

140. The Workers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16)

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank You for including us in Your kingdom. Thank You for giving the same gift of heaven to all people who trust in Jesus. Help us continue faithful and always work for You. Help us be satisfied and thank You for Your wonderful gifts for us, and not to demand more. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

Matthew 20:1-2. Jesus told a story about the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is the same as this: A man owned a vineyard. Early in the morning at 6:00 a.m., he went out to hire people to work in his vineyard. He found people and agreed to give them normal pay for one full day of work. He sent them into his vineyard to work."

- Jesus is telling a story that shows something about what God's kingdom is like. What does the vineyard represent? Who does the owner represent? Who do the workers represent?
- How much did the owner agree to pay the workers? How long will those men work for their money? (A normal work day was 6:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.)

Matthew 20:3-4. At 9:00 a.m., the owner went out again. He saw people standing around, not working. He told them, "You go work in my vineyard. I will give you the right pay." So they went.

- Did the owner have enough people to work? What did he do?
- How long will these people work, hired at 9:00 a.m.? What did the owner promise to pay them?

Matthew 20:5-7. The owner went out at noon and 3:00 p.m. He saw more people not working and told them to go work in his vineyard. Again, he said he will pay what is right. At 5:00 p.m., the owner went out again. He found more people standing around. The owner asked them, "All day you stand here and do nothing? Why?" They answered, "No one hired us to work." The owner told them, "You go work in my vineyard."

- The owner went out 3 more times. How long will these people work? What did the owner say he will pay them?

Matthew 20:8-12. Evening came (6:00 p.m.). The owner told the foreman, “Call the workers to come here. The people hired last, pay them first. The people hired first, pay them last.” The people who started work at 5:00 p.m. came, and each person got paid for a full day of work. The people who got hired first came. They thought they would get more pay. But the owner paid each person for one full day of work. When they saw their money, they complained. They said, “The last men you hired only worked one hour. We worked hard all day in the heat. You made those men equal to us!”

- How much did owner pay the men who worked one hour? How much did the owner pay the men who worked 12 hours?
- What did the men who worked all day think about their pay? Why?

Matthew 20:13-16. The owner said to one man, “Friend, I am not doing wrong. We agreed you will work and I will give you the normal pay for one full day of work, right? Take your pay and go. But I want to give the last man the same pay. It is my money. I can do what I want with my money, right? Are you jealous because I want to give?” Jesus said, “This is how the last will become first, and the first will become last.”

- What did the owner and the first workers agree about?
- Why did the other workers (hired at 9:00, 12:00, 3:00 and 5:00) get paid for a full day of work?
- Suppose a person lives their whole life as a faithful Christian. What does God give them when they die? Another person is an unbeliever and becomes a Christian only a couple months before he dies. What does God give him?
- What should be our attitude about people who become Christians later in life?