

## Matthew 20:1-16

### The Scandal of Grace

#### (The King and His Kingdom)

There was a man who went to his boss and said, "Sir, my wife and I need to do some deep cleaning at home and she's asking for my help tomorrow. She wants me to do some work in the attic, some heavy lifting in the garage. She's asking that I would get the day off."

The boss shook his head and said, "I'm sorry, we're short staffed. We don't have enough people to go around. I can't let you off work tomorrow."

And the man smiled and said, "Thanks boss, I knew I could count on you." He thought he was the best boss in the world. He got me out of the honey do list at home.

So he headed home. "Sorry sweetheart can't do the housecleaning tomorrow, my boss says he can't spare me tomorrow because we are short staffed.

#### Imagine having the best boss in the world.

I mean a boss who is gracious to every employee, helpful to every employee, stands with every employee.

In Matthew Chapter 20, we are introduced to what some would consider the best boss in the world.

A)Others would consider the worst boss in the world. It all depends on your perspective.

B)The Parable is a continuation of the conversation that took place in Chapter 19 between Jesus and the rich young ruler – Looked at last time.

C)Recall that story - Rich Young ruler ..... What must I do to experience eternal life.

1)Jesus has this conversation with this guy that results in the guy leaving very Sad. (Go online to listen)

D)After that conversation – Jesus looked at his disciples and said - It is hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven..... Camel through the eye of a needle.

E)Who then can be saved? Men it is impossible – but with God nothing is impossible - Last week

27 Then Peter answered and said to Him, (Doesn't surprise us – right – Peter always seems to have to say something.)

“See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?”

28 So Jesus said to them, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. 30 But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

So it is that conversation that sets up this Parable that we are looking at today.

For the kingdom of heaven is like (Insight into how God operates- How he does things) For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.

In those days, in warmer months at the harvest time in the Middle East, the day began at six o'clock in the morning and ended at six o'clock in the evening.

A)It was a twelve-hour workday.

B)It was a very common scene to see laborers kind of mulling around the marketplace looking for a job,

1)looking for anybody who would hire them during that peak season of the harvest.

C)Landowners would come and look for people to come and work in the fields.

1)So the landowner is looking for field workers for the day

<sup>2</sup>Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

So they agree on a set wage and what is the set wage?

A)A denarius in our translation. It's a penny in the King James,

B)That was the typical payment for a day laborer working an entire day.

1)A penny, or a denarius, was also the daily salary of a Roman soldier, Jesus was speaking of a day's fair wage.

**C)The key thing to note here is the first group of workers – agree on a wage – shake hands**

**1)Sign a contract – whatever they did in those days**

<sup>3</sup> And he went out about the third hour (9am) and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, <sup>4</sup> and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. <sup>5</sup> Again he went out about the sixth (12pm) and the ninth hour, (3pm) and did likewise. <sup>6</sup> And about the eleventh hour (5pm) he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' <sup>7</sup> They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.'

<sup>8</sup> "So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them *their* wages, beginning with the last to the first.' <sup>9</sup> And when those came who *were hired* about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. <sup>10</sup> But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. <sup>11</sup> And when they had received *it*, they complained against the landowner, <sup>12</sup> saying, 'These last *men* have worked *only* one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.' <sup>13</sup> But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? <sup>14</sup> Take *what is yours* and go your way. I wish to give to this last man *the same* as to you. <sup>15</sup> Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' <sup>16</sup> So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen."

**So We have this parable:**

**A)One of the things we've learned about Jesus is how much he loved the method of telling stories.**

**B)We figure about one third of all of Jesus' teaching was in story form, parabolic form.**

**C)Keep in mind 2,000 years ago, they had a longer attention span than we do today.**

1)We are so visual today: We don't even listen to music anymore. We're used to seeing music- Videos

**D)So our skill of listening to a story is greatly diminished in our culture.**

**E)But in the days before computer, before television, before iPads/ iPhones, there was the storytelling.**

1)It was like the ancient television and a parable in particular was a specialized way that a teacher would communicate truths.

**Now the word parable is from the Greek word *parabolē***

**A)which means, "To place something alongside of something else."**

**B)So the idea of a parable is to use an earthly story but to teach a heavenly lesson.**

1)To place one thing next to another thing,

2)A natural thing next to a supernatural thing for the sake of a comparison

**C)So that in looking at the natural thing in the story, you understand the supernatural thing it's pointing toward.**

1)**So it's an earthly story with a heavenly lesson**

**The story illustrates the way that God often works in His Kingdom – The kingdom.... Is like.**

**A)If we are honest the story makes us uncomfortable.**

**B)Heard someone recently say: "Stories in the Bible like this one – if not a Christian – make me not want to be one!"**

**C)The whole context of it – screams –NOT FAIR!**

**We have a landowner who pays people who work only one hour the same wage he pays those who work all day.**

**A)What businessman operates that way? It seems irrational. It produces labor problems.**

**B)More than that, it is bad business. A person who operated in this manner would soon be bankrupt.**

**C)The whole thing – seems UNJUST!**

1)We may be reluctant to say it, knowing that the owner of the vineyard is God

2)And that God is always just, regardless of what we may think.

**D)Why should those who were hired later be paid the same as those who were hired at the start of the day?**

1)Why shouldn't those who worked longer be paid more?

**Some have attempted to interpret the parable so as to eliminate these difficulties,**

A)Some have suggested that those who began early in the day did not work well.

B)They took extended coffee breaks and talked on the job.

1)They knocked off for two and a half hours at lunch.

**C)Those who worked a shorter day worked harder.**

1)They accomplished as much in their one, four, or seven hours as the early risers did in their twelve hours.

D)So It was a case of equal pay for equal work.

E)Unfortunately, nothing in the story indicates that we should interpret it this way, - pure speculation.

**Others have suggested that the coins were different.**

A)In one case it was a gold denarius, in another silver, in another bronze, and so on.

B)Again the text doesn't say that and the reaction of the workers hired first – speaks against that.

C)Clear interpretation is He paid them all the same!

For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:8-9

**God is different than we are – This parable highlights the Generosity of God**

A)But also the wrong outlook and condition of the Human heart

B)So what can we learn from this story?

1)What does this lesson teach us? -

C)Five things I want us to consider today.

1)What does this Parable teach us?

**#1 It teaches us about Grace – Grace is getting what you don't deserve.**

A)Question did the guys who worked at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour deserve as much as the guys who got paid the same as the guys who started at 6am

B)NO!!! – And neither did the guys who were hired at 9am or at noon or at 3pm

C)Interesting to me that he paid the last guys first

1)he knows this is going to cause some problems – ruffle some feathers

**To be honest I love God's grace when I am the guy picked at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour & I get paid for the whole day**

A)I am like Yea – God you are so awesome

B)But I don't like it at all when I am the guy who started at 6am and I see the dude that only worked one hour get paid as much as me.

**C)That stinks – Lord you are so unfair.**

D)I don't like it when I am doing things right – and I watch someone who isn't getting "blessed"

1)That bothers me - (Anyone else?)

**I can easily be like the older Brother – in the story of the Prodigal son**

A)You have never thrown me a party God – this guy is a total waste – wasted everything you gave him – throwing a party.

B)I have been tried and true Lord – definition of Faithful – I deserve more!!!

1)Easy to fall into Performance based acceptance mentality

C)I think I DESERVE MORE!!!

**D)Listen you never want to ask God to give you what you deserve.**

1)What we ALL deserve is Hell

E) Sinners broken God's Word – rebelled against Him

1) We deserve Hell - He offers Heaven

**In reality – we are all recipients of God's grace – constantly.**

A) It is really a matter of perspective: Focus

B) God has been so good to us!!!!

**“I think there are basically two types of people in the world; complainers and worshippers. And there isn't much difference between the two. Complainers will always find something to complain about. Worshippers will always find something to praise God about.” Mark Batterson**

C) When we focus in on how gracious God has been to us – Worship is THE NATURAL RESPONSE

D) And it is a lot easier to rejoice when we see God blessing someone else.

1) Even though in our minds they seem undeserving

E) Because we realize we are totally undeserving of the grace and blessing God has bestowed on us!

So #1 It teaches us about God's grace!

**#2 It teaches us about God's Sovereignty:**

A) God has the right to do what He wants and with who He wants – and when He wants – He is God

B) Notice what the landowner told all those who were hired after 6am –

1) after the first group that agreed to the contract He said to the rest: **I will pay you what is Right**

C) Who determines what is Right? - The Landowner!

1) It is his prerogative to pay what he wants!

**Now you have to admit any union boss would hate that story.**

A) They would protest these practices, any HR Department; would be thrown into a tizzy.

B) That is not right! – You can't do that!

C) God's Union is the trinity – God the Father/ God the Son/ God the Holy Spirit

1) They are all in agreement!

**Note: V.11 The ones who were hired first** they complained against the landowner, <sup>12</sup> saying, 'These last *men* have worked *only* one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.'

A) We protest: That is not Right? - They complained

<sup>13</sup> But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? <sup>14</sup> Take *what is yours* and go your way. I wish to give to this last man *the same* as to you. <sup>15</sup> Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? **Or is your eye evil because I am good?**'

B) Who says: I can't do what I want with my land and my money. I can do what I want – When/Who

**C) Telling question: Is your eye evil because I am good?**

1) Other words: Your reaction is only revealing the problem in your own heart!

**The Song in Heaven: Revelation 15:3**

**“Great and marvelous are Your works,  
Lord God Almighty!  
Just and true are Your ways,  
O King of the saints!**

A) That will be our perspective when we get to heaven.

B) **God's ways are always right**- no matter what it looks like to us here

**C) I will be honest: I have some serious why questions for God that have never been answered.**

1) Things that have happened in my life – that I don't understand – asked – NO ANSWER.

D) Choice: Get frustrated or do what Pastor Chuck used to say: **“When you find yourself in a situation where you just don't know what is going on. – Fall back on what you do know.”** Chuck Smith

E) Some answers we will not get until eternity –

1) But in that moment – we will sing with the rest of Heaven: Just and true are your ways..... get it

- #1 It teaches us about Grace
- #2 It teaches us about God's Sovereignty
- #3 We have to watch out for Jealousy.

A) Those who compare themselves among themselves are not wise. 2 Corinthians 10:12

B) Why do we do that? Jealousy – compare – how come they get that –

1) Why am I sick – they are not?

C) My life seems to always be a struggle and theirs is a breeze.

D) I work hard and financially squeak by – they are rolling in the dough

Remember Peter: John 21 – Peter you are going to suffer – take you.....

A) What About John – Lord let's talk about him

B) Don't worry about John – You follow me!

C) That my friend is the answer:

1) Believe he is gracious and a Good, Good Father

2) Believe he is Sovereign –

D) Not going to compare – I am going to follow – Run this race – Fixing my eyes on Jesus –

E) Run with eye on the prize – not the other runner

1) Jr. High race against friend Allen Renshaw – looked back and lost

- #1 It teaches us about Grace
- #2 It teaches us about God's Sovereignty
- #3 We have to watch out for Jealousy

#4 It is never too late to follow Jesus!

A) The last group of guys got hired at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour

B) Here today – thinking – I have wasted my life – too late for me. – No it is not

1) Never too late – Grace is available today

C) Those of you who have prodigals that you are praying for- Don't stop praying

Also reminds us that it is Never too late to start serving the Lord.

A) 11<sup>th</sup> hour – standing idle – Why? No one hired us – No one thought we were useful

B) Now I like the fact that these guys didn't go home.

1) Not today: Go home take a siesta – grab a brew

C) No these guys kept hoping and hanging in there

D) Maybe you feel overlooked – maybe you have felt – I don't have anything to offer – listen that is not true!!!

E) Never too late to respond

You might be saying, "I'm old."

A) You might be at five o'clock in your lifespan. You might be fifty, sixty, seventy, or eighty years old.

B) You might be saying, "I've walked with the Lord for ten years and haven't done a thing for Him."

1) Take heart! It's never too late.

C) You can still be used by the Lord!

D) Listen it is not the quantity of the work that is rewarded.

1) It is not the type of work that is rewarded

E) It is the quality of the work that is rewarded.

The first group worked hard for 12 hours – the last group worked hard for one.

A) They were rewarded the same!

B) You do what God has called you to do – for his Glory – You will be greatly rewarded.

C) We often think the famous people here – Billy Grahams the Greg Laurie's – Chuck Smith

1) Will be the most rewarded in heaven

I think we are going to be surprised.

A) I think there are going to be a lot of people who ministered here in obscurity – behind the scenes

B) Children's ministry: Parking lot – prayer warriors

1) Writing emails to missionaries

**C)They are going to be radically rewarded –**

**D)The reason is they do what God has called them to do even though no one sees it**

**E)They do it with the same passion and vigor as the person who ministers in front of 1,000's**

**Never too late to get started: Never too late to be useful in His hands – lots of opportunities**

**#5 People matter more than things:**

**A)The land owner pursued these guys**

**B)Each time he went out looking for people that He could shower his grace upon.**

**C)He looks today – People He wants to save**

**1)Come unto Me**

**D)Looks today – People He can bless – Shower grace**

**E)Looks today – People He can employ in His field – to serve.**