

Session 11 – The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard | Matthew 19:14 -20:16

Matthew 19:14-29 | The Context

- Verses 19:14-15 – the reminder that *humility* was required for entrance to the Kingdom. This is not the same occasion as in Matthew 18:8, but is a reminder of that message.
- Verses 19:16-22 – The Rich Young Ruler
 - This is not a parable.
 - Note that the modern versions have different wording in vv. 16-17 due to a textual variation.
 - The recipient of the question was the **Good Master** (Jesus Christ). Jesus challenged the man's use of that term because only God is good.
 - It is fundamentally important to note that Jesus does not challenge the heart of his question: **what good thing shall I do?** Why doesn't Jesus say, "Son, it is not what you DO, it is what you BELIEVE?" Could it be that this young man lived in a dispensation in which he needed to *do something*?
 - Note that everything in Jesus' answers leaves the young man with the impression that you can *do something* (namely, obey the commandments) in order to inherit eternal life.
 - Standard options in commentary when a failure to rightly divide is assumed:
 - Jesus spoke to this man's hidden greed (the problem being that He did not speak to this man's greatest need).
 - James Montgomery Boice – "The specifics may be different, but the demand is the same for all people. To be saved we must deny ourselves, take up our crosses daily, and follow Jesus"¹
 - Jesus didn't tell this man the truth because he was not one of the elect (the problem being that this same theology holds that, if he wasn't elect, he couldn't have accepted the Gospel anyway).
 - Jesus told this man the right answer, and the church is getting the Gospel wrong.
 - James Montgomery Boice - "because it fails to articulate this cost, much of today's church "isn't preaching Jesus' gospel!"¹
 - Honest options:
 - If Jesus led this man astray, Jesus is unworthy to be followed.
 - If Jesus did not lead the man astray, then the man could **inherit eternal life** by obedience to the commandments.
 - If the above is true, then we must determine if it is true for all time.
 - If it is not true for all time, we must become a dispensationalist.
- Verses 23-29 – The future Kingdom blessing
 - Verses 23-26 – The challenge of riches
 - Verses 27-29 - The answer for those who had **forsaken all**

Matthew 19:30-20:16 | The Laborers in the Vineyard

- Verse 19:30 –
 - This verse connects with the following parable, which is "book-ended" with these words (here and Matt. 20:16).
 - It aligns with the context of humility for the Kingdom.

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 409.

- Verse 20:1 –
 - The word **householder** is stronger than *servants* (used in the parable of the unmerciful king - Matt 18:23ff) and **steward** (used in the parable of the unjust steward - Lk 16:1ff). The word is οἰκοδεσπότης [oikodespotes], the *despot of the house* - the clear and ultimate ruler.
 - This man came to **hire labourers unto his vineyard**. The **vineyard** is the nation of Israel (not the church). Compare Isaiah 5:1-7 (especially verse 7) and Psalm 80:8-9. All interpretations must be about Israel.
 - The **labourers** appear to be the apostles, the first to be called.
- Verse 20:2 –
 - The **penny a day** wages was a *denarion*, the standard daily wage.
 - The English word **penny** was a word that was used for any coin. Oxford English Dictionary defines as “Any of various monetary units or coins of the British Isles.”
 - Note that there wasn’t a huge wage promised to the first labourers.
- Verses 20:3-4 –
 - The **third hour** is 9 AM.
 - The only relevant use is in Acts 2:15, where we are told that Pentecost occurred at **the third hour of the day**. (The crucifixion was also at the third hour, but seemingly has no connection to this parable).
 - Beginning with Pentecost, other laborers are recruited. These laborers sell everything they have (unlike the previous chapter) and began to labor.
- Verse 20:5 –
 - Peter’s vision took place at the **sixth** hour (Acts 10:9) and Cornelius and others (see Acts 21:16) became laborers. Cornelius saw his vision on the **ninth hour** (Acts 10:3).
 - Note that these times could be purely coincidental and unrelated.
- Verses 20:6-7 –
 - Who are these hired at **the eleventh hour**? Clearly those who joined just before the “end of the day.” That is, the last of those who spread the Kingdom Gospel.
 - They could be men like Dionysius the Areopagite, Damaras (Acts 17:34), Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:2), Crispus (Acts 18:8), etc.
 - However, because the nation rejected the message (Acts 28:25-26), the nation was destroyed and the final **eleventh hour** workers are going to be those of the tribulation, and the prophecy of Matthew 24:14 will be fulfilled.
- Verses 20:8-16 –
 - Note that in Matthew 19:29 **every one that hath forsaken** each received a **hundredfold** as well as **everlasting life**.
 - When the master of the house **answered one of them** could it have been directed to Peter, who asked the original question in Matthew 19:27?
 - In this parable the mystery was revealed that the nation would receive the reward of the Kingdom equally, regardless of the era in which they lived.