

Remembering the Hope of the Gospel

Text

Matthew 20:1-16

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early 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 "About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. 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 about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. ⁶ About 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 foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.'

⁹ "The workers who were hired about 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 grumble 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 the burden of the work and the heat of the day.'

¹³ "But he answered one of them, 'I am not being unfair 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."

As a Christian you can be discouraged about the things going on around you, some are terrible things. But you don't have permission to lose hope.

We follow Jesus who was resurrected from the dead, who healed many and performed miracles...hope is never dead!

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In the midst of a bad economy, the vineyard owner goes out 5 times hiring people to work in his vineyard. There was much to be done in the vineyard.

Remember that a parable is a small story with a big point. What we will see in this parable will be a picture of a generous God.

1) Hope of Righteousness

My hope is in his righteousness, can you imagine for some of the workers serving at this vineyard without knowing what your wage will be. The early workers agreed to work for a "denarius". This was a very generous salary for a days work.

The parable tells us about two types of workers:

- > One is the early guy, he has a degree, he looks professional, has his resume and he is prepared.
- > The other is the late guy he slept in he was sloppy and unprepared.

The way the owner paid them is very telling:

- > The late guys get paid first after working only 2 hours and he pays them a denarius.
- > Then he pays the early guys the same generous wage.

The responses of the workers tells us a lot:

- > The late guy received this generous wage and was silent
- > The early guys response shows us much: "*and you have made them equal to us*"

People respond to God's Grace, kindness and mercy in two ways:

- > The late guy was so thankful that he could not speak.
- > The early guy shows total disdain for the other worker. What this worker shows is a sense of entitlement, but it's worse than that because the sin of the early guy is seeking to *control God's grace and mercy*.

As the disciples listened to Jesus tell the parable of the young rich man they began to wonder who could be saved. But then Jesus said; "*With men it is impossible, but not with God, because all things are possible with God.*"

The fact of the matter is that whether you're rich, poor, an early or late guy we need Jesus to get to heaven. But as important as this is, we also know that "anyone" who believes in Christ as Savior is saved...anyone.

¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. (I John 4:15)

⁹ If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. (Romans 10:9-10)

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The book of Revelation talks about a “Book of Life” that God will read the names from at the end of the age. We need to remember we are not the authors, editors or publishers of that book, God is.

The early guy’s sin was thinking “I worked for you for many hours”. Maybe with us it sounds like; “I have followed you for many years, I have done so much for you”. This can become a merit or work based attitude, in reality it is his grace and mercy.

You are “in” because Jesus is kind and generous. The owner of the vineyard tells the workers that he will pay what is right, the word “right” in the original language means “righteousness”.

2) Hope of the Harvest

In the ancient world the unemployed would go to a particular location and wait for a call to work. There were early guys and late guys.

Our vineyard owner will make 5 rounds of hiring, because it was harvest time. Jesus was referring to the harvest to come, which we currently work and will participate in the future harvest.

This is a challenge to us, that it is 5:00pm these are the end times. Some may think, “why even bother it’s so late”, because the Lord of the Harvest is calling us into his fields. The day is almost done.

3) Hope of the Gospel

As Christians many of us see ourselves as the early guy. In reality we are all 5:00pm people. Where we may grumble after walking and serving the Lord for many years, the real scandal is that we get the same reward as Abraham, Paul, Peter and Mother Teresa!

It is not our responsibility to control the expansiveness of God's grace, but to preach and share it.

“A God of grace will endlessly frustrate those who’ve built their hope on merit”

We are living in the end times, Jesus is coming but thankfully the doors are still open.

The Comparison Peter and Judas

Although we may not always think of these two men as being similar in many ways they were. In their comparison we see God’s grace and our response.

They both walked with Jesus, they saw the healings, miracles and heard him speak. They were both sent out by Jesus and did the same things.

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The difference was that only one of them received God's Grace the other ran away from it. Peter was willing to receive God's Grace and forgiveness, when we betray him will you be willing to come back?

Discussion Questions

- 1) AJ told us that it was normal to become discouraged with all the things going on around us. He also said that we can't allow hope to die, because of who Jesus is and what he had done. What is it about Jesus or what did he do that will always keep hope alive?
- 2) Under the "hope of righteousness", we see two types of workers. One is there early and prepared the other is late. Discuss their responses to being paid, one was thankful and speechless the other only had disdain for the late guy. What does this tell us about each of these workers, a merit based mentality and maybe ourselves?
- 3) The early guys response shows is a sense of entitlement, but please discuss the fact that the sin of the early guy is *seeking to control God's grace and mercy*. What does this mean to you and have you ever been in his shoes?
- 4) We learned that the frantic hiring in the parable was based on the fact that it was harvest time. Please discuss that it is harvest time right now, that we are in the end times and the Lord of Harvest is coming soon. This should not be a "whoop them up" time, but is his coming in our thinking as we go about in our lives with harvest around us?
- 5) So in relation to the "hope of the gospel", how does this statement direct our actions? "It is not our responsibility to control the expansiveness of God's grace, but to preach and share it".
- 6) Lastly, review the comparison between Peter and Judas above. What challenged you, what comforted you or what other impact did it have on you?