

1. Why did the master go to the market's hiring spot so many times through-out the day?

Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. ⁶ And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' ⁷ They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.'

He was concerned about: a. His crop. b. the Unhired, willing.

Lesson: God is concerned about...

2. Why did the master line the workers up that way?

'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.'

Jesus is challenging our mind-sets by contrasting E_____

values and expectations with those of the K_____.

3. Why did the master show such generosity?

I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. ¹⁵ Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?'

Jesus is telling us that God has chosen to show generous mercy to people who merit J_____.

Suggested Questions for Small Groups

1. Who do you think the laborers in this parable represent?
2. What is the lesson Jesus is teaching us about God when he has the master in the story go to the place of hiring so many times?
3. Why did those who were hired early in the day get so bitter with the master when they were justly paid? How are followers of God today like that too?
4. On what basis do you receive Grace from God: a. It's a reward I deserve. b. It's a gift I don't deserve. c. I've tried to be good. d. other...

Next Sunday, April 11, 2010: **Great Parables of Jesus**

Part 8 - "The Parable of the Rich man and Lazarus" Luke 16:19-31

Jesus builds a story around two characters, a rich man and a poor man. One eats sumptuously each day and the other is covered in sores and attempting to get crumbs to eat. Both die. One goes the "Abraham's side" and the other goes to Hades. Our subject next Sunday will be: What is going on in the heart of human beings that allows us to be indifferent to the momentousness reality of the approaching end of our earthly lives and the beginning of our eternal lives?

Pastor Tim Keller has a great message on this parable entitled "Hell: Isn't the God of Christianity an angry Judge?" and you can find it here: <http://sermons2.redeemer.com/sermons/sermonlist/1>

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GREAT PARABLES OF JESUS CHRIST

parable 1'parəbəl | noun

a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson, as told by Jesus in the Gospels.

ORIGIN Middle English : from Old French *parabole*, from an ecclesiastical Latin sense 'discourse, allegory' of Latin *parabola* 'comparison,' from Greek *parabolē*.

APRIL 4 - THE PARABLE OF THE LABORERS

Matt. 20:1-16

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ² After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³ And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴ and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.' ⁵ So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. ⁶ And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing.

For the kingdom of heaven is like: Many of Jesus' parables use this opening sentence. Jesus is attempting, through story, to change the mind-set of his listeners. Their concept of what the kingdom of heaven was like is not correct. Here Jesus will teach his listeners that the kingdom of God is a place where costly grace is offered to those who need it. *to hire laborers for a denarius a day:* In this parable the owner oddly hires workers on five different occasions throughout a day and then surprisingly pays them all the same wage. Those hired earliest, complain and the owner responds to them. He reminds them that they had agreed to work for a denarius which was the typical laborers daily wage. *third hour...sixth hour...ninth...eleventh:* The owner goes to the market where people stand and seek to be hired for day labor, not only at early morning, but at 9:00 AM, noon, 3:00 PM, and 5:00 PM. These later hires he promises to pay "whatever is right" and they trust in him. Is the owner going to the market to hire workers five different times because he misjudged the amount of help he needed to finish his work? Or is there another reason he is going there and hiring more men? The motivation seems to be compassion for the unemployed.

And he said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?'
⁷ They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.'
*⁸ And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.'*⁹
*And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius.*¹⁰ *Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius.*¹¹ *And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house,*¹² *saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.'*¹³ *But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?'*¹⁴ *Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you.*¹⁵ *Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?'*¹⁶ *So the last will be first, and the first last."*

Why do you stand here idle all day?: This is the concern of the owner and why he would expend the effort to come five times from his workplace to see if other laborers were still unhired. These men needed the day's income and they remained all day in the marketplace hoping to be hired. The owner feels compassion for them and sees that they have not been hired by others, so he welcomes them into his employ. So, much like the three parables of Luke 15 (lost coin, lost sheep, lost son) we have a search being conducted that is motivated by a strong, even passionate interest in others who are in need. These lost ones, or unemployed people, have a need and Jesus portrays the kingdom of heaven as being a place where grace is freely given to those looking for help at great expense to the employer.

pay them their wages: Interestingly, we suddenly have a "foreman" or estate manager in the story. For some reason, on this day, the owner in Jesus' parable has been doing the foreman's job of hiring the laborers. In Jesus' metaphor of the kingdom of heaven the owner is portrayed as being concerned about those who have not been hired for the day. He keeps going out to see if any remain who have not been hired. At the end of the day when it comes time to pay the workers the owner specifies the order in which the men are to be paid - the last hired will be paid first. If he had done the customary, first hired - first paid, there might not have been any cause for bitterness. But, surprisingly, the owner first pays those who had worked fewest hours a full day's wage. The tension begins to grow.

they thought they would receive more... they grumbled at the master: Those hired first that day see that the employer is paying the ones who were hired late in the day a full day's wage. They assume that they will be paid even more than these workers, because they have worked longer and therefore merit more than those hired late in the day. But they are paid the same amount which caused them to grumble about the fairness of the compensation. Does the owner not understand that paying everyone the same amount would upset those who had worked all day long? Who is Jesus directing this parable toward? Some have said it was the religious leaders of Israel who thought that the mercy and grace Jesus was extending to sinners was a defect in his orthodoxy. They might complain like these workers, just as Jesus' disciples might complain. No doubt this parable is a lesson for Peter and other disciples who said in Matt. 19:27 "See we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?" Jesus' lesson for them is that in the kingdom of heaven (19:30) "...many who are the first [by man's standards of reward] will be last, and the last first."

you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day: "This is not the cry of the underpaid. No one is underpaid in this parable. The complaint is from the justly paid who cannot tolerate grace!" "To their market-oriented minds, their worth as human beings is directly related to how much they are paid. Grace is not only amazing, it is also - for certain types - infuriating!" (K. Bailey, Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes) God's grace does make us all equal. Our efforts do not make us worthy of God's grace just as someone's lack of time in service to God does not make them less worthy. No one can claim deserved membership in the kingdom of God. Grace is a gift from God which He gives to those He chooses.

I am doing you no wrong: Jesus has the owner in this story answer the grumbling workers with a declaration that he is just - he did no wrong. Jesus wants his listeners to question why the master and God would treat such attitudes so harshly.

Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? The owner's rationale for paying those who worked less hours the same amount as those who worked all day is this: He chooses to do so - He chooses to generously give what belongs to himself to others. God chooses to show the same grace to those who come late in the day as he does to those who came early. The principles by which God receives people into his kingdom are not the same principles we use to pay people fairly for their work.

do you begrudge my generosity?: Why do we humans feel cheated when someone else gets grace? The Greek word translated "begrudge" is a compound word - 'ophthalmosponeros' - literally meaning, "the evil or bad eye". It's used in Matt. 6:23 "...but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness..." There Jesus is saying that a person with an "eye" to God as Master will see light, but those with a "bad" eye will look to treasures on earth and the darkness that brings. This story is totally about the owner. It's about the owner's generosity that flows not in response to what we have done but from his nature of compassion and his choice to give. If your eyes are good you will see God's gracious goodness and be filled with gratitude that you have received it. And you will be filled with thanksgiving that others receive it as well.

the last will be first and the first last: Who is last and then becomes first in this parable? It's those who were hired late in the day. They will feel the great generosity of the owner. The expectation of earthly reward motivating our service to God is not what the Kingdom of God is 'like'. If we ask, (like the disciples) "What then will we have?", we exhibit values that are not a part of the Kingdom. The Kingdom is all about the incredibly generous gift of Grace given to all its inhabitants which changes us from reward seekers to humble and grateful servants of the One who made all things.