



Matthew 20:1 – 16 Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard (Part 1)

Preached at Cloverdale Church 5/19/24

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. ² And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like this man in the story. This means God having dominion and rule over our lives and His Kingdom being manifested in the earth, in our lives, and in the church, in the country, in the world looks like this parable. Kingdom represents authority and God's ever-increasing rule over situations and us. Notice the elements of the story:

The man – homeowner who owns a vineyard and needs to hire workers.

Vineyard – which represents what? The fields where the harvest is.

Early morning workers – they are ready and hired first.

Wages are agreed to between the man and the workers and they are sent out to start to work for the man.

³ And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴ And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

The man goes out around 9:00 AM. He sees other workers just standing around doing nothing. He tells them to go work in the same vineyard with the same folks who he hired earlier.

The salary for these later workers is negotiated it seems or at the least, whatever is good and right in the sight of the man will be their reward. They obeyed.

⁵ Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. ⁶ And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? ⁷ They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

The man goes out three more times. I'm assuming he is going out on purpose looking for workers. He repeats the same process.

Notice in the story, he asks the question for the last group, "why stand ye here....idle?" Idleness seems to be the case for each group except the first group.

Regardless of the timing, each group of workers are promised they will receive payment and a reward for their labor.



The last group works for only an hour.

Now let's analyze this in the natural setting and see how it relates to a spiritual application of a Kingdom process.

The workers are hired to perform duties in the cultivation and harvesting of grapes. First, there must be a need. There must be a need for workers and the workers must be in need of work.

- A need.
- A change of direction. They turned from being idle to working in the vineyard. They put being idle behind them.
- There is the hope of payment and a reward for the work.
- There is an agreement or contract involved before they begin the work.
- They actually perform the work. Notice they don't actually start working until they have instructions and an agreement.

The householder asks the last group a question. Why have you been standing here all day doing nothing? The answer is because no one else has hired them. Others don't see the value in them so they have been rejected. However, this man hires them anyway.

- Whatever disqualified them from being employed before didn't deter the man from hiring them now. This last group goes through the same process.
- Every group goes through the same process in working toward their payment.

So, let's compare what is happening in the natural to determine if there is a spiritual application. If Jesus said the Kingdom of Heaven operates like this, then what is happening in the story provide insight into how the Kingdom grows and expands.

Think about this in today's terms.

Parable analysis:

The Goodman of the House represents who? God

The laborers = us

Just as the man goes through the process in seeking out his workers, Jesus finds Kingdom workers. Just as the man does, Jesus pursues after us for a purpose.

When we meet Jesus, we are in need. Some of us may have faced rejection, but he pursues and offers us a new hope.

The same process and first five steps we identified in the natural story, is the same spiritual principles at work in the Kingdom.

1. We recognize our need for Jesus. We cannot get hired through our own efforts.
2. When we hear the offer from Jesus, we have to make a decision to either continue doing what we were doing versus changing and turning to the hope Jesus offers. This is repentance.
3. We have a new hope in Jesus as he accepts us.

4. We enter a new covenant or agreement with Jesus. We are part of him. There is a role Jesus plays and a role we play. The agreement helps us to understand and obey.
5. As led under the agreement, we start to work. Notice, we don't start working with others in the world until there is an agreement and instructions. We need the Holy Spirit before we go!

Question: If the work in the vineyard is to cultivate and prepare the grapes for a future harvest, then what is the work that Jesus is expecting us to do in his spiritual vineyard?

- We are to do the same work that Jesus was sent to do. To make disciples and have mercy on those in need.

Application for today:

- I promise you Jesus is pursuing us to enter into an agreement and relationship with him. This is the first phase of the process for how the Kingdom expands. He is seeking a covenant relationship with you/us.
- The question and the statements the householder makes to the workers are the same statements Jesus presents to us today.
 - Go ye also into the vineyard. The harvest is ripe but the laborers are few.
 - Why are you standing here idle all day?
 - You can have a relationship with God and still be idle and not doing the work.
 - He is sending us into the vineyard, will we go?
 - There is a reward at the end of this for those who are working in the Kingdom.
- This is beyond just showing up to church and mid-week service and even worship. If we truly love Jesus, then we will keep his commandments and one of his commandments is that we go.
- Go do what? Work in the vineyard or the world because we love God, we go to love others and help them into the harvest.

This is how the Kingdom works on the earth. This is how the Kingdom process works in our life.

How will you answer the call? People are idle, churches are idle, and if we don't go put in the work, we will miss the reward and miss expanding the Kingdom on earth and in others.

I've been idle before. No one told me there was work for me. I didn't think the Kingdom work included me. I didn't think I was equipped to do this work. I was just happy to be saved.

- You can be busy working on other things but be idle in performing the work He has called us to do. Are you in the vineyard yet?
- The vineyard goes beyond just coming and doing church.

Where are you in this story? Question, which group of laborers are you. There were 5 groups. Where would the thief on the cross be?

- It is never too late to be sent. Jesus is still searching for workers in the marketplace. The marketplace where people deal and exchange goods. Jesus is looking to offer us a new deal where we exchange our old life and our old condition for the hope he gives.

Matthew 20:1 – 16 Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard (Part 2)

Preached at Cloverdale Church 5/26/24

Background: Last week we discussed this parable and the spiritual application for us. As a review we see the Kingdom of Heaven works like this:

- There is a Man who consistently goes out looking for workers.
- He follows a specific process.
- The workers, likewise, follow a specific process before they set off to work in the vineyard.
- The application is when we follow this process as believers:
 - Recognize we have a need we can't satisfy.
 - Repent or turn from what we were doing and turn toward Him.
 - Have the hope that our future is about to change.
 - A contractual relationship exists empowering us to do a work for the Kingdom.

This is how the Kingdom currently operates as it expands. Today, we look at the second half of this parable and how to have a Kingdom perspective of serving and working for the Kingdom of Heaven.

⁸So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. ⁹And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. ¹⁰But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. ¹¹And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, ¹²Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

Again, let us look at the story in the natural.

Payment time happens at the end of the day. The last workers are paid their wages first. The man determines the order and the wages for each group.

Strange, the ones who came last are paid first and given the same wage as the workers who came first. Notice the reaction of the first group:

- They make an assumption. Logical assumptions are not always spiritually accurate when it pertains to the Kingdom.
- Why are they upset? They thought they deserved more pay and a greater reward because they worked longer in the field. That seems logical.
- They were okay with the goodman of the house at first, why did they start to complain?
 - Focused on what the others had received who had worked less time than them.
 - Had a problem with the amount of reward/payment given. Would probably not have been a complaint if the goodman paid them more than the last workers.
 - They worked longer and during the hardest part of the day.

- Their complaint is against the “Goodman”. They think they deserve more.

¹³ But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? ¹⁴ Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.

He answered one but not all of them. I wonder why only one received the answer. Calls him friend. Perhaps he was the loudest complainer....I don't know.

He addresses the murmuring with a question. Did we have an agreement? Yes. The question demonstrates that this problem is not with the man but with his murmuring. His perspective is the problem.

The Goodman explains his intention is to bless the last workers even as he rewards the first.

¹⁵ Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? ¹⁶ So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

Next question, did he break any laws with how he paid the others? The first two questions were the set up to prove he wasn't crazy or evil. Last question is one of logic and spiritual application. If I'm not evil, then are you looking at this with the wrong perspective? If I'm not wrong, then are you wrong? If I'm not wrong, then why are you complaining?

Story ends with the lesson application. The Kingdom of Heaven is like this. It doesn't matter when you get started, there is a reward....we all get paid the same.

Observations in the natural:

- It just doesn't seem fair that the first workers don't get more pay. They see it that way.
- The Goodman explains there is nothing wrong with his payment and to explain this through a series of questions:
 - You agreed to the payment arrangements.
 - I'm within my right to distribute my payments in a manner I see fit.
 - I'm being good to those who come last. If I'm being good to them, why are you looking at it as being evil. You are wrong in how you are looking at this.

Spiritual Application: If the Goodman represents God, then we need only to see which group we fall into and answer the same questions.

- God keeps His promises; He will not cheat you.
- God has a right to be generous to anyone and in a manner as He sees fit.
- God has blessed us by wanting us to do a work for Him and receive a reward. We were humbled when we started.
- We can't think ourselves more highly than other workers.
- Make sure you have the right perspective about your situation.



If I was in the last group I would be:

- Super appreciative that I have everlasting life and a reward even though I showed up late.
- Thankful to the first group for doing some of the heavy work to make it easier for me.
- Glad that God is not fair and sees me like this.

If I were in the first group I would be:

- Glad that God invited me to work in the Kingdom.
- Happy that I could be working this long and making it easier for the other workers who come after me.
- Rejoice in the mercy and grace that God shows those who come behind me.
- Rejoice in that I can see all workers in the Kingdom like God sees them.

This is not a matter in my mind of fairness, it is a matter of grace and mercy for those who may not have been working as long as others for the goodman.

- I hear people complaining about things not being fair all the time. It may work from a world perspective but God and the Kingdom have a different perspective.
- In the Kingdom, I celebrate my fellow laborers and this is not a competition. Don't hate, celebrate and participate.
- I need to be careful about murmuring and complaining in the Kingdom; I might have an evil perspective. Follow the steps to determine if your complaint is evil.
- We can find a lot of things to complain about while working in the Kingdom.
 - Do you have a complaint about God? Do you have a complaint about your blessing?
 - Before I start complaining, I want to check my perspective and understand God's will.

Summary and Key Observations:

- God has plenty of work for us to do; He is constantly looking for workers and still asks the question of us today, why are you idle? Let's get to work.
- There is always a reward in doing the Kingdom work.
- Don't worry if you get there late, just get there.
- God sees value in you, that you may not see in yourself.
- Make sure you have the right perspective; ensure you are looking at your situation with the right lens before you start complaining.
 - Follow the steps.
 - Lord I need your help because I'm feeling a certain way about this.
 - Let me put aside my feelings and complaints; turn from my self and turn to you.
 - What does the word say and what is your will in this situation for me?
 - Rely on the Holy Spirit to give you the insight and power to act in a manner that brings God glory and makes Him proud of you.
- Don't be jealous at how God blesses others.



The evening is drawing near when we can do no work. Have the right attitude before the harvest comes. Stay humble, go to work, stay humble.