evening Payouts/Rewards (8-15)

- “When evening came” (8)
- 11th hour workers => 1/12 denarius?! (9)
- 1st hour workers’ expectation (10) and grumbling against the owner (11-12)
- The Wonderful Answer (13-15)
 - “Friend, I am not being unfair to you” (13-14a)
 - “I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you” (14)
 - *“Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my money? Or are you envious because I am generous?”* (15) [“evil eye” Mt 6:23]

Applications: Last-First, First-Last

- Three Points (Owner vs. First, Last Workers)
 - God's Justice, Grace, Sovereignty vs. Human Problem
- One Message—the Gospel of God's Grace
 - Childlike Humility and Trust in God's Sovereign Grace [the Greatest in the Kingdom]
- Salvation by Grace; Reward by Grace
 - Overcoming World System of Works-Righteousness-Reward [“Evil Eye” —Relativism]
 - Examples: Paul (1Cor 15:10, 58; Rom 8:32); Peter (2Pe 1:1, 3:18)

Interpreting the Parables p. 224 (Blomberg)

- (1) *From the earlier groups of workers, one learns that none of God's people will be treated unfairly (cf. v. 4—"whatever is right I will give you"); that is no one will be shortchanged. [vv. 13-14a]*
- (2) *From the last group of workers comes the principle that many seemingly less deserving people will be treated generously, due to the sovereign, free choice of God. [vv. 14b-15]*
- (3) *From the unifying role of the master stems the precious truth that all true disciples are equal in God's eyes. [v. 16]*