

Glen Park Gospel Church
Tuesday Evening Bible Study Group Notes

Rev Chris Trinham

Stories Jesus Told

No 7

Workers in the Vineyard.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 20:1-16.

We need to put this parable into its biblical context, Matthew 19:16-20:28. A rich young ruler's failure to forego fame and fortune and trust in the Lord alone, led to the analogy of the camel and eye of a needle 19:23, and provides us with the text, *It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.* This led to Peter's impetuous question "*We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?*" And he received a precise answer. Service to the Lord costs us, sometimes all we have. See Matthew 19:29. Remember study No. 6 of this series and the wise use of unrighteous mammon! However as Jesus here teaches, service also has its rewards, and these rewards are according to His grace. The parable must be read in light of this context.

First, the labourers the Master Himself

Hires, the first at sunrise, then 9am, some at noon, some at 3pm and even 5pm, only one hour to work.

The period of service depended on the time the Master found them in life's market place. The use of the word 'others' v3 suggests that these were not there earlier. He found them progressively available.

Second, the Wages the Master Pays.

This story makes little commercial sense. That is its point. Heaven's wages are not earned, but offered by grace and good will. The pay offered here was one denarius, the pay a Roman soldier received for each day's service. The contract was only to the first men hired. Subsequent groups of workers simply trusted the word of the landowner.

You may be confident that God's recognition of your service in the kingdom will be just, and it will not be withheld. It will be made on time. People were paid daily in accord with

Deuteronomy 24:14&15.

Likewise compensation for what that service has cost, that which has been surrendered to Him to do His bidding will also be recognised in accord with the promise of Jesus in Matthew 19:29 and like the manna, those who gathered much had nothing left over and those who gathered little had enough Exodus 16:18, according to ability.

Third, the Distinctions the Master Makes.

God's treatment of others will be in accord with His dealings with them, and not in accord with his call to us. In that sense not all God's dealings are 'equal' as we count equality, but that is because:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "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.

Consider and Identify:

Who called - the landowner

Who were called - the unemployed

Where from - agora, the world's place of commerce and social contact.

When hired - variously, for all or the remainder of the day.

Where to - the Lord's vineyard

Remuneration - what is right.

Order- First in, last out.

Basis - grace of the Master, not 'a fair day's pay for a fair day's work.'

God does not need us to preach His gospel, He can and does bring His message to people through what is to us miraculous means. He has *chosen* to give us a part in His enterprise. He will share with us the blessings of its increase, like all His fellow-workers.

Going Further.

The purpose of parables was to make known to the disciples the concepts of the kingdom.

The rules of conduct for the kingdom were given in the Sermon on the Mount, which is the policy speech of the Lord, and these rules are given in plain speech.

The concept of, or the conduct of, the kingdom however is a mystery which was yet to be revealed and therefore Jesus spoke in parables. Parables were to hide the meaning from the uninitiated, cause disciples to ponder meanings and state eternal truth in

contemporary terms; and they still do.

Who were first labourers those under contract? There are several lines of thought. Were they:

Those of us who come to Christ in our youth who also work for the Lord all our years, perhaps as career missionaries, and others perhaps in their last days? This is perhaps the usual application.

Israel who received the promises as delivered to the patriarchs and expanded under levitical law? Other peoples, gentiles, were to be added until the day that the harvest is won, people from every nation and tribe and tongue who have no such promise, some at the last hour. This was a mystery then, it was revealed to Paul, and is now known to us:

... the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

From Ephesians 3:4-6.

The disciples who were promised in Matthew 19:28 to have a share in the administration of the coming kingdom? If this is so, then read Revelation 2:25-29.

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Galatians 6:9.

Bible quotations in this study are from the NIV, unless otherwise acknowledged.

Welcome

Glen Park Gospel Church

Lower Road, Eltham North

Sundays 10.30 am

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