

Parables - 3/1/26  
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Matthew 20: 1-16

## The Workers in the Vineyards

### I. The Kingdom of Heaven

- A. The rule and reign of God; where His will is being done
- B. Hard to define; how do you define America?
- C. What is the Kingdom of Heaven like?
  - 1. The citizens are poor in spirit (Matt 5:3, Is 66:2; Ps 34:6)
  - 2. It's explained in the Sermon on the Mount:
    - i. Your thoughts matter, not just your actions
    - ii. Love your enemies
    - iii. Don't judge
    - iv. Do spiritual things privately, just between you and God
  - 3. It's like: (Matt 13)
    - i. Weeds in the field - Jesus is king, but not all behave (v. 24)
    - ii. A mustard seed and yeast; starting small but growing (v. 31, 33)
  - 4. How to be great in this kingdom? Be like a child. (Matt 18:1)

### II. Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard

- A. Context:
  - 1. Jesus preaching on "other side" (east?) of the Jordan
  - 2. The "Rich Young Ruler" has just talked with Jesus
    - i. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than a rich man to get into heaven.
    - ii. Many who are first will be last; many who are last will be first.
    - iii. In the Kingdom of Heaven, expected roles are reversed
- B. The Workers in the Vineyard - Matt 20:1 - 16
  - 1. All workers get paid the same - that's not fair!
  - 2. Application: all who are saved, no matter for how long, receive the same eternal reward.
  - 3. Most of us are ok with this ... *but* ...

### III. Expectations of the Fairness of God

- A. "God is fair" turns into:
  - 1. God treats all the same, which turns into
  - 2. God treats the good people better.
- B. This is legalism: God's actions to us are determined by "contractual obligations".
  - 1. Wealth: the good get rich, the disobedient have broken cars
  - 2. Health: the good are healthy and beautiful, the bad get cancer
  - 3. Kids: the good have good kids, the bad have the kids they deserve
  - 4. Career: the good get the promotion, the bad get the pink slip
  - 5. God: the good hear from God, are blessed by God, have better gifts from God, while the rest of get silence

- C. What should we expect from God? What does He promise?
  1. “You will be hated by everyone because of Me.” (Matt 10:22)
  2. “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.” (1 Peter 4:12)
  3. “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds ...” (James 1:2)
  4. Recall Jesus and Peter in John 21.
    - i. Peter will die a horrible death.
    - ii. This is actually good news
- D. More promises of God
  1. “In this world you will have trouble ... I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)
  2. “Do not be anxious ... the peace of God will guard [you]” (Phil 4:6,7)
  3. “He who began a good work in you [will complete it]” (Phil 1:6)
  4. “Let us throw off ... sin ... and fix our eyes on Jesus” (Heb 12:1,2)

#### IV. Takeaways

- A. In the Kingdom of God, blessings and hardships are not based on what we deserve.
- B. Write down how you feel God has been unfair.
- C. Write down how you have been undeservedly blessed.

#### **LIFEgroup Questions:**

1. *Optional Icebreaker Question: What is the best ice cream flavor of all time?*
2. Where do you see (or resist) God’s rule in your life right now?
3. What does it mean to be “poor in spirit” (Gospel of Matthew 5:3), and why does it matter?
4. In the workers’ parable (Gospel of Matthew 20:1–16), what feels unfair to you?
5. Have you ever expected God to reward obedience with an easier life? How do verses like Gospel of John 16:33 challenge that?
6. Where have you felt God was unfair — and where have you received undeserved grace?