



A just weight
and balance

are the
LORD'S:

Thus saith the Lord...

- **“Life is not fair! Praise God!”**

- Would you **agree** with that statement?

- Well, that is what **Jesus taught!**

(Matthew 20:1-16)

- As the conflict between Jesus and His adversaries **began to intensify,**
- And as the time for our **Lord's sacrificial death drew near,**
- He said some very **shocking things.**

- When some parents sought to bring their little children to Jesus, so that He could bless them, the disciples rebuked them for doing so.
- Jesus was too busy and too important to be interrupted by children.
- Jesus corrected His disciples, instructing them to allow the children to come to Him, because,...
 - **“the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these”**

- Then, Jesus was approached by a man we know as “the rich young ruler” (Matthew 19:16-22).
- This man wanted to know what it was that he must do to inherit eternal life.

- Since this man felt that he had fully kept the law from his youth,
- Jesus had to show him how far he came from measuring up to God's standards.

- Jesus told this
“rich young ruler”
something startling....
- “To sell all that he owned”
and to give the proceeds
to the poor.
- That was too high a price to pay,
 - And so the rich young ruler
“went away sorrowful.”

- Jesus then turned to his disciples and pointed out how hard it is for the rich to enter heaven.
 - Their love and their trust is in their wealth.
 - When Jesus said that **“it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter heaven”** (Matthew 19:24), the disciples were shocked.

- In that day, many assumed that the rich went to heaven, while the poor went to hell.
- They believed that wealth was God's reward for being righteous,
 - While poverty was God's punishment for sin.

- Then Jesus turned the religion of that day upside-down.

- He said,
“many who are first
will be last,
and
the last first”
(**Matthew 19:30**).

- Jesus then went on to tell the parable that is our text for today.

- “**Many who are first will be last, and the last first,**”
(**Matthew 20:16**)

- It is those who are hired first who protest when they are paid their normal wage,
- Even though this was the payment upon which they had agreed.

- It is not so much that they had been cheated, by being paid less than the rate agreed upon;

- It is that the last group of workers were paid more than they deserved.

- Now, that just stinks.

- Don't you agree?

- Life isn't fair is it?

- But, notice this...

- Romans 3:23

For all have sinned
and fall short of
the glory of God.

. 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

"The Unmerciful Servant",
Mt 18:21-35

Our next parable identifies
another attitude of heart
that has
No place in the kingdom...

This parable is known as
"The Laborers In The Vineyard"
(Matthew 20:1-16)

- This parable may sound to us as if it described a purely imaginary situation, but that is far from being the case.
 - Apart from the method of payment, the parable describes the kind of thing that frequently happened at certain times in Palestine.

The grape harvest ripened towards the end of September, and then close on its heels the rains came.

If the harvest was not gathered before the rains broke, then it was ruined; and so to get the harvest in was a frantic race against time.

Any worker was welcome, even if he could give only an hour to the work.

THE SETTING

THE CONVERSATION WITH THE RICH YOUNG RULER

(**Matthew 19:16-22**)

Jesus had been approached by this man
with a question concerning eternal life

Jesus challenged the young man
to give up all and follow Him.

The man went away sorrowful,
“for he had great possessions.”

Jesus now uses this opportunity to teach how difficult it is for **the rich** to enter the kingdom of heaven.

This causes the disciples to wonder **who** then could be saved?

Jesus' response is that

"with God all things are possible".

(Matthew 19:26)

THE QUESTION
RAISED BY PETER
(Matthew 19:27)

**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

So he asks:

"Therefore what shall we have?"

(Matthew 19:27)

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?

- Jesus is telling Peter and us just the opposite of what society tells us is the “right way” to live our lives.

. Peter's question could be viewed as coming from a materialistic spirit...

That is having some sort of personal profit as a chief aim.

THE REPLY GIVEN BY JESUS

Specifically, to the apostles:

Matthew 19:28

And Jesus said unto them,

Verily I say unto you, That you which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

In the "**regeneration**", they will be judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Their role as apostles in the gospel age following Pentecost - **Mt 16:19**

"Twelve tribes" being a figurative

term as in **James 1:1**

denoting the people of God

who are the **spiritual Israel**

under the **New Testament Law**.

Then Jesus addresses 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**)

those who give up all will receive
more than enough in return

But then, a warning

Matthew 19:30

**"But many who are first
will be last,
and the last first."**

A warning 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...

THE PARABLE
AND ITS MESSAGE

THE PARABLE SUMMARIZED...

Early in the morning, a landowner hires laborers to work for an agreed upon wage - **Mt 20:1-2**

Later, at different hours of the day, he finds more and hires them also, for a fair but unspecified wage
Mt 20:3-7

The men who were standing in the market-place were **not loafing** away their day.

The market-place was the equivalent of the **labor exchange**. (**7th Ave.**)

A man came there first thing in the morning, carrying his tools, and **waited until** someone hired him.

The men who stood in the market-place were waiting for work, and the fact that some of them stood on until even **five o'clock** in the evening is the proof of how desperately they wanted it.

At the end of the day, they
are all paid equally,
which irritates those
who had worked all day.

Mt 20:8-12

The landowner responds
to the complainers...

I treated you fairly, for you received according to our agreement.

Mt 20:13-14

I wish to pay the others the same.

Mt 20:14

Do I have not the right? - Mt 20:15

**Is your eye evil,
because I am good? - Mt 20:15³⁴**

It is in one sense a warning to the disciples.

It is as if Jesus said to them,

"You have received the great privilege of coming into the Kingdom and fellowship very early, right at the beginning.

In later days others will come in. You must not claim a special honor and a special place because you were Christians before they were.

All who come, no matter when they come, are equally precious to God. (**Mt 11:28**)

There are people who think that, because they have been members of a Church for a long time, the Church practically belongs to them and they can dictate its policy.

There is no seniority in the Lord's Church.

There are no charter members!

There is an equally definite warning to the Jews.

They knew they were the “chosen people” and didn't want anyone to forget it.

As a consequence they looked down on the Gentiles. Usually they hated and despised them, and hoped for nothing but their destruction.

This attitude threatened to be carried forward into the New Testament Church.

If the Gentiles were to be allowed into the fellowship of the Church at all, they must come in as inferiors.

Jesus concludes by
repeating the warning

Matthew 20:16

"For many are called,
but few chosen"

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

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

Jesus addresses the **apostles**
and others like them.

Who are called by Christ through
the gospel **early in life**.

And who therefore may labor long
and hard in the "**vineyard**"
(the kingdom of God)

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

Some of whom are called **late in life**.

Who **do not** have opportunity to do as much for the Lord.

In the parable there is the
comfort of God.

It means that no matter
when a man enters the
Kingdom, late or soon
he/she is

equally dear to God.

In the picture of the holy city in the Revelation there are twelve gates.

There are gates on the East which is the direction of the dawn, and whereby a man may enter in the glad morning of his days;

there are gates on the West which is the direction of the setting sun, and whereby a man may enter in his advanced age.

No matter when a man comes to Christ, he is equally dear to him.

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

What everyone receives will be more than "fair".

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?")

Matthew 20:15

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?"

Mt 20:15

Therefore no one should serve the Lord
with a monetary spirit!

The very danger **Peter** was close to falling into
by the question he raised!

A danger to which we are **all** susceptible!

Perhaps I should stress that
this parable is **NOT** saying
that those who
purposely put off obeying Christ
until the last moment can be saved!

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.

Many are they who learn of the gospel
at the **11th hour.**

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:

(1) They judge themselves unworthy of
everlasting life **Acts 13:46**

(2) They are storing up for themselves
wrath in the day of wrath - **Romans 2:4-11**

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 Laborers In The Vineyard](#)" teaches us there is no room in the kingdom of heaven for those with "[an envious spirit](#)"!

Here also is the generosity
of God.

These men did not all do the
same work;

but they did receive
the same pay.

There are two great lessons
here.

All service ranks the same with
God

It is **not** the amount of service given, but the love in which it is given which matters.

2Co 8:12 **For if there be first a willing mind, *it is* accepted according to that a man hath, *and* not according to that he hath not.**

The second lesson

is even greater:

All God gives is of grace.

What God gives

is not pay,

but a gift

Eph 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

2:9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

- Perhaps, this lesson of the Laborers in the Vineyard is even harder to digest than the lesson of giving up everything to follow Jesus.
- Harder because, frequently, when we look around us, it is difficult to believe that we are all on an equal footing; all on the same playing field.

- Hard to believe that
 - our faith,
 - our way of life,
- our accomplishments
 - are not somehow
just a little,
if not a lot better,
or more correct,
than everyone else.
- Yet, in God's eyes
we are all equal.

- God sees us all through the same set of lenses.
- Unfortunately, it is not until we understand this –
- Until we come to understand just what His grace is all about –
 - It is not until then that we can experience the peace that passes all understanding.
(**Philippians 4:7**)

**Doors of the church
are open.**

**Spirit & Bride Say
“Come”.**

Revelation 22:17