

A Parable – The Gracious Master

Sermon 56 in the Matthew Series

Matthew 20:1-16

Context: We Have Left all to Follow You 19:27-30

19:30 and the conclusion of the parable 20:16

I. Understanding the Parable – Overview

1. We can see the landowner is God Himself
2. He is the one who searches for, finds and hires the workers
Spiritual truth of effectual calling.
3. He is the one who rewards to workers in the end
4. Their reward is “a days wages” – but notice – some of them have a “longer day”.
In reality Christ is talking about regeneration and eternal life – which is why the matter of how much they “worked” is not the issue.
5. This is a parable about the kingdom of Heaven and is not meant to be followed in business practices regarding a pay scale.
6. The issue of “fairness” does not apply here, because the landowner was honest with all and generous to all, and he rewards by grace not by merit.
7. The parable is directed toward the disciples – but it applicable to all who know the Lord, because it shows that grace cannot be earned

II. Grace that Surprises

Grace and fairness do not co-exist.

Merit and grace do not co-exist.

Matthew Henry -- Sometimes those who come to Christ last, are blessed and accomplish much in their very short time. It is God who gives the increase.

III. The Exposition

v. 1 – The Kingdom of Heaven – now, in its present form. Wages paid at the final judgment.

v. 2 – A fair wage is agreed upon.

v. 3-4 – 3 hours later – more workers.

v. 5-8 – The situation repeats itself – with more coming to work in what would be a 12 hour day for those who started at the beginning.

v. 9 – Those who worked for only one hour receive a full days wages!

v. 10-12 – ONLY a days wage? v. 11-12 – **they** complained – grumbled.

You have made **these one hour** workers equal to us who worked 12.

v. 13-15 -- The Master gives a three-fold answer:

1. I gave you exactly what I promised and you were pleased.

2. I own the vineyard and can do with it as I please. The sovereignty of God.

Romans 9:15 – Exodus 33:19

For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."

Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

3. You were not harmed simply because I was generous with the others.

IV. The Application

v. 16 – "The last will be first and the first will be last".

This is the absolute equality of all Christians.

The ground is level at the foot of the cross.

The reward is the same in salvation – the reward is Christ Himself.

Calvin: "Christ only meant to say that every one who has been called before others ought to run with so much the greater alacrity, (enthusiasm). ...exhort all men to be modest, not to give themselves the preference above others, but willingly share with them a common prize."

Spurgeon: "Some of the last will be first – for abounding grace is seen in their brief hour of work; but some of the first will be last, for they are not always diligent throughout their longer day, and so fall back in the race, or their legal notions put them far behind those who were called later in life, but who are better instructed in the principles of divine grace."