

THEME: **THE PARABLES OF JESUS**

TOPIC: **THE LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD PART II**

TEXT: **MATTHEW 20:1-16**

INTRODUCTION

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

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**

In our previous study of "**The Labourers in the Vineyard Part 1**" we identified another attitude of the heart that has no place in the kingdom which is having an envious spirit.

The meaning of this parable has challenged many expositors, and explanations offered have been quite varied.

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").

B. THE MESSAGE OF THE PARABLE.

1. Many and varied have been the interpretations; for example...

a. The various bands of workers are the O.T. saints; those called at the eleventh hour are the apostles

b. The workers first called are the Jews, those called last are the Gentiles

c. The parable represents the whole gospel age up to Christ's return, and the workers are groups saved at various periods

d. It refers to different periods of a person's life in which he may respond to the Lord: some responding early, others late in life

2. Since this parable is in response to Peter's question, it could mean

a. That the first workers represent the apostles and others like them.

▪ Those who are called by Christ through the gospel early in life.

▪ And those who therefore may labour long and hard in the "vineyard" (the kingdom)

b. The other workers represent those who are called by Christ via the gospel at various times

▪ Some of whom are called late in life.

▪ Some who do not have opportunity to do as much for the Lord.

3. In light of this interpretation, the main point of the parable is.

a. What everyone receives will be more than "fair" ("**Did you not agree with me?**")

b. No one has the right to question the "generosity" of the Lord ("**Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things?**").

c. Those who may serve long and hard should not be "envious" if others receive the same reward ("**Is your eye evil because I am good?**")

d. Therefore no one should serve the Lord with a commercial or mercenary spirit!

- The very danger Peter was close to falling into by the question he raised!
- A danger to which we are all susceptible!

4. This parable is NOT saying that those who purposely put off obeying Christ until the last moment can be saved!

a. If that were the point, the parable would have been worded differently

- Notice that those who responded at the late hour of the day had not been working
"Because no one hired us" – Matthew 20:7

- They accepted the offer as soon as they heard it, though late in the day

-- They were not people who turned down many opportunities to accept the offer to labour in the vineyard, only to accept at the last hour!

b. Whether one can be saved at the last moment after lifelong rejection of the gospel is another question

- One which only the Lord can rightfully answer
- However, notice what is said of those who remain in a condition of rejecting the gospel:
 - ✓ They judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life – **Acts 13:46**
 - ✓ They are storing up for themselves wrath in the day of wrath – **Romans 2:4-11**

CONCLUSION

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?"

With this parable, we learn more about those in the kingdom of heaven.

- Just as the parable of "**The Unmerciful Servant**" teaches us there is no place in the kingdom of heaven for "an unforgiving spirit".
- So the parable of "**The Labourers in the Vineyard**" teaches us there is no room in the kingdom of heaven for those with either "a mercenary spirit" or "an envious spirit"!

What is our attitude toward our service to Christ?

- Is it one of gratitude?
- Is it one of commercialism?

- There is only one attitude that is acceptable!

For those who are not yet Christians.

- Why not let the gracious spirit of the "landowner" revealed in this parable encourage you to accept the grace of God in humble obedience to His gospel?
- Why not live out the rest of your life in grateful service to Him?