

January 30th – The Last Will Be First

*“So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.”  
(Matt. 20:16)*

Jesus spent much of His ministry addressing the Jews – those who had the Law and the covenants but had not always acted on them. Jesus once told a parable about a vineyard owner who hired laborers to work in his vineyard. The owner hired some at daybreak, but others he hired at 9am, noon, 3pm, and even as late as 5pm. The owner promised each worker that he would pay them a fair wage for honest work.

When the work was done and it was time for pay, the owner commanded his steward to pay the laborers beginning with those who came the latest. Shockingly, the owner paid the same amount to those who came at 5pm to those who came at daybreak. One might expect the first workers to get paid first and to get paid the most. It’s not surprising that the first workers complained about the remuneration – “These men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us” (Matt. 19:12).

The owner rebuked the complainers by reminding them that they agreed to one day’s wage. The first workers despised the owner’s generosity, but he responded, “Is your eye evil because I am good?” (Matt. 19:15). The parable is symbolic, as it seems the Jews represent those who’ve been in the vineyard all day, and Gentiles represent those who’ve only been there a short time. The message is clear – the same grace is available to every person regardless of their lineage or background. The Gospel is the power of God to salvation for all who believe (Rom. 1:16).