

Sunday, June 15, 2025

## Matthew 20: 1-16, Workers in The Kingdom

### Matthew 20

**1**“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. **2**He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. **3**“About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. **4**He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ **5**So they went.

“He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. **6**About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’ **7**” ‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered. “He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’ **8**“When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his supervisor, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’ **9**“The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. **10**So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. **11**When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. **12**‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’ **13**“But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? **14**Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. **15**Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ **16**“So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

### INTRODUCTION:

The Parable of the Workers in the Vinyard. Jesus has just ended Matthew 19 making a promise to His disciples saying:

Matthew 19:29And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. 30But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

Jesus says to people throughout His ministry, “come and follow me..”

Matthew 4:18As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 19“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” 20At once they left their nets and followed him. 21Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of

Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Matthew 9:9 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

John 1:43 The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."

## 1. **What does it mean to be a Christian?**

Following Jesus. What does following Jesus mean? The Great Commission:

Matthew 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

We know that 'doing things' does not save. We are saved by faith, not by works.

Ephesians 2:4,5,10 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.... 10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

We are not saved by our works, **and** we are saved TO something.

II Peter 1:5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## 2. **Working in the Kingdom:**

This parable of the workers in the vineyard is about 'working' in the Kingdom.

a. Following Jesus Includes Working in His Harvest Field

- Matthew 20:1
- Matthew 9:35–38
- Matthew 20:28
- Matthew 10:7
- Matthew 10:38–39
- Matthew 12:50

- Matthew 13:23
- Matthew 25:21-30
- Matthew 25:34-45
- James 2:14-26

b. There Is a Reward for Working in His Harvest

*Matthew 20:1*“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. *2*He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

Matthew 19:29-30

Matthew 20:9 “The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. 10So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius.

This passage does not elevate anyone rather, it levels the playing field. You are not doing anything FOR the reward; you are doing Kingdom work because God has given you the assignment and the responsibility. In His generosity, He does reward you. It is a promise:

Matthew 20:13“But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? *14*Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. *15*Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’

Ephesians 1:5God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. *6*So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. *7*He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. *8*He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding. (NLT)

We Serve God with all we have because He gave all He had for us. We Serve Him not because we must, but because we get to! While Eternal Life is more than enough and more than we deserve, He rewards us too.

c. **Everyone Is Eligible**

Matthew 20:8 "When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.' 9 "The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. 10 So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. 11 When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. 12 'These who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.' 13 "But he answered one of them, 'I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius?' 14 Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. 15 Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?' 16 "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

EVERYONE IS ELIGIBLE.

Ephesians 1:12-14

Matthew 15:24-28

Romans 1:16-17

Salvation is for ALL, not just the few. This parable reflects that.

3. But "It is not fair."

Matthew 20:9 "The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. 10 So when those came who were hired first, *they expected to receive more*. But each one of them also received a denarius. 11 When they received it, *they began to grumble against the landowner*. 12 'These who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and *you have made them equal to us* who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.'

Why were the first workers grumbling? Because the last ones, the ones who worked for only 1 hour while they worked the entire day in the heat, got the same reward for their work.

The criminal on the cross who chose to believe just moments before his own death was assured by Jesus 'today you will be with me in paradise...' No opportunity to serve, ministry, water baptism, just belief. He received Eternal Life.

And the same is true for each person today, no one is outside of the Saving Grace of God. The reward is the same for those who accepted the free gift of salvation many years ago AND those who receive it today. We do not do kingdom work for the reward; we do it because we have been directed to do it by God. God is a generous God.

**QUESTIONS:**

1. Talk about a time you tried out for, auditioned for, applied for, or ran for something and got it. How did you react? What did it feel like? Tell about a time you tried out for, auditioned for, applied for, or ran for something and did not get it? How did you react? What did it feel like?

2. In this parable there are five groups of workers hired at different times. What do you think they represent? How do you think the last group (those who only worked 1 hour) felt about their compensation in comparison to how the first group (those who worked 12 hours) felt about theirs? Which of the five groups do you identify with most when it comes to your faith journey?

3. Thinking about the church today, who would be the people in the first group? How are we tempted to overlook God's blessings because we are focused on what we think we deserve? Because we are focused on others? Looking at things from their standpoint, how might you sympathize with the workers in the first group? What can you do to slow down the pace of your life and make space for noticing, celebrating, and being grateful for the blessings of God?

4. Thinking about the church today, who would be the people in the later groups? The last group? In what ways are people made to feel excluded or unwelcome in the church today? How might this impact their relationship with God? What steps have you personally taken to ensure all are welcome?