

Harris Creek Baptist Church
Nate Hilgenkamp
Series: Summer of Stories
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The Parable of the Vineyard Workers
Matthew 20:1-16

How are we doing, Harris Creek? Thank you so much for tuning in and joining us today. If we've never met before, my name is Nate Hilgenkamp. I get to serve on staff here at Harris Creek. It's mid-August, which means school is just a few weeks away. We think school is happening. I don't know if it's happening or not, but it's probably going to happen, and since it's that time of the year, I just figured now is as good of a time as ever to tell you my college GPA.

My college GPA is essentially worthless. You work all of those years, and you get it, and you never think about it, you never talk about it ever again. Since I worked so hard to get it, I might as well at least fit it into a sermon. Here's what it is. I went to Baylor and graduated with a religion degree, which means I had to take some really, really difficult classes.

In that degree, you have to take classes like "Ideas in Math" and "Theater Appreciation" and "World Oceans" and astronomy and beginner's tennis and beginner's golf and softball and social dance. True story. I tried to find a girlfriend. It didn't work. Those are the classes I took. After that murderer's row of classes, I finished with a GPA of 3.746, which means I had earned a cum laude degree.

If you don't know what *cum laude* is, it's a Latin word for super smart. They throw it on your diploma, and then whenever you walk across for graduation, they hand you your diploma and announce you "Nate Hilgenkamp, cum laude," and everyone claps. It was amazing. I had earned it, and I was so excited for it, because graduation week was here.

Baylor finally sent out the email describing who was cum laude and who wasn't, and it was weird. It was actually embarrassing on Baylor's behalf, because when they sent out the email, I wasn't included. I didn't make it. I was like, "Oh man. This is horrible for them. They must not have any cum laudes in their graduation department. They must have messed up." So I decided to send them an email.

I was like, "Hey, I think you missed it. I was cum laude. I earned it. So, could you just get that switched before graduation day? Please and thanks." They responded back by saying, "Actually, you didn't make it, because your GPA was 3.746, and you needed to have a 3.75 or above." I was like, "What are you talking about?" In my Ideas in Math class freshman year, I learned that you round up whenever you're trying to find a full number, and if you round up, I had 3.75. I had earned it. I had cum laude. But they said, "It doesn't work that way."

I was like, "Are you serious?" So, I only had one other option. I had received an A- in one of my religion classes that semester. I had worked really hard for four years in the religion department, so I figured I'd earned some grace to get a grade changed, so I sent an email to a professor asking

for them to change my grade. I actually went back this week, and I found this email I sent four and a half years ago. Look at what I said.

I said, "Dr. [blank], I know this request is annoying, but I would wondering if I could possibly get my grade switched to an A." Look at that. "I would wondering." That alone proves I don't deserve anything. "If not, I totally get it, because I earned an A-. However, an A would put my graduation GPA at 3.75, which would make me cum laude. Again, totally not expecting anything. Just thought I would ask. Thanks! Nate."

I mean, that's a nice email. I'm not being too forceful. I'm just being like, "Hey, if you can do it, that'd be great. If not, no problem." Do you know what he said? "Nope. Not going to do it for you." After all of these years at Baylor, after all this work you put in the religion department, you know what we're going to do? Nothing for you. And, Baylor, after I worked four years to get a 3.746 GPA, you can't even round up for me? Are you kidding me? I earned better than that.

The worst part of the story is a year and a half later, my wife was graduating from Baylor, and she had a graduating GPA of 3.752. She just barely squeaked in. On graduation day, not only did I have to sit through a five-hour-long ceremony, I had to hear the words, "Adalee Lamberth, cum laude." It was horrible, because I knew from that moment on, she was going to hold that above my head for the rest of my life, that she had it and I didn't.

Now she thinks she's smarter than me, which is not fair, because we're the exact same, literally just one grade away. Not just one grade but *half* a grade away. If I got an A instead of an A-, we'd be the exact same. It's not fair, because now whenever we're having an argument, she gets to be like, "Well, I'm cum laude and you're not." It's so frustrating. It makes marriage hard, because she has it and I don't, even though I think I earned it. Four years later, I still think I earned it. Baylor, you owe me.

Why do I bring that up today? Well, first, to prove I need counseling, and second, because it's so frustrating when you don't get what you deserve. When you've earned something and you don't get it, when you feel like you got ripped off, it's so aggravating. All of us have been there. Maybe you worked really hard to make the team, and you deserved it, but then you got cut. It's devastating. Or maybe you've worked really, really hard to get that job or you've worked really hard to get that raise, and you don't get it. Man, it's heartbreaking.

Or maybe you've put in the effort to be noticed, and you deserve to be noticed, but once again, you're left unnoticed. It is so frustrating when you've put in the work, you've had all this effort on your behalf, only to be overseen, underpaid, and underappreciated. It'll drive you crazy. So, today, that's what we're going to be talking about: those moments when you don't get what you deserve, when life simply isn't fair. You've worked for it, you've earned it, and you didn't get it.

Those times are so aggravating, because life isn't fair. But here's the worst part about those times: we realize that God is not fair. When we don't get what we deserve, we realize that God is not fair. He just must not care that much about fairness. I think of the passage we're going to read today. Jesus tells us that God is not fair. I know that's a spicy statement, but I think that's what we see in Scripture. God is not fair. Let's see if you agree with me.

We're going to be in Matthew, chapter 20, this morning. We're going to be talking about the parable of the vineyard workers as we come to a close in our parables sermon series called *Summer of Stories*. We've been in the parables of Jesus. Parables are really just stories Jesus shares in order to emphasize a point. The reason we've been in them is we believe that Jesus is the wisest person to ever walk the face of the earth.

He's not just the wisest person; he's the God-man who came down to tell us what life is about, and he tells us about how life is meant to be lived through these stories, through these parables. So we've wanted to be in these parables to learn how life is meant to be lived. Today, as we're in the parable of the vineyard workers in Matthew 20:1-16, we're going to learn about three different movements in this passage: *the work, the wages, and the ways of God*.

As we set it up, I'm just going to read the whole passage. We're going to read 16 verses. Sixteen verses is a lot of words, but remember, these are Jesus' words to you about something really, really important. If you miss the rest of the message, that's fine. All I'm asking is for you to be leaned in and locked in, because Jesus has something to share with you right now. Let's read it.

Matthew 20:1-16: **"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day..."** A denarius was a typical day's wages. This is a fair payment for the day. **"...and sent them into his vineyard. About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing."** People would gather in the marketplace, and they'd be trying to find a job. They're essentially day laborers. They're just trying to find a job for the day. So this landowner went out and hired them.

"He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. 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?' 'Because no one has hired us,' they answered. He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.'

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.' The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner.

'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.' But he answered one of them, 'I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?' So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

Okay. That's the passage. Now let's break it down into its three separate parts: the work, the wages, and the ways of God.

1. *The work.* Selfishly, I'm really intrigued by how Jesus starts this parable. He starts this parable in a very normal way, a way that he starts so many of his parables. He says, "**For the kingdom of heaven is like...**" What do you think should come after that? What do you think the kingdom of heaven is like? I think he should say, "For the kingdom of heaven is like an all-inclusive resort." You can eat whatever you want, whenever you want.

You have pool access. You have beach access. You have anything you want right here. That's what the kingdom of heaven is like. For me, the kingdom of heaven is like sitting on the beach with a Diet Coke in hand and a pizza in my lap. That's the kingdom of heaven. But Jesus describes it differently here. You see, in this passage he says, "**For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard.**"

Jesus has this one shot. He has all of these people gathered together, and they're listening to him, and he goes, "You guys, you won't believe this. I'm about to describe to you the kingdom of heaven. Do you want to listen in? Come on. Get in, get in, get in. The kingdom of heaven is like a guy who wants to put you to work." What? What are you doing, Jesus? This doesn't sound very enticing. This isn't very fun. Why are you telling them this?

In fact, if I was there that day, if I was Peter, I'd just pull Jesus aside and be like, "Hey, Jesus, I'm not sure who taught you evangelism, but you're not very good at it. A good salesperson tells people what they want to hear, not what they don't want to hear. These people here? They want you to tell them that you're going to free them from work, not that they're going to have to work more. Jesus, could you just make a small change and tell them how much easier their life will be in your vineyard, not how much harder it will be in your vineyard?"

But that's not what Jesus says. He says, "The kingdom of heaven is like a place where you have to work." I think this is important. I think Jesus is making a point. I think he's saying that if you want to thrive in the kingdom of heaven, it's going to take some work. But isn't that heretical? Like, "Nate, aren't we saved by grace through faith, not by works, so that no one can boast? Aren't we saved so that we can be freed from our work, not so we have to work more?"

Well, yes and no. We're not saved because we work to get into the kingdom, but this is important: once we get into the kingdom, we have to get to work, because there's a lot of work to be done. I don't think I need to convince you of this. I don't think it's surprising to hear that there's work to be done. Just look at the world around you. Just look at our country. There's so much work to be done in this world. We have a broken world with more division than maybe ever, I know the most division in *my* lifetime. There's a lot of work to be done in this world.

But don't just look outside you. Look within you. Look at your own heart. Look at your own decisions. The more we look inward, the more we realize, "Man, I'm jacked up, and there's a lot of work that needs to be done in my own heart." There's a lot of work that needs to be done. I love how this old-time pastor... His name was Duncan Campbell. He made this same point by

saying this: "Can we be casual in the work of God—casual when the house is on fire and people are in danger of being burned?"

Can we be casual, church? Is this just kind of some hobby of ours, that we get to be the church, like, we'll get around to it whenever we want to? I love the way Duncan puts it, because he says the church is supposed to be the firefighters of the world. We see a problem. We see that the world is on fire, but we also have the solution. If we really believe the house is on fire, the world is on fire, how would we react if we're going to be the firefighters?

We're not just going to stand around and hope the wind blows it out. We're not just going to splash some water on the house if we can. We're going to stay up all night and put as much water on the house as possible. We're going to work as hard as we possibly can to put that fire out, because we have a job to do. That's what Jesus is saying in this passage. He's saying, "I'm not inviting you into my all-inclusive resort. I'm inviting you into my vineyard that needs some work, and you have a job to do."

I don't think many of us see our relationship with Jesus this way. I don't. I think a lot of people get saved, and then they get sedentary. I don't think I just *think* this. I've *seen* it. We get saved, and then we just sit around, and then we get bored. We get bored with this whole Christianity thing. Do you know what I've realized the synonym is for a bored Christian? A *lazy* Christian. Laziness might be your biggest hindrance to a deep and growing and thriving relationship with Jesus.

If you're bored with Jesus right now, it's not because he has gotten boring. If you're bored with Jesus... And we've all been there. I've been there. If you're bored with Jesus, it's probably because your pursuit of Jesus is boring. It's probably because you haven't really been getting up early to get in the Word. It's probably because you're not praying every single day. It's probably because you're not sharing the gospel with those around you. You're bored with your faith because you're not doing anything. You'd rather be spoon-fed in your faith and have everyone else do everything for you. You're not getting after it, which is a problem for us.

Like you, I so wish that growing in our faith would be easier. I so wish that every single morning, the Holy Spirit would wake me up with a kiss on the forehead and say, "Good morning, Nate." He'd miraculously make me feel awake and alive, and he'd hand me some premade coffee, preferably a vanilla latte, nonfat milk, from Starbucks, and then he'd walk me out into the living room, and then Jesus would be there, and Jesus would just read the Bible to me.

I wish that's how we grew in our faith, but it's not how it works. We don't get saved so we can sit around and have Jesus do everything for us. We get saved so we can get to work. I don't know about you, but I know the women and men in my life who have the deepest relationship with Jesus are the people who have worked the hardest at it. They're the people who have a grittiness to their faith. They have a fight to their faith.

They get up every single morning at 6:00 a.m., even though they don't want to, and they start prayer-walking their neighborhood. They're the type of people who are in the Word every single day, and they can tell me about it later in the day. They can tell me what they read. They're the

type of people who are sharing Jesus with those around them. Do you know what happens? They're excited about Jesus because their pursuit of him is exciting.

It's almost like James was right 2,000 years ago when he wrote this in James 4:8: "**Come near to God and he will come near to you.**" This is so key. I hope you understand this. Coming near to God takes work. It takes some effort. I think that's what Jesus is saying in this passage. He's saying, "I'm expecting workers, not vacationers, in my kingdom."

Many of you *have* been working. There are so many of y'all at Harris Creek who have been getting after it during your time in quarantine. You've been reading the Bible like never before. You've been following along every single day in the Bible reading plan, and you've been leading your family closer and closer to Jesus. You've been putting in the work.

I know that when I put in the work in my faith, just like anything else in life, I expect to receive a reward. I work in order to get my wages. I work in order to get my reward. I work 40 hours a week so that I'm paid 40 hours a week. That's just how it works. Most of us don't do our job just because it's fun. It's not some hobby. You do your job because you get paid. Right? It's all about the wages. You work for the wages, which leads to the second movement in the parable.

2. *The wages.* Here's where things start to get a little hairy in this passage. This is where the conflict comes. It's the end of the day. The sun is starting to go down. It's about 6:00 p.m., and the landowner says, "Okay. We're calling it quits for the day. I'm going to pay all of you guys, so line up. We'll put the 5:00 p.m. workers, the guys we hired last, over *here* and the early morning workers over *here*."

He starts to pay the guys who were hired at 5:00 p.m. They just worked one hour. The landowner reaches in his back pocket, pulls out his wallet, and he hands them a denarius. Then he gets to the 3:00 p.m. workers, the people who just worked three hours, and he hands them a denarius. Now, if I was in that early morning crew, the people who had been putting in the work since sunrise that morning, I know what I'd be thinking right now.

I'd be looking at my buddies going, "Bro, we're about to get paid, yo! We worked so much harder than them. If they got paid a denarius, we're probably getting paid three." Can't you just imagine being in their shoes? I know *I* can. You were there the longest. You got hired first. From the moment you got there, you kind of figured out pretty quickly what was going on. You're a high-capacity worker.

After about an hour, you realized what the job was, and then all of a sudden, these people showed up at 9:00 a.m., and you trained them. Then more workers showed up at noon, and you trained them. Then all of a sudden, more people showed up at 3:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m., and now suddenly, the guys you trained are training these next workers.

So, by the end of the day, you're like upper-level management by now. You're a big shot in the vineyard, and this is the moment you've been waiting for. This is the moment you've been working for. You're about to get your wages. You're about to get paid, and the landowner is going to differentiate you from everyone else. He's going to prove your worth.

As he's going down the line, he gets to the guys who were hired at noon, and he gives them a denarius. Then he finds the guys hired at 9:00 a.m., and he gives them a denarius. Then he finds you, the guy who has been there all day long working harder than anyone, and he gives you a denarius.

"I mean, are you kidding me? That's not fair! You're really going to give everyone equal pay? We didn't put in equal work. I mean, who are you, guy? Are you the guy who just gives everybody a trophy? I hate that stuff! That's how you raise spineless kids. We need to be paid according to our work, and we worked harder than everyone else. Pay us more than everyone else. This isn't fair!"

If I was there that day, I'd be genuinely angry. "I worked more. I've earned more. Give me more." If I was there, I'd probably be like, "Hey, Mr. Landowner Guy, I'll see you in court, because you haven't treated me fairly at all." That's how *I'd* feel, because that's how I've felt in life. I don't know if you've felt that way, but there have been times in my life where I've felt, "I've worked hard, and you'd better pay me back."

Anybody ever felt that way toward God? Have you ever felt like, "Hey, God, you owe me. I've put in the work. Where are my wages?" I've felt that way. There are a lot of times when I do good things *for* God, I expect to receive good things *from* God. For example, recently, I was giving to Harris Creek, you know, just paying my salary and all.

I was online giving, and I hadn't really noticed this before, but there's your full number of how much you've given in 2020, and then there's the full number of what you've given in 2019, and then there's the full number of what you've given in 2018. When I saw those numbers and started to add it up, I was like, "Holy cow! That's a lot of money."

Now, I don't say this pridefully. I say this, actually, incredibly embarrassed, because my next thought was, "Okay, God. How are you going to pay me back?" I'm not kidding you. I went on this rabbit trail of how God was going to pay me back. I saw this number of what I'd given in 2018. I was like, "Well, if he had given me a few more speaking engagements, that would probably make up for that. Then in 2019, he could probably make up for that if he gave me a raise this next year."

I mean, it's sick. It's embarrassing, but I was just thinking, "I've done so much for God. I've given to God. How is he going to give back to me?" That's what went through my mind. I can so associate with those early morning workers in this parable, because I want to be paid according to what I've done. I want to get what I deserve. That early morning crew worked harder than everyone else.

While they were working, while they were sweating... Look at how the passage describes everyone else. Look at what it says about the other workers in verse 3. **"About nine in the morning [the landowner] went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing."** Verse 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?'"**

"While I was putting in the work, they were standing around doing nothing. They were in their parents' basement playing video games. These guys are useless, and you paid us the same? We're not equal. I've worked harder than them." I've so been there in life. It's so aggravating to watch people get more than they deserve. I don't like watching bad people get good things.

For example, when I was single in college, some of these guys I knew who weren't following Jesus would start dating girls who were awesome, and I remember thinking, "God, what are you doing? That guy is not even following you, and he gets to date *her*? That's not fair." Or I've had some friends who don't work super hard, in all honesty, and I've watched them get raises and bonuses and promotions, and I haven't really. I'm just looking at them, going, "God, that's not fair! They haven't earned that." Am I the only one who thinks this way?

Maybe one of your friends has bought your dream house, and meanwhile, you're looking at your house, and it's two sizes too small, and you're looking at God going, "God, I deserve better than this. I've been working for you all my life. When are you going to show up and pay my wages?" It's so frustrating to watch other people get more than they deserve when you're sitting there getting less than you've earned.

So many times, when I see other people's successes, it's a reminder of my failure. I don't have what I've earned. This is the conflict in the passage. That early morning crew got ripped off. They worked the hardest, sweated the most, and, therefore, deserved the most, but they got the same as everyone else, and it wasn't fair. May I be so bold to say today...? I know this is uncomfortable, but may I be so bold to say that I don't understand why God isn't fair?

I wish he was more fair to us. I wish I could know that he'd be fair, that whenever I got up early to pray, my prayers would be answered, that his answer would always be "Yes." I wish he was fair in that way. I think I would pray more. I wish he was fair in terms of my giving. I wish I could know that whenever I give to God I'm going to get from God. I just kind of wish God was more fair to me, but for whatever reason, it's not in his character to be fair the way I want him to be fair, which leads us to the third movement in this parable.

3. The ways of God. This is so key, because in this passage, Jesus is making a point. He's saying that the landowner is not fair. It doesn't take someone who's a cum laude to understand that the landowner in this passage is God. Jesus, in this parable, who has been with God, who knows God, who's with God the Father... He has been with him for years and years and years. He's about to tell us who he is, and he says, "God, your heavenly Father, is not fair."

Do you realize that's what he's saying? Do you want to serve this God who won't be fair to you? do you want to worship this God who won't be fair to you? Do you want to stick around this God who won't be fair to you? Do you want to work for this God who won't be fair to you? Is he deserving of your worship if he's not going to be fair? Yes. If we want to talk about fairness, if we want to talk about what you've earned, if we want to talk about what your wages have earned you, let's check out what Romans says.

Romans 6:23: **"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus..."** Friend, if you've earned anything in life, if you deserve anything in life it's one thing: it's death and damnation. All of your lying and your lust and your greed and your gossip and every other sin you've ever committed have earned you one thing: eternal separation from God. You've turned your back on him. He should turn his back on you, but he doesn't treat you how you should be treated. He doesn't treat you fairly. Check out what Psalm 103:8-12 says:

"The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."

Praise God we don't get what we deserve! Praise God he's not up in heaven with a scorecard, keeping track of everything we've done and haven't done. While it's easy to think that the point of this parable is that the early morning crew got ripped off, that's not the point of the parable. The point of the parable is the generosity of the landowner. That's the whole point. If we're going to find ourselves in this passage...

I know I'm prone to think I'm in that early morning crew. That's not us. In fact, I don't even think we're *in* the passage. I don't think we're *in* the parable. We're not even the guys who were hired at 5:00 p.m. We didn't even work a single hour. Here's who *I* think we are in the passage. I think we're the people who God went and hired, and he brought us into his vineyard, and we got to see his amazing vineyard. I mean, vineyards are only in the prettiest places on earth.

We saw his amazing creation, his amazing vineyard, his amazing property. We also saw this amazingly large bulldozer, and we climbed up in the bulldozer, and we went through and tore up his whole thing. And do you know what we did? We walked out, and he paid us. He paid us for a job we didn't do. We screwed everything up, and he gave us a gift anyway. That's our story. Our story isn't how much we've done for God; our story is how much God has done for us.

I just love the character of the landowner in this passage, because I don't think his main concern is getting the job done. He has a horrible business plan. It seems like his main concern that day was to just pay as many people as possible. He went out time and time again, and he tried to bring more people in and more people in and more people in. He got those early morning workers, and he's like, "Man, I bet I could pay more people." Then he went out at noon and 3:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m., and he's like, "I just want to bring in more and more and more."

It's not because he needed them. I mean, think about the people who were hired last. They worked for one measly hour. In fact, they probably didn't even really work. They just probably got in the way. And he still paid them! He paid them because he wanted to pay them. He wanted them there. It's not because of what they would do; it's because of what he wanted to do. He wanted to give generously to his workers.

Friends, that's how he treats us. That's the character of our heavenly Father. He's compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love, not treating you as you deserve to be treated.

Friends, you get to be in the kingdom of God, not because of *your* efforts but because of *his* efforts. This is my story. This is your salvation story.

Romans 5:6-8. At just the right time, when I was still powerless, Christ died for Nate Hilgenkamp. But God demonstrates his own love for me in this: while I was still a sinner, Christ died for me. That's my story. My story isn't I've earned my worth. My story isn't that I worked for salvation. My story is that I was sitting on the side of the road, wasting away, doing nothing, until Jesus walked by and said, "Nate, I want you. I have a job for you. I have a purpose for you. I want you. Come and work in my vineyard."

That's all we want. Y'all, that's the reward. Our reward in this life isn't that we'll be paid more than everyone else. The reward in this life is that we've been chosen and loved by the King of Kings. That's what your heart longs for. The story of our lives isn't that he owes us for everything we've done for him. The story of our lives is that we owe *him* for everything he has done for us, and that's what we need to take away from this passage.

We don't need to work in order to receive a reward; we work because we've already received our reward. It changes how you live. Honestly, it makes you happier. Now I don't give in order to receive; I give *because* I've received. I don't serve in order that I might be served; I serve *because* I've been served. I don't get up early and read my Bible to prove to God that I love him; I get up early to read my Bible because God has proved to me that he loves me. It changes the way you live.

I don't want to miss out on the generosity of God in my life because I'm comparing what he has given to me to what he has given to everyone else. I don't want to miss out on the generosity of God in my life because I'm expecting him to do more than what he has already done, because here's what I *know* he has done in my life. I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that this is what he has given me. He has redeemed my past, he has given me purpose for the present, and he has given me a hope for the future. That's what Jesus has done, and I don't need anything else, and you don't either.

Friends, this changes the way we live. Some of you need to hear this. If you understood just how amazingly generous God has already been to you, if you could finally realize that you don't need anything else, suddenly, everyone else can have everything else and you can celebrate it. You don't need to compare what you have to everyone else; you can just celebrate the generosity of God in their life. So, when they get the job you think you should have had, praise God that they got the job. What a blessing for them.

Or maybe you've been struggling to have kids, and you're frustrated, and it has been hard, but you get to see another one of your friends have a kid. You get to celebrate with them that God blessed them, because you don't need it to be happy. Or maybe when you're single and you watch another one of your friends get married, you can rejoice with them, because you don't need to be married for your happiness. You've already received your reward.

You know Jesus, and anything on top of that is just a bonus. Like, "God, you want to give me extra? You want to give me money? Fantastic. You want to give me health? Amazing. You want

to give me a great marriage and healthy kids? Praise God. But all of that is just a bonus. I don't need it. I have all I need in Christ Jesus. I've been saved. I've been found. I've been chosen. I have a purpose. I have a job to do."

Church, my hope for us is that we'd be a group of people that's kind of surprised and delighted to be here. We get to work in the vineyard. We were sitting on the side of the road without a care in the world, without anything to do. Our lives were wasting away, and then Jesus found us and gave us a job and a purpose, and he's going to pay us regardless of if we do the job well or not. How good is that? How grateful can we be that we have a generous landowner who loves us and who wants what's best for us.

So, I hope that we wouldn't be so focused on everything we've done and everything we think we've deserved, but instead, I pray that our mindset and our eyes would be focused on everything *he* has done and everything *he* deserves, because that's where the joy is, friends. That's where the life is. We can live our lives thankful for everything he has done, and anything he *will* do is just a bonus, because right now, I'm just surprised and delighted to be here.

I don't have to earn my worth. I don't have to work for my wealth. I don't have to work for my wages. God has given me the greatest reward. I'm seen, I'm found, I'm forgiven, and I don't need anything else. Do you know what that makes me want to do? It makes me want to get to work for the good and generous landowner. Let me pray that it would be so of us.

God, thank you for the good news of your gospel, that your gospel isn't that we need to work our way into your kingdom, but instead, you've worked for us to get in. God, thank you that we don't have to earn our worth, but our worth has been bestowed on us through what you've done through your Son Jesus Christ.

God, thank you for your Word. I just pray we'd be a church that loves your Word, that wants to dive into your Word, because your Word wants to sharpen us each and every day. Father, thank you for sending your Son Jesus to describe how life is best meant to be lived and how life is meant to be lived in your kingdom.

God, I just pray we'd be willing to live it out, that we'd be a church that's willing to get to work, that we'd see everyone around us lost and in need of a Savior and we'd work to bring them in, just like you work to bring us in. Father, I just pray that we'd be overwhelmed by your generosity, that we wouldn't be a people who keep thinking, "I deserve more. I deserve more. I deserve more," but instead, we'd realize our true situation: that we deserve nothing and you've given us everything.

Thank you, God, for not treating us as we deserve. Thank you for being a God who's not fair, but instead, you give us more and more and more than we could ever ask or imagine. So, God, I just pray that we'd respond appropriately now and each and every day, that we would worship you with all we have, because you're a good God and Jesus is alive and with us and for us. It's in his name we pray, amen.