

This passage is simpler than a lot of the others we have looked at:

- There's no citations from the OT
- There's no real miracle in the story that needs explained
- There are no heavy theological explanations needed
- There's no real sin that is confronted in the parable

What is left is a fairly simple story with a twist to it, and a lesson at the end.

We will break this parable up into 3 parts:

1. The basic story of the hiring agreement
2. The twist in the story when all workers were paid the same
3. The landowners explanation of what he was doing

Let's first read Matthew 20:1-7

In Matthew 20:1, what is this story supposed to represent? The Kingdom of Heaven.

In order for this story to make sense, we need to figure out the following:

1. **Who does the landowner represent? *Hint: The Landowner is the overreaching power over all his land.** The Lord
2. **What does the vineyard represent? *Hint: The vineyard represents all the land he owns; his "kingdom".** The Lord's Kingdom (The Kingdom of God)
3. **Who are the "workers" or "labourers"?** That would be us, Christians. The ones that do the Lord's work here on earth and will in heaven one day too.

So the landowner goes out early one morning to do what? Go Shopping, pick up the newspaper...?

He goes to the place where he could find workers. Even in these days, there are areas especially in other countries that men stand around in hopes they will be picked up and be given a job for the day to earn money.

Did the landowner just make one trip to get workers, or multiple trips? How many trips? The landowner made 4 trips total.

Jesus doesn't tell us in the parable, but what are some reasons the Lord of this vineyard kept going back for more workers? Maybe the work was too great for just a few workers, or maybe the day was getting closer to being over and the work needed to be finished.

How does God relate to this landowner that keeps going back for more workers? God is constantly searching the hearts of man and woman to bring them into his Kingdom. God wishes that no one would perish. He wants salvation for all, but all won't surrender unfortunately.

The landowner might have been worried about the work not being finished before the day ends. The more workers he has, the more work can be done in the vineyard. **What about our job of witnessing and bringing the word of salvation to the unsaved in this world? Will there always be a "tomorrow"?**

Why does the Bible teach such urgency spreading the gospel? Have you ever known anyone that may say "I don't have time for God right now", or "I don't feel like I'm ready to take that step?" The bible

clearly teaches that a “last day” will come when it will be too late. The reason we are still here on this earth and the Lord hasn’t come back is to give people more time to repent and turn to him.

Read Matthew 20:8-13

Imagine you get a call to come work at a strawberry field picking strawberries. The owner and you agree on a wage of \$100 for the day. You get there at 8am in the morning. You work for 2 hours and at 10am, the owner asks another person to come work and promises to pay them “whatever is right”, then in the same way another person at 1pm, and lastly at 4pm.

At 5pm, the day’s work is done, so the owner calls his accountant to go out and pay everyone, but to first pay the last one that started working and work backwards from there. You watch as the person that only worked one hour was handed \$100, then the person that worked 4 hours \$100, then the person that worked 7 hours \$100, and lastly you get paid (working 9 hours) \$100.

What do you think about this? Fair? Not Fair? Who cares since you got paid what you were promised? None of your business since it’s the owners money? Etc....

What happens in verses 8-13? How did the workers in this parable respond to how everyone was paid? More than likely, you would have responded much like the workers in this parable did. The ones that worked the least got paid first and also got paid the SAME AMOUNT as the ones that worked the entire day! They murmured and grumbled.

In human terms when talking about worldly jobs and employment, maybe this would be considered unfair, but that’s not the point. **Remember, what does this parable represent???** Doing the Lord God’s work. The Kingdom of Heaven.

Did anyone pick up on a key difference between the agreement of pay between the land owner and the first group and the landowner and the other groups that were hired later?

- **The First Group:** “He agreed with the labourers for a penny a day” VERSE 2. A penny was the roman “denarius” which equaled about to one day’s pay for an average laborer in those times.
- **The Other Groups:**
 - “Whatever IS RIGHT I will give you” VERSE 4
 - “Whatsoever is right, thall shalt receive” VERSE 7

The landowner simply has to remind the workers of a few important points in response to their complaints. He does this in Verse 13.

1. **Did the early workers get paid exactly what He promised them and what they agreed to?** Yes. So they had no reason to complain.
2. **Since He was the landowner and the one making the payments, was he free to give the other workers what he wanted too.** Of course. It was not the first workers place to decide what the landowner wanted to pay the others nor should it be their business.

Matthew 20:14-16

In this last section, what does the landowner tell the workers to do in verse 14? He tells the workers to take their wages and go. **Does it seem like the landowner was going to change his mind?** No. Nothing good would come out of the workers complaining.

What about verse 15. What last point does the landowner make? If you work hard for your money, do you want others telling you what and how much you can spend on this and that? The landowner points out that there is no law that says how much he can and should pay each person.

The last verse completes the final point. This statement is made elsewhere in the bible. “The last will be first and the first will be last”. What does this mean to you guys? This statement says that the Lord cannot be held to social conventions or customs in how he rewards people, but we do know that he is fair and generous in how he does it. We also know that it is all by grace that he rewards his workers and just as much by grace that he offered them to come to work for him and receive salvation.

What prompted this lesson Jesus gave? That can be found in Matthew 19:27-30. The disciples claimed they left everything to follow Christ and implied that they deserved some kind of reward for their service. After all, they were the first ones to leave everything to follow him.

This entire lesson Jesus gives centers around faithful discipleship:

FAITHFUL DISCIPLESHIP

- 1. The Lord is sovereign over His Kingdom:** Because God is the “landowner”; he can pay people whatever he wants to pay them as long as He is just. He owes no man an explanation of how he deals with the workers. He promised the first workers a fair day’s wages and delivered as he promised. He promised a fair wage to the other workers, and was certainly more than fair.
- 2. God alone makes the decisions on how to reward faithfulness:** We should all be thankful for God’s love and kindness to us by offering us salvation through Christ.
- 3. Everyone who serves the Lord will be treated fairly:** All the workers either got what they agreed to or even more. All those that accept Christ are just as much part of the “team” whether they have been a Christian for 10 years or 50 years.
- 4. How the Lord treats all of his servants is completely by grace:** Until the landowner approached the workers, none of them had work. If he had not went looking for them and arranged for them to enter his vineyard, they would have remained with nothing (lost).
- 5. We should not be concerned with what God gives other people:** If the workers in the vineyard were genuinely pleased to receive the work and the day’s wages, they would have stayed focused on that. Instead, they started focusing on what others were given. When people start comparing what God has given to other believers they begin to judge God’s fairness.