

**(Matt. 20:1)** – The Lord continues to teach His disciples the lesson He taught in the previous chapter – *“But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first”* (19:30; cf. 20:16). There is a blessed equality in the kingdom of heaven among the people of God because no sinner deserves or earns salvation by who he is or what he has done. All who are saved are saved by God’s grace based on the righteousness of Christ freely imputed to them. There is no merit in those whom God has chosen to save. IT IS ALL GOD’S GRACE according to His sovereign will and good pleasure. When God saves a sinner or condemns a sinner, He always does whatever is right, just, and good in His sight (Rom. 9:13-29). *“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”* (Gen. 18:25). God will always do right! The Lord expands upon this principle of grace by giving a parable of laborers in a vineyard – *“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.”*

**(Matt. 20:2-7)** – The *“HOUSEHOLDER”* represents the Lord Himself, and the *“LABOURERS”* represent all sinners saved by grace, all true believers who have been given the gift of faith in Christ and brought by the power of God to receive Christ and submit to Him as their righteousness before God (John 1:12-13; 6:45). Hiring laborers at various times represents two things: (1) God brings His chosen people by new birth to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works at different ages and to labor for Christ for different lengths of time, all determined by the sovereign will and purpose of God. Those who are brought to the Savior are effectually called to Him when it pleases the Lord (Gal. 1:15; cf. Rom. 16:7). Using this illustration, we could say, for example, that Samuel, who was converted at an early age, would be like those who were hired at 6:00 a.m.; Paul was converted later in life like those who were hired at noon, and the thief on the cross like those who were hired at 5:00 p.m.

(2) This also teaches that the gifts and opportunities to labor in God’s vineyard vary among His people. By nature, we have neither the will nor the power to toil for the Lord (Eph. 2:1-3). Whatever abilities we have, God gave them to us. God gives different talents and opportunities according to the good pleasure of His will (1 Cor. 12:4-30), so that we all do not have the same capabilities and opportunities, nor the same length of time. But what we all have equally by God’s grace is all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3). God ALWAYS freely gives to His people *“WHATEVER IS RIGHT”* according to His grace in Christ!

**(Matt. 20:8-9)** – At the end of the work day, *“THE LORD OF THE VINEYARD SAITH UNTO HIS STEWARD, CALL THE LABOURERS, AND GIVE THEM THEIR HIRE,*

*BEGINNING FROM THE LAST UNTO THE FIRST.*” The Lord gave each man exactly what he had agreed to pay them and what they had agreed to work for – “*A PENNY.*”

**(Matt. 20:10-13)** – The ones who were hired earlier in the day and had worked the longest also received the same pay, so “*THEY MURMURED AGAINST THE GOODMAN OF THE HOUSE,*” saying that it was not right or fair for the Lord to make those who had worked less “*EQUAL UNTO US, WHICH HAVE BORNE THE BURDEN AND HEAT OF THE DAY.*” Again, we see that this was the same fleshly thinking of Peter and the disciples who thought that because of their sacrifice and service they would occupy a higher place in the kingdom than those who would sacrifice and serve less. They forgot that whatever time of service, abilities, talents, gifts, or opportunities any of us, as sinners saved and preserved by God’s grace in Christ, all of these things are determined and given freely by the Lord. The Lord alone receives the glory, not the laborer. Paul told the Corinthians concerning their spiritual gifts, “*Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive*” (1 Cor. 4:7). Remember the words of our Savior – “*When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do*” (Luke 17:10).

Let us not be so foolish as to boast of our labors and accomplishments when it is a fact that all who are in the kingdom of God and all that they are enabled to do is due solely to the grace of God given us freely in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. God does not reward sinners on the basis of our works, length of service, or faithfulness. We are all rewarded according to the perfect obedience of Christ Who is “*THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*” (Jer. 23:5-6). Just as He was punished by the wrath of God for our sins, we are rewarded with the blessings and glory of heaven because of HIS faithfulness and obedience unto death as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. There are no degrees of rewards in heaven! Every child of God is blessed with “*all spiritual blessings*” in Christ which were given to us in Him before the world began (Eph. 1:3-4).

**(Matt. 20:14-16)** – The Lord here declares His absolute sovereignty and justness to do what He will with His own. He is the Potter, and we are the clay (Rom. 9:20-23). None of us deserve or earn God’s favor. Salvation is ALL OF GRACE, a free gift. “*IS THINE EYE EVIL, BECAUSE I AM GOOD?*” What we as sinners saved by grace have is due only to the sovereign, free, undeserved goodness of God towards us in Christ. Those who are evil and unregenerate despise “*the riches of His goodness*” (Rom. 2:4). His goodness and grace in Christ is the great equalizer – “*SO THE LAST SHALL BE FIRST, AND THE FIRST LAST.*” This is a truth that so contrary to our natural, self-righteous way of thinking, so as there are many called by the outward proclamation of the Gospel, few are chosen by God in the power of the Holy Spirit to receive and believe in Christ in Whom all of God’s people are equal as recipients of His free and sovereign grace (Gal. 3:26-29).