

**THEME:**     **THE PARABLES OF JESUS**

**TOPIC:**     **THE LABOUERS IN THE VINEYARD**

**TEXT:**       **MATTHEW 20:1-16**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In our previous study in "**The Parables of Jesus**"...

a. We saw that "an unforgiving spirit" has no place in the hearts of those who would make up the kingdom of heaven. As explained in "**The Unmerciful Servant**", **Matthew 18:21-35**  
Our next parable in today's study identifies another attitude of the heart that has no place in the kingdom.

This parable is known as "**The Labourers in the Vineyard**". The meaning of this parable has challenged many expositors, and explanations offered have been quite varied.

## **I. THE SETTING OF THE PARABLE**

### **A. THE CONVERSATION WITH THE RICH YOUNG RULER – Matthew 19:16-22**

1. Jesus had been approached by this man with a question concerning eternal life
2. In the course of their conversation, Jesus challenged the young man to give up all and follow Him
3. The man went away sorrowful, unable to accept the challenge.

### **B. THE DISCUSSION WITH THE DISCIPLES – Matthew 19:23-26**

1. Jesus used this opportunity to teach how difficult it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven
2. This causes the disciples to wonder who then could be saved.
3. Jesus' response is that with God all things are possible

### **C. THE QUESTION RAISED BY PETER – Matthew 19:27**

1. Unlike the rich young man, Peter and the other disciples had accepted the challenge to give up all and follow Jesus – **Matthew 4:18-22**
2. So he asks: "**Therefore what shall we have?**"
3. It appears that Peter is wanting to know.
  - If the rich can be saved (though barely, and with the help of God)...
  - What more will those receive, who have given up all to follow Christ?
4. Peter's question could be viewed as coming from a commercial or mercenary spirit.
  - As in having some sort of personal profit as a chief aim
  - As in motivated solely by a desire for personal gain
5. Peter's motive may have been pure, in which case Jesus' complete answer may have been designed to be a "pre-emptive strike" against any improper motives.

### **D. THE REPLY GIVEN BY JESUS – Matthew 19:28-30**

1. First, he gave an assurance...
  - Specifically, to the apostles – **Matthew 19:28**
    - a. In the "regeneration", they will be judging the twelve tribes of Israel.  
This promise could refer either to:
      - Their role as apostles in the gospel age following Pentecost – **Matthew 16:19**
      - A special role following the return of Christ when He comes to judge the world – **Matthew 25:31-45**
    - b. Generally, to all disciples - **Matthew 19:29**
      - In this life, a "hundredfold" houses, brothers, sisters etc.

- In the age to come, "everlasting life" – **Mark 10:29-30**
- I.e., those who give up all will receive more than enough in return
- 2. But then, a warning – **Matthew 19:30**
  - **"But many who are first will be last, and the last first."**
  - A rather cryptic warning, one repeated again in **Matthew 20:16**

[Since this warning both precedes and follows the parable we are studying, it is evident that the parable was told to explain the warning! With this in mind, let's proceed to consider.]

## **II. THE PARABLE AND ITS MESSAGE**

### **A. THE PARABLE SUMMARIZED...**

1. Early in the morning, a landowner hires labourers to work for an agreed upon wage – **Matthew 20:1-2**
2. Later, at different hours of the day, he finds more and hires them also, for a fair but unspecified wage – **Matthew 20:3-7**
3. At the end of the day, they are all paid equally, which irritates those who had worked all day – **Matthew 20:8-12**
4. The landowner responds to the complainers...
  - a. I treated you fairly, for you received according to our agreement – **Matthew 20:13-14a**
  - b. I wish to pay the others the same – **Matthew 20:14b**
    - Do I not have the right? – **Matthew 20:15a**
    - Are you envious, because I am gracious? – **Matthew 20:15b**
5. Jesus concludes by repeating the warning – **Matthew 20:16** (some manuscripts add another warning: "For many are called, but few chosen")

## **CONCLUSION**

It is my understanding that the proper application of this parable is this...

- a. When we are called by the gospel to obey Christ, we should respond at once!
  - For some, we may hear the invitation early in life
  - Others may not come to know of the gospel until late in life
- b. As labourers in the vineyard (in the kingdom), we should work diligently in whatever time we may have left
  - We may be blessed to offer a full life of service to the Lord
  - Or we may only have a short time.
- c. We should do whatever we can without a commercial or mercenary spirit ("Do I get more because I gave more?").