

**You Get the Most Out of What Christ Puts In.**

***For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. "About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. "He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing. About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?' " "Because no one has hired us," they answered. "He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.' "When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.' "The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. "These men who were hired last worked only one hour," they said, "and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day." "But he answered one of them, 'Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?' "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."***

We live in a world where effort equals outcome. The more you work, the more you get. In sports they say, "No pain, no gain." In school or college they say, "you will get out of it what you put into it." Not in the kingdom of God. Not in his Church. In his parable today Jesus tells us that it isn't about us, how we get out of it what we put into it. Rather, let's rejoice that we get out of it what Jesus put into it.

*I. The context.*

Please let me give you the context for this parable. Jesus just had an encounter with a rich young man. He sincerely wanted to know what he had to do to inherit eternal life. He had the mindset of "the more I put into it, the more I get out of it." So Jesus gave the man one simple command. Sell all he had and hand over his great wealth to the poor. That's it. Millions of people in the world would gladly trade in everything for eternal life. But this man couldn't. He couldn't keep this one command. It was too much for him. He wasn't good enough.

Why did Jesus set the bar so high for this young man? Why does God set the bar so high for eternal life in his heaven? Well, he has to. What kind of heaven would it be if people still committed murder in heaven, either with a gun or with hate in their hearts? Also, Jesus set the bar so high so this young man, and Lord willing each of us, would realize how desperate things are in our lives. No matter how hard we try, we just can't do it. We fail. The disciples got it. They felt the desperation when they asked, "***Who then can be saved?***"

And that is exactly where God wants us to be. No one can be saved. But Jesus said, "***With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.***" God does the impossible. He found a way to get imperfect, sinful humans like us into heaven. Jesus is God in the flesh, a perfect, Holy God who will make the perfect sacrifice for the sinner. He will pay for our sins with his own death. Because of that, God will stamp "innocent" on the sinner. And then he will take his holiness and put it around us. Because of Jesus we are perfect matches for heaven. It isn't a matter of what we do. It is all about Jesus and what he does for us.

Then Peter ruined it all. "***We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?***" We call it "despising God's grace." God's grace means he forgives us and gives us heaven as a gift. Living under that grace means we trust we are saved solely because of Christ. But it also means that God doesn't answer our prayers if we pray harder, or protect us if we give so much a year. We live under grace when we also realize that God does these things because he wants to, not because we deserve it. Peter didn't get it. He admitted he didn't really want to live under grace. This is why Jesus gave us this parable.

*II. The parable.*

***"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard."*** A job needs to be done so the owner looks for workers. This goes on every day in America.

But this is where it gets interesting. "***About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. "He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing. About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?' " "Because no one has hired us," they answered. "He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.'"***" Ok, this still sounds normal. He needs more workers so he finds them and hires them. So what?

But notice how Jesus contrasts these workers. Those hired first are different. They discussed it. They negotiated pay, about a day's wage, think of a crisp hundred dollar bill, and the boss agreed to pay it. Now look at the other workers. They didn't negotiate. Rather the boss made a promise: **"I will pay you whatever is right."** They didn't know what they would get. They were happy that someone hired them.

And this contrast comes out at the end of the day. **"When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.' 'The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. 'These men who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.'"** The owner paid those hired last and worked his way down to those who worked all day long. Each got the same pay, a denarius or a crisp hundred dollar bill. You can imagine those hired first, who worked a full twelve hours. They started drooling because they figured they should get more because they worked longer. But they got what they agreed to, a denarius, and they were mad.

But they had no reason to complain. They negotiated their pay. They agreed to it and that is what they got. **"But he answered one of them, 'Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?' 'So the last will be first, and the first will be last."** Instead of being happy, they were upset. They criticized the owner's generosity. So the owner gave them their pay and told them to leave.

Do you see how this parable is about grace? The first workers didn't want to live under grace or the generosity of the owner. They wanted to negotiate a reward and work for it. The rest didn't negotiate a thing. The owner called to them, took them in and paid them, not according to what they did, but according to his generosity. Living under grace means we are saved solely because of God's grace in Christ. It also means that God is generous to all of us, not because we deserved it, but because he wanted to be generous.

### *III. The Warning.*

Does this parable have a place in our lives? Of course, we shouldn't be jealous of those who lived a pagan, sin filled life and suddenly come to faith and have the same thing we do, heaven through Christ. We know we should feel happy for them, but are we? Or do we think we deserve a bit more because we have been life long members or do more for the church? We pray and God says no. Normally in faith we say your will be done and are satisfied. But how often have we felt disappointed as if he owed something? Have you ever wondered why something is happening to you? Why you? Others who ignore God don't have to deal with your problems. Do you feel frustrated? You have given thousands if not tens of thousands to the Lord, you actually work hard at avoiding foul language and other sins. But then you feel as though it was all wasted. You are not doing better than others.

### *IV. The comfort.*

That is why it is good we have this parable today. Look at the other workers. They were happy someone hired them. They got more than they dreamed of. Remember what Paul said in our earlier reading. **"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two."** If it wasn't for Jesus Christ, you would never speak that way. Imagine that! Because of Christ we can't lose. To die means heaven. And if God would let us live a while longer, we are happy, too, because we live for Christ. You get that, not because you put something into it. You get that because of what Jesus put into it. And living under that grace means that offerings, fighting temptation, serving God and others are not chores. Nor do we do this so we can be rewarded. We do it because we are living under God's grace.

I look at the thief on the cross. You know which one, the one who spent his entire life in trouble and was being executed for crimes. He came to faith and Jesus promised him that very day he would be in paradise. On the one hand we are happy for him. Any last minute conversion means another sinner and soul is saved. But on the other hand we feel sorry for him because he didn't have a lifetime he could dedicate to the Lord. This is what it means to live under grace. Every minute we get to serve God and our neighbor isn't a job for which we are paid. It is a privilege.

So we don't need to envy the person who lives without God and without hope in this world, though his life seems to be better than ours, his income higher and his opportunities greater. We don't because we don't despise grace. We relish it. Suddenly it isn't a chore. It is a joy. It means we live under Grace.

At the gym or the practice field, it is no pain, no gain. When it comes to school or work, you get out of it what you put into it. Thank God it doesn't work that way in his Kingdom. We can never put in enough to get heaven out of it. Instead, we get out of it what Jesus puts into it. Marvel at the generosity of your Lord. Amen.