

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #234

Jesus' Final Journey to Jerusalem Jesus' Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard MT 20.1-16

1 "For the Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who went out first thing in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. 2 He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

3 "At nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing around in the marketplace. 4 He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' 5 So they went.

"He went out again at noon and at three in the afternoon and did the same thing. 6 At five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?'

7 "'Because no one has hired us,' they answered. He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.'

8 "When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with those hired last, and moving on to the first.'

9 "The workers who were hired at five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. 10 So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. 11 When they received it, they began to complain against the landowner.

12 "'These who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne all the burden of the work and the heat of the day.'

13 "But he answered one of them, 'I am not being unjust to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? 14 Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. 15 Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?'

16 "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

CONTEXT DIGEST	
Location	Somewhere on the Road to Jerusalem
Timeline	March (Month 38)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage VII: Jesus' Ministry in Perea
	C. Jesus' Final Journey to Jerusalem
Title	12. Jesus' Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard

COMMENT:

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Jesus had ended his explanation of the perils of riches and the rewards of faithfulness in the preceding paragraph with the saying: **"Many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."** In today's reading he told a parable to further explain this truth. Note that the parable ended with the same statement, in inverted order. The teaching of the parable is synonymous with the earlier lesson.

The parable was based upon the sovereign authority of the landowner. As the owner of the land, he had the right to do what he wanted with it. He had the resources to hire laborers, and the right to expect their labor. He expected his manager to serve him faithfully. Because God is the single, sovereign maker and ruler of the universe, all people are accountable to him, and responsible before him. That is the reality in which we all live.

Jesus emphasized two things about God's sovereignty in this story. First, God is good, and therefore he is just and righteous. He discussed the wages in advance and agreed with the workers regarding them. When he hired workers later in the day, he promised that he would pay them "what is right." He kept his promises. When some of the workers complained about their wages, he gently called them "friend." The moral goodness of the landowner caused him to be fair, just, righteous, and faithful to his word in all his dealings with his workers. God is like that.

Secondly, the landowner was also ridiculously generous. Though he did not owe the people who only worked an hour a denarius, he paid them the same wage as those who worked all day. Rather than being unfair to the workers who were hired at the beginning of the day, he was being gracious and giving to those who were last. As the sovereign landowner, he had the right to be as generous and gracious as he wanted to be. God's righteousness does not limit his generosity in any way.

Because God is both righteous and gracious, many people who are "first" in this world--who are sufficient in themselves...the "rich"--will find that they are last at the final judgement, and in the age to come. Conversely, many of the the "poor" in this life, who are "last" in this age, will find that they come out "first" in the final judgement, and in the age to come.

The final coming of King Jesus to reign in his kingdom will turn this world's values and priorities right side up in an eternal, instant adjustment. In that day, everyone will experience God's righteousness and justice in the judgement. The "poor in spirit" in this world will also receive God's eternal generosity in the grace and mercy of his Son. The "Great Reversal" will certainly come at the end of that day.

APPLICATION:

Matthew was the only gospel writer to include this parable. It is interesting that a tax collector--an accountant in our world--included this story about keeping "fair" accounts with worker's wages. The personality and perspective of a man who handled accounts shows through here. This is an encouraging reminder that God uses our personalities, life experiences, and expertise in his kingdom. He wastes nothing and makes use of everything, working it all together for good. This is part of his generosity toward the "poor in spirit."

There will be no complaining at the final judgement. Everyone will declare--to his glory-- that God is perfectly righteous and just in his judgement. At the same time, the "poor in spirit" will experience God's generosity that will lift them out of every pain, heartache, suffering, and malady of this life into the radiant glory of being transformed into the perfect moral likeness of Jesus, qualified for the full intimacy of fellowship with the Trinity in perfect love. We will be co-heirs with Jesus!

Are you "standing around, doing nothing" in your relationship with God?

How can the certainty of God's generosity towards you create motivation to serve him more faithfully today?