

Series: The Kingdom of Jesus

Message: Descriptions of the Kingdom-Laborers in the Vineyard

Scripture: Matthew 20:1-16

**Introduction:** The description of the Kingdom Jesus gave us in this story of the Laborers was directly related to the events leading up to the story. These events are recorded in Matthew 19

- The encounter with the Rich Young ruler-19: 16-24
- The disciples question- “who can be saved?” 19:25-26
- Peter’s question- Matt. 19:27-on screen
- Jesus statement about Reward-19:28-29
- Jesus statement- “The first will be last and the last, first”

From this story of the Laborers Jesus is sharing at least 2 primary truths for us to embrace today

1. The kingdom is a Kingdom of Grace.
2. Jesus is the ultimate Reward of the Kingdom.

### **The Kingdom is a Kingdom of Grace**

Those who have believed in Jesus and have received the gift of eternal life understand that the forgiveness of sin and the new birth in Christ is by God’s Grace alone.

The trouble is that many in thoughts & actions do not seem to understand that the rewards of the Kingdom for serving & living for Jesus are also by God’s Grace alone.

The envious response of those who worked all day in the fields to those who only work a few hours is an indication of not understanding grace.

Being called to serve in God's vineyard is a gift of Grace. Being rewarded in any way for the privilege of serving Jesus who gave his all to redeem us is grace. Our receiving of the reward should be in an attitude of humility and grace as well. The laborers are sought out by the owner of the field. If he did not seek them they could never have been in the field and they would not have received the reward. The first ones in the field who felt that they had been mistreated needed to be reminded who the owner was and of the reality that he can handle his vineyard and workers as he desired. He can give grace to whomever he wants, whenever he wants.

Those who were called to labor in the field later can be understood in many ways. Here are two thoughts.

1. Perhaps they did not have the opportunity to work until later.

What if the call from the owner for workers did not come to them until later. If we view this kingdom principle from the view point of history we see the movement of Christianity going from Europe to North America. Then it moves to South America to Africa & Asia. Many people in Africa & Asia have only had a Gospel witness for 50 years. Some still have had no witness of the Gospel. Those come to the vineyard later at the last hour. Should they not receive the same reward?

2. Perhaps some come later in life to trust in Christ. The thief on the cross came at the final hour. He did not expect or ask for any reward. He only asked to be remembered. Jesus promised him the full reward. Jesus said you will be with me in paradise. Those who would say I will enjoy this world & then later in life I will give myself to Jesus misunderstood several truths.

## **Truths Misunderstood**

- You can only come to Jesus when the call comes to you from God's Grace. To ignore now the conviction of God & call of God to trust Jesus may be the final opportunity you are given.
- The world cannot satisfy the true longing of the soul. Why waste the precious life & time given by God on something that is empty.
- The world, once pursued, will enslave both the mind and the body. This will make it more difficult to choose to trust Jesus and it will be more difficult to walk in freedom from guilt & shame once you do trust in Jesus.
- The truth is that Jesus is the source of real meaning in life. It is sad to see a follower of Jesus always seeking from people or things in this world the peace, joy, and contentment which is found only in Jesus. Jesus is in them. His peace, joy, love and contentment are all available to them if they would seek to know Him. The opportunity to serve Him and live for Him brings the reward of knowing Him. Knowing Him is the ultimate Prize of Grace whether we come to Him early or late.

## **Jesus is the Ultimate Reward of the Kingdom**

If Jesus is the ultimate reward of Heaven would not knowing Him more now be the ultimate reward for us in this world too? How we view the kingdom determines if we can truly see Jesus as the ultimate reward.

We hear the testimonies of suffering pastors in Asia or other parts of the world and we are bewildered by their stories.

For preaching and teaching Jesus to the village they are beaten, and imprisoned. One pastor was placed in a 3x4 cage for many years. He was beaten and tortured yet he would not renounce his faith in Jesus, Once released he was interviewed. The person doing the interview said they were sorry for all he had endured. The pastor stopped the person saying “do not feel sorry”. I have had the joy of fellowshiping with my Jesus at such a great level. I know Him more now in the power of His resurrection & fellowship of His sufferings. I am so blessed.

We, like Jesus disciples, often cannot grasp these concepts. We have become convinced that the rewards of following Jesus must be something from this world. In **John 17:3** Jesus tells us plainly that Eternal life is Knowing Him. **Read John 17:3 Here**. When we choose to seek first His Kingdom & Righteousness, then He meets all our needs. (**Matthew 6:33-on screen**). If we seek to meet all our wants & needs first then we will be disappointed.

The devil uses 3 primary temptations. In 1 John 2:16 we are told they are the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the eyes, and Pride of Life. All 3 of these offer a cheap substitute for the real prize, Jesus. These temptations seek to cause us to believe that some temporary pleasure or comfort will truly satisfy. If we will be honest however we see evidence all around us that this is a lie.

The lust of the flesh-to try to find satisfaction this way by feeding the flesh will only lead to enslavement & it can never be satisfied.

The lust of the eyes-we see something or someone or someday to enjoy life & pursue it-we see, we want, we get it then find it that it does not meet our need. We therefore must see & have something else.

The pride of life-we seek position or place. We feel & believe that we deserve certain things. This is the spirit of envy we see in the first group of laborers. Envy does not necessarily have to have more. It just requires that others have less. To serve Jesus with an "I deserve" mindset is to miss the real prize, Jesus Himself.

King Solomon pursued all 3 of these temptations fully with all of his God given wisdom. No man had ever experienced more wealth & power. No man has ever explored more lust of flesh & eyes. No man has ever attained more Pride of Life. Yet Solomon sums all of it up as Vanity. (**Ecclesiastes 1:2-on screen**) Solomon calls this pursuit, chasing the wind. It is like cotton candy. It looks satisfying but really is only air & leaves a stain. Solomon said to find purpose we must Fear God and obey his commands. Only in a right relationship with God can we experience the true reward of eternal life, Knowing Jesus.

The Apostle Paul said that all he attained in life he counted as less than nothing for the joy of Knowing Jesus more. He was pursuing the real prize Jesus. (Philippians 3) Let's not wait till Heaven to enjoy the true reward. The kingdom is grace from beginning until the end. The Kingdom of Jesus!

**Applications:**

- 1) Is God calling you to belong to Him & to serve in His Kingdom through Jesus? Respond in trust today.
- 2) Are you enjoying the true reward of Grace and Faith now? (Jesus) **or** Are you being deceived?
- 3) Are you being deceived to pursue the lust of your flesh & eyes believing that experiences or attaining things or lifestyles in this world will satisfy?
- 4) Are you deceived into pursuing the pride of life leading you to disappointment & envy & jealousy?
- 5) Has the enemy deceived you into an “I deserve” mindset like these first laborers in the field?
- 6) These priorities will never satisfy whether you achieve them **or** spend your life longing for them. They will cause you to waste this life & miss out on the joy of Knowing Jesus & experiencing the truth that He is the Ultimate Reward. Only Jesus can truly satisfy your soul.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His Glory & Grace.