

CALVARY CHAPEL OF PHILADELPHIA

**CHILDREN'S MINISTRY**

**2ND GRADE**

**TEACHER'S PACKET**

**SUNDAY MORNING**

Study 22

*The Parable of the Laborers*



# The Parable of the Laborers

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

These are the books of the Bible we will be memorizing. New books for this month are in bold. If a student can memorize all the books up to this month's books, you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

**Objective** This lesson will give the students an understanding of God's grace, showing that God rewards as He sees fit, not in the ways that we would expect.

## Key Verses

Matthew 20:1-16—Main Teaching Passage  
Matthew 19:27-30

## Books to Memorize

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1&2 Samuel, 1&2 King, 1&2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, **Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum**

## Hook

Ask the kids if they know what the word "grace" means. Explain to them that grace is when we get something good that we don't deserve.

An example of this might be a birthday present. You don't have to do anything to earn a birthday present, but because your parents love you, they might give you something on your birthday to show you their love.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

# BOOK

The parable of the laborers in the vineyard is a response to the question asked by Peter in Matthew 19:27: "See we have left all [we have] and followed you. Therefore what shall we have?" Peter was asking Jesus what the disciples' reward will be for following Him. Jesus responded with the parable found in Matthew 20:1-16.

In the parable, a landowner hires some workers in the morning, promising to pay them a denarius for their work (a fair day's pay). Throughout the day, he hires more and more workers, promising only to pay them "whatever is right," but making no specific financial agreement with them. At the end of the day, the workers who worked all day received the same pay as the workers who only worked for a few hours. Those who worked all day complained that they should receive more, but the landowner reminds them that he paid them exactly what they agreed to at the start of the day. The landowner is free to pay the men whatever he wants, and he does so. If he wants to pay the workers who came later more than they earned, that's his choice. Jesus told the disciples that this is what the Kingdom of Heaven shall be like, and that when God rewards the disciples, they should not be surprised if He also chooses to reward others in the same way, or even giving them more. Jesus finishes by stating that this is what He means when He says that the first shall be last and the last shall first.

# LOOK

In our Bible study, Jesus answered a very interesting question: "What do we get for following you?" The disciples were asking Him what they were going to receive for leaving everything behind, including their families, their homes, all their stuff, to follow after Jesus. Jesus told them in 19:28-30 that those who followed Him will sit on thrones like kings, judging the people of God. What an amazing reward for following Jesus! Then Jesus adds a little warning: don't become prideful. God is going to reward people however He sees fit, whether or not you like it.

You might think to yourself that it is unfair that the disciples got to follow Jesus in person and see all the things that He did when you weren't even born yet. How come they get such a great reward? Our parable today answers that question. You see the disciples are like the men who got hired by the landowner in the morning. At the end of the day, they received exactly what the landowner had promised them.

You and I are like the people who were hired later in the day. Even though they weren't there at first, and even though the work that they did

The interpretation/exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

## LOOK (Continued)

was different than those who were there first, the reward that was given at the end of the day was the same. The same way, our reward is no different from that of Jesus' first disciples.

Any reward that we get, anything at all that we receive from the Lord is all, because of grace. Grace is a wonderful word that means that we get something that we didn't deserve. If God gives you anything it is only because He loves you and He wants you to have it, not because you deserved it.

So what are the rewards that God gives to those who follow Him? There are many, but two of the most important are: one, Jesus comes into your life and lives with you, helping you every single day, and two, you get to live with Jesus forever. We don't earn these incredible gifts, we don't deserve these wonderful rewards, but because God loves us so much He desires to give them to us anyway.

You and I don't have the opportunity to speak to Jesus and listen to Him teach like the disciples did, but that doesn't mean that our reward for following Him will be any different from theirs. This story shows us that we don't have to worry about rewards and blessings, that anything we get from Him is from grace anyway.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

## TOOK

Review the lesson by asking the students to summarize the events of the parable. Ask how the landowner shows us what God's grace is. Have them give examples of grace that He shows us.

**Pray:** Thank the Lord for the grace He gives to us. Ask Him to keep us from being prideful about our heavenly rewards.

**Parent Question:** What things has God given you that you don't deserve?

# FURTHER STUDY

## Commentary on Matthew 20:1-16 by David Guzik

A. The parable of the workers in the vineyard.

1. ([Mat 20:1-2](#)) A landowner's workers early in the morning.

**"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard."**

a. **For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner:** Like many of Jesus' parables, this story is about an employer and those who work for him. Jesus will use this story to answer a question from [Matthew 19:27](#): *See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?* His reply came in stages.

- First, a promise of reward ([Matthew 19:28](#)).

- Second, a warning that God's manner of distributing reward is not necessarily the manner of men (*many who are the first will be last, and the last first*, [Matthew 19:30](#)).

- Finally, this parable that illustrates the principle that God's manner of rewarding is not like man's practice of giving rewards.

b. **To hire laborers for his vineyard:** The landowner went to the marketplace, which was the gathering place for day laborers. A man who wanted to work came there first thing in the morning, carrying his tools, and waited until someone hired him.

c. **Early in the morning:** This is literally "at dawn," usually reckoned to be about 6:00 in the morning. These workers hired at the very beginning of the working day **agreed** to work **for a denarius a day**, the common daily wage for a workingman. This was an entirely normal arrangement.

2. ([Mat 20:3-7](#)) Through the day, the landowner continues to hire workers.

**"And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.'"**

a. **And he went out about the third hour:** The **third hour** was about 9:00 a.m.; the **sixth hour** was about 12 noon; the **eleventh hour** was about 5:00 in the evening. Through the day, the landowner went to the place where the laborers gathered, found some **standing idle in the marketplace**, and hired them to do the work in his **vineyard**.

i. "If the harvest was not ingathered 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." (Barclay)

- ii. The picture is that the landowner had an inexhaustible supply of work for those who wanted to work. The impression is that the landowner was *surprised* to find people **idle**, because he had plenty of work to give them.
  - iii. Spurgeon applied this to us spiritually: “Why is any one of *us* remaining idle towards God? Has nothing yet had power to engage us to sacred service? Can we dare to say, ‘*No man hath hired us?*’”
  - b. **Whatever is right I will give you...whatever is right you will receive:** The landowner promised the earliest workers a day’s wage (*a denarius a day*). The other workers hired through the day were not promised a *specific* wage, only **whatever is right**. He promised to pay all the later workers fairly.
3. ([Mat 20:8-10](#)) The landowner pays his workers.

**So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, ‘Call the laborers and give them *their* wages, beginning with the last to the first.’ And when those came who *were hired* about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius.**

- a. **Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first:** These are day laborers, so they are paid at the end of each day. When it came time to pay the workers, the men hired last were paid first – and paid for a full day of work!
- i. The men who were hired at the **eleventh hour** – who worked only about one hour – were obviously elated about being paid first, and being paid for a full day.
- b. **They supposed that they would receive more:** The men who worked for the landowner all day saw the men who worked for only an hour come away from the pay table, and they **supposed**, “If the landowner is paying these guys a full day’s pay for one hour’s work, then we will get far more.”
- i. The *order* of payment was important. If the first workers had been paid first, they would not have had time to develop the expectation of more pay for themselves. “Possibly *the first* felt their vanity wounded by being paid after the others. They used their waiting time in considering their own superiority to the latecomers.” (Spurgeon)
- c. **They likewise received a denarius:** Yet the men hired first – early in the day, and who had worked all day – got paid exactly what the landowner had promised them (*a denarius a day*, [Matthew 20:2](#)). The landowner did exactly as promised, but their supposition of more pay than promised was disappointed.

4. ([Mat 20:11-15](#)) The complaint of the early workers.

**“And when they had received *it*, they complained against the landowner, saying, ‘These last *men* have worked *only* one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.’ But he answered one of them and said, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take *what is yours* and go your way. I wish to give to this last man *the same* as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?’”**

- a. **They complained against the landowner:** After being paid, the men hired first took up their complaint with the landowner. They were offended that the landowner gave the men who worked less **equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day**.
- i. “The money was paid by the overseer, but he was standing by enjoying the scene.” (Bruce)

- ii. It is easy to sympathize with these who had worked all day. They worked while the others were idle. They worked in **the heat of the day** while others shaded themselves. Yet they were paid exactly the same.
- b. **Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?** The landowner reminded them that he had been completely fair to them. He did them **no wrong**, and had broken no promise.
- c. **I wish to give to this last man the same as to you:** The landowner did nothing to *explain* why he did it, other than simply to say “**I wish.**” The reasons for the landowner’s generosity were completely in the landowner himself, and *not in the ones who received.*
- d. **Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?** The landowner rebuked them for their jealousy and resentment of the landowner’s generosity towards others. He also strongly claimed his right to do what he wanted with what was his.
- i. The “evil eye” was a jealous, envious eye. The landowner asked if they were jealous because the landowner was generous to other people. “The ‘evil eye’ was an idiom used to refer to jealousy (cf. [Deuteronomy 15:9](#); [1 Samuel 18:9](#)).” (Carson)
- ii. “An *evil eye* was a phrase in use, among the ancient Jews, to denote an *envious, covetous* man or disposition; a man who repined at his neighbour’s prosperity, loved his own money, and would do nothing in the way of charity for God’s sake.” (Clarke)
- 5. ([Mat 20:16](#)) The parable applied: the principle of God’s reward.

**“So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.”**

- a. **So the last will be first, and the first last:** Peter and the disciples knew they had given up a great deal to follow Jesus. Peter wanted to know what they would get in return. Through this parable Jesus assured Peter and the disciples that they will be rewarded – but the principle of *many who are first will be last and the last first* ([Matthew 19:30](#)) meant that God may not reward as man expects – even as the parable illustrated.
- i. Some think this parable speaks of the way that people come to God at different stages of their life. They may come at the beginning of their life, in their youth, in adulthood, in old age, or at the very end. Others think it refers to how the gospel first dawned with John the Baptist, then the preaching of Jesus, then the preaching at Pentecost, then to the Jews, and finally to the Gentiles. It is best understood as a parable about grace and reward.
- ii. The disciples should expect to be rewarded; but they should not be surprised if, when rewards are distributed, God will reward others in unexpected ways.
- b. **Last will be first, and the first last:** This is the essence of God’s *grace*, when He rewards and blesses man according to His will and pleasure, not necessarily according to what men deserve.
- i. The system of law is easy to figure out: you get what you deserve. The system of grace is foreign to us: God deals with us according to who *He* is, not according to who *we* are.
- ii. It is important to see that the landowner did not treat anyone *unfairly*, though he was more *generous* to some than to others. We can be assured that God will never, ever be unfair to us, though He may – for His own purpose and pleasure – bestow greater blessing on someone else who seems less deserving.
- iii. The point isn’t that all have the same reward – though all God’s people do go to the same heaven (where they will have reward in different measure). The point is that God rewards on the principle of grace, and we should therefore expect surprises. He will never be *less* than fair, but reserves the right to be *more* than fair as

pleases Him. God's grace always operates righteously.

iv. This parable is not a perfect illustration of God's grace, because the principle of working and deserving is involved. The grace of God does not give us *more* blessing than we deserve – it gives blessing to us completely apart from the principle of deserving.

v. Living under grace is sort of a two-edged sword. Under grace, we can't come to God complaining, "Don't I deserve better than this"; because God will reply, "Does this mean that you really want Me to give you what you deserve?"

vi. Grace should be especially manifested in our service; it is of grace, not works.

- All our service is already due to God; it belongs to Him.
- The ability to serve God is the gift of His grace.
- The call to serve God is the gift of His grace.
- Every opportunity to serve is a gift of His grace.
- Being in the right state of mind to do the Lord's work is a gift of grace.
- Successful service to God is the gift of His grace.

vii. "My last word to God's children is this: what does it matter, after all, whether we are first or whether we are last? Do not let us dwell too much upon it, for *we all share the honor given to each*. When we are converted, we become members of Christ's living body; and as we grow in grace, and get the true spirit that permeates that body, we shall say, when any member of it is honored, 'This is honor for us'...If any brother shall be greatly honored of God, I feel honored in his honor. If God shall bless your brother, and make him ten times more useful than you are, then you see that he is blessing you — not only blessing him, but you. If my hand has something in it, my foot does not say, 'Oh, I have not got it!' No, for if my hand has it, my foot has it; it belongs to the whole of my body." (Spurgeon)

c. **For many are called, but few chosen:** This was said in the context of this illustration of grace. Jesus emphasized that both the calling and the choosing of God is based on His grace – *especially* His choosing.