

ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES, VALLEY BIBLE CHURCH, GORDON
KEMBLE

Parables Lesson 8: What is God Like? He gives more grace.

THE CRAZY EMPLOYER

Matthew 20:1-16

Introduction:

The next two lessons include three parables that tie together:

The first applies to God's relationship to man--

It is a story of mercy and grace

The second applies to man's relationship to man--

It is a story of love and forgiveness

They reveal to us the heart of God, but also our responsibility to respond to His heart by becoming less like our natural selves and more like him.

The chapters of Matthew immediately before today's parable are packed with important teaching. They discuss information of who Jesus is and what He came to do (die) and instruction about faith, humility, prayer, power, mercy, and forgiveness.

In chapter 19, verse 1 we see Jesus left Galilee and went to Judea with great multitudes of people following him (v 2) and, as usual He was healing all that needed healing.

The Pharisees, obviously worried about His growing popularity, tried to trap him in a common argument about marriage and divorce. Should divorce be granted to a man only in cases of a wife's sexual immorality, or for just any reason (She burned the soup, she didn't starch his collars, etc.). Jesus dealt with this by referring to the teachings of Scripture. By the way, the teaching has more to do with re-marriage than divorce.

Next Jesus rebuked his followers for keeping the children from "bothering" Him using that opportunity to give them and us one more glimpse of the Kingdom.

Immediately preceding our story is the episode that had been labeled The Rich Young Ruler vv 19-30: Review story.

Is Jesus beginning a new cult that insists that to follow Him everyone must sell everything and give the money to the poor? No. Jesus knows that the one thing that keeps this rich young man, and most very rich people from coming to Jesus is their commitment to their money.

In fact, this problem is so serious that Jesus makes this startling statement in verse 24, "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." (Don't downplay the degree of difficulty by making this a hyperbole.)

Jesus means just what He says. When the disciples reacted by asking, "If a wonderful young man who has kept the commandments and is rich and successful can't get into heaven, who then can be saved?" the answer is clear--NOBODY!

"With man this is impossible." There is nothing man can DO, or BE, or OWN to be saved. "But with God all things are possible." God has to bring about a miracle of changed heart, including a change in priority or none can come.

Peter reacts, just as some of us might. "What about us, we left everything to follow." *Jesus' response is surprising and fun and is the background for today's parable.* He tells Peter that those who have left all to follow will receive great rewards, in fact they even get eternal life, BUT there will be some surprises--(v 30) "But many who are first will be last and the last first.

John Newton said: *"When I get to heaven, I shall see there three wonders. The first will be the many persons there I did not expect to see; the second will be to miss many whom I expected to see; the greatest wonder of all will be to find myself there."*

STORY OF THE CRAZY EMPLOYER: Read Matthew 20:1-16

I. HIRING

A. Early Start

1. The Deal

A vineyard owners produce is ripe and he needs pickers. He went out very early to the market place to find day-laborers to hire for the job.

He made a deal (v 2)--One denarius for a days labor. That would be a pretty good wage, about the amount made by a soldier in the Roman army, for about 12 hours work, 6 to 6, sun up to sun down.

2. The Need

Perhaps the owner underestimated his need for workers. He returned at the third hour (9 AM) to hire more men.

He made a deal with them also, "You go out into my vineyard and I will pay you what's fair." They really needed the work and perhaps they knew his reputation so they signed up and went to work. (vv 3-4)

B. Later

1. Ditto

The owner returns the sixth hour (12 noon) and the ninth hour (3 PM) and hires more. (v 5)

He made the same deal. "Trust me, I will be fair."

2. Desperation

The day is waning and the crop must be harvested while it is ripe and before it spoils. He needs more workers and he needs them now. So, at the eleventh hour (5 PM), with only one hour of daylight left he returns to the market. (vv 6-7)

"Why are you guys just standing around?" Because no one wanted us." "I want you, and I want you now. Get to work and I'll pay you what is fair."

Desperate for anything, they trust him and go to work.

II. PAYING

The owner told his Steward to call all his workers together to pay them for their labor. He has a great surprise in store for them all.

A. The Last

1. Last hired

The men who were hired at five o'clock can expect 1/12th of a day's wage at best. In fact many owners would give them nothing but a piece of bread for their work, and they would be glad to get it. Life wasn't fair.

BUT, they received a full day's wage. (v 9) This is unbelievable. They are excited, not ecstatic.

2. The middle hired

The other partial-day laborers came, and each received a full denarius--a full day's wage.

This is an unexpected bonus, everybody is happy.

B. The First

1. The workers hired first who slaved in the hot sun all day now come to be paid.

What do they expect? The Lord is generous, even extravagant. Surely they can expect to get MORE.

2. They come to the steward's table and he places their wages before them. They reach out to take them expecting to find an extra bonus. If the Lord pays the other so well what will he pay them? find And they find ONE DENARIUS--A FULL DAY'S WAGE.

Wait a minute. What is wrong with this picture? It isn't fair. Everybody is happy but the full-day workers and they are livid.

III. REACTIONS

A. Full-day Worker's

1. They leave the money on the table, rush past the steward to the master: *"The last men have worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the heat of the day."* (v 12)

We worked twelve times as long and in the heat (gk=the burning or the burner referring to the east desert wind). Compare the fruit, weight the baskets.

2. Actually you paid us far less than any of them. That isn't fair. Don't you tend to agree. Have you ever had someone hired for the same job you do later and paid a higher wage than you got when you started? What happened to labor laws?

B. The Lord's--Read vv 13-15

1. Did I really cheat you?

Didn't you make a deal with me for a generous wage and didn't I pay as promised? Pick up your money and get out.

2. It's my money.

If I chose to be generous with my own money and pay everyone the same, why is that not fair. I can do what I want with what is mine to give.

Does it bother you to see others treated well. Can't you be happy for their good fortune. (It reminds me of the lost son's older brother.)

IV. GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

A. From the view of Fairness and Justice

1. Was the Lord fair? Yes, he paid what he promised.
2. Was the Lord just and good?

Yes, he paid not for what they did but for their willingness to work for him. They were grateful for any work and he rewarded them.

God gives the same salvation to all, rich or poor, eight or eighty, if they only come into His Kingdom.

B. From the view of Motives and Quantity

1. Mercenary motives have no place in eternal reward. Jesus taught if we serve for earthly reward that is all the reward we will get.
2. Pure and sacrificial motives bring eternal reward. The poor widow was honored because she gave all she had. "Store up treasure in heaven where moth and dust cannot corrupt and thieves cannot break in and steal."

C. From the view of Mercy and Grace

1. The Lord didn't have to hire any of those workers. None of them had control of the master. Whom he chose and what he chose to pay were at his discretion.

None of us get what we deserve. We are recipients of God's mercy, His unearned favor, so we should glory in his goodness and mercy and grace to all men.

2. Whatever god chooses to give is by His grace.

The Biblical principle is, "What is the big deal if we do what we should? That is what any good servant does."

We are forever deeply in debt to God for His great gift of eternal life.

That is the theme of our next lesson, so join us next week.