

# The Kingdom: Is God Fair?

Matthew 20:1–16

Theology on F.I.R.E. Series



# ◇ What You Read



- ◇ On January 29th you read for your devotions Exodus 19-21 & Matthew 20:1-16.
- ◇ Tonight we are going to look at Matthew 20:1-16 and challenge our view of fairness and God.
- ◇ This is true theology - the study of God.



## ◊ Using F.I.R.E.

- ◊ Pastor Ken created the method of F.I.R.E. in order to understand a passage.
- ◊ Do you know what each letter stands for?

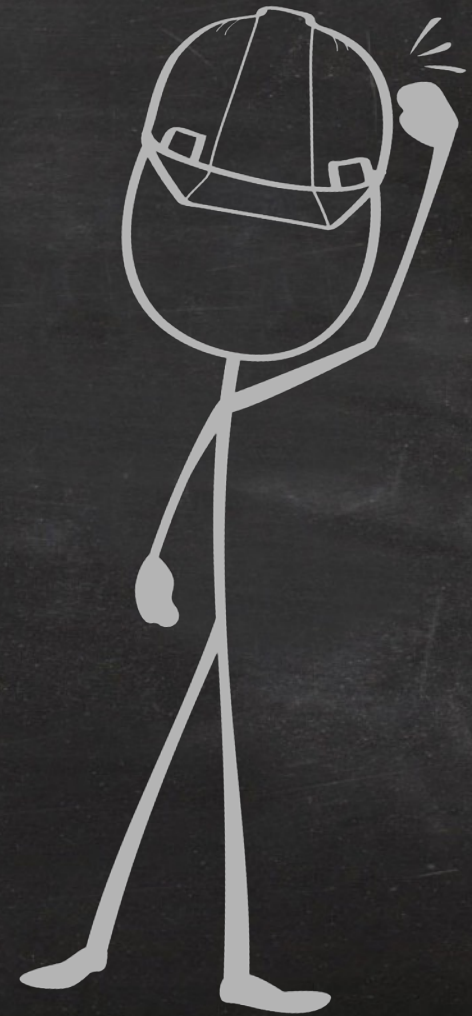


# F.I.R.E. Method

- ◇ The letter F stands for familiarity. This is when you read the text and ask questions to better understand the passage.
  - ◇ read, ask questions, and become familiar with the passage
- ◇ The letter I stands for interpretation. This is when you try to understand the meaning of the text. You answer the questions you asked which interprets the author's intent for this passage.
  - ◇ simply explain the passage
- ◇ The letter R stands for relationship. This is when you look to see the relationship of this passage with other passages.
  - ◇ how does this single passage relate to it's context, book, and entire Bible
- ◇ The letter E stands for employment. What is the timeless truth in this passage. How can we take that truth and employ it in our everyday lives?
  - ◇ how can I employ the timeless truth from this passage?

# Set Matthew 20:1-16 On F.I.R.E.

- ◊ Because time is limited - briefly walk through each step of F.I.R.E. on tonight's passage.
- ◊ Feel free to use any resource you want - but if you use a resource simply cite it.



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# Simple F.I.R.E.

- ◇ Here is a quick example on this passage
  - ◇ Familiarity
    - ◇ What is the Kingdom of Heaven?
    - ◇ Who does the landowner represent?
    - ◇ What does the text mean by 6th and 9th hour
    - ◇ What's a denarius
    - ◇ Who are the workers that come early and those who come late?
    - ◇ What does the proverb mean "first are last and last are first?"

- ◇ The Kingdom of Heaven refers to the 1,000 year Millennial Kingdom (this will also be seen in relationship) however it can also refer to the God's Spiritual Kingdom
- ◇ The Landowner seems to represent God The Father
- ◇ The 6th hour is noon, and the 9th hour is 3pm - NIV
- ◇ A denarius is one days pay - Faithlife Study Bible
- ◇ It appears from the context that the laborers are referring to groups who come early and late to the Kingdom
- ◇ The proverb is an endless cycle. The first become last, the last become first, and so on.
  - ◇ The guys in the front of the line received the same payment as the guys in the back of the line. The guy in the back of the line receives the same payment as the guy in front of the line. Think of this as a wheel - all come out the same. The proverb is saying all will receive the same thing.



◇ From looking at the parable - here are the main characters

◇ Landowner = God

◇ Vineyard = The Kingdom

◇ Laborers = Those who are called into the Kingdom

◇ Day = The Laborers life work

◇ Denarius = Eternal life

◇ God is kind and allows those whom He has chosen into the Kingdom (even those who were late to believe). Those who work at 6 am are like the Disciples who were with Jesus from the beginning and gave up all for the Kingdom. The workers who only worked from 5pm - 6pm are those who accept Christ later in life. No matter how much work each one put in - each receives the same thing - eternal life.

- ◇ The literal Kingdom of Heaven (or Kingdom of God) is referred to as the 1,000 Kingdom in which Jesus will rule and reign (Dan. 2:44; Isa. 9:7; Rev. 20.)
- ◇ This passage is not talking about rewards - for all people will not receive the same rewards. Paul writes in 1 Cor. 3:8;
  - ◇ Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.
- ◇ Scripture cannot contradict itself thus this passage is not saying all people will receive the same rewards.

- ◊ Notice that the Rich Young Ruler rejected Jesus' call. The Disciples accepted His call and labored for the Kingdom. However, the thief on the cross (one who came late) would receive the same eternal life which was given to the disciples (one who came early.)
- ◊ There is also a broader Biblical principle that can be seen. Notice that this is near the end of Jesus' ministry. The next verse (Matt. 20:17) says that Jesus is going up to Jerusalem to die. He is about to offer the Kingdom to the Jews and will be rejected. After Jesus died - the disciples would offer the Kingdom to both Jew and Gentile alike. This caused the Jews to become jealous. See Acts 13:42-48
- ◊ In Matthew 22:1-14 Jesus will use the same phrase - many are called but few are chosen. This is a "Kingdom parable" (like our story) referring to God reaching out to many people, yet sadly many will reject His call and not come to His wedding Feast. Therefore He will invite others to the feast - even though they are late - they join in the celebration.

Do not envy those who come late  
to salvation - for by God's grace  
they will share in the Kingdom with  
you!

# Passage Background

- ◇ Jesus had just exposed the rich young ruler - how his heart valued money above God.
- ◇ As the young man walked away - Jesus told His disciples that it is hard for the rich to enter into the Kingdom of God - Matthew 19:23-26.



This was shocking to the disciples. Many Jews felt that rich people were blessed by God because of their goodness, thus a rich person would go into the Kingdom.

The disciples had bad theology - a bad view of God's character and how it related to mankind.

Jesus responded to them by saying that it is impossible for man to gain entrance (into the Kingdom), yet nothing is impossible for God.



Peter (unlike the rich young ruler) had left everything to follow Jesus. So he asked what his reward would be.

Jesus answered this question by giving a riddle / proverb.

The first will be last and the last will be first. He is about to define this in His Parable.



Jesus is about to reveal  
more about God's kindness.

Not only does God give  
grace to those who  
sacrifice for Him, but He  
also gives grace to those  
who come to Him in the  
last days!





# Matthew 20:1-2

- ◇ “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.
- ◇ Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

◇ Notice that the laborers made a deal to work for one denarius.

◇ According to Weber “A typical workday for field workers in the ancient Near East began at approximately 6 a.m. (sunrise) and ended at around 6 p.m. (sunset). The average workday was likely ten-plus hours. So the landowner of the parable was scouting for workers before 6 a.m.”



#### SILVER DENARIUS

The denarius was considered a fair day's pay for a common laborer in the first century. Jesus asked to see this coin when asked if it were lawful to pay taxes to Caesar (Matt 22:18).

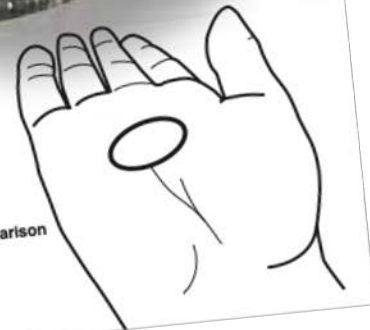
**What one coin could buy:**  
15 lbs. of wheat  
(in a basket).

**Translation of coin text:** "Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine [Augustus], [himself now] Augustus"



## A Silver Denarius

When the Pharisees asked Jesus if it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, Jesus asked to see a coin for the tax. They gave Him a denarius like this. The motto on this coin proclaims Tiberius to be the son of the divine Caesar who preceded him. Jesus, the true Son of God, would have recognized the irony of Tiberius' claim (Matt 22:17-22; Mark 12:14-17; Luke 20:21-26).



Size comparison

# Note. . .

- ◊ Also note that it was the landowner who chose the laborers, and they responded to His call.

# Matthew 20:3-4

- ◊ And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went.
- ◊ It is now 9 a.m. The landowner chooses more workers. He told them He would pay them a fair amount.
- ◊ They knew they were not working a full day since three hours have passed - so they agreed because they simply wanted to work.

R. C. Trench

“We observed every morning, before the sun rose, that a numerous band of peasants were collected, with spades in their hands, waiting to be hired for the day to work in the surrounding fields.”



# Matthew 20:5-7



◇ Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise.

◇ And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?'

◇ They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.'



## Matthew 20:5-7

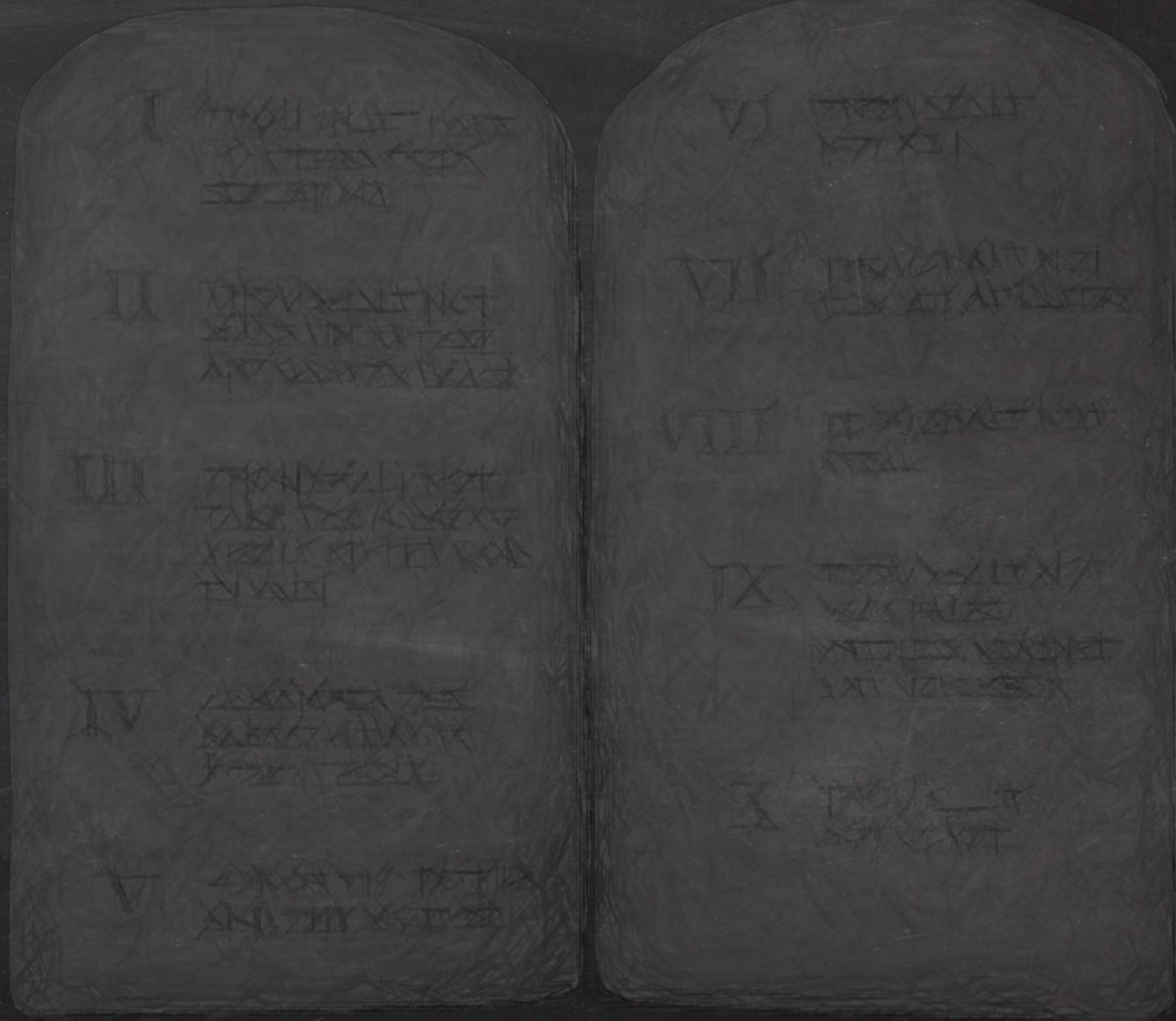
- ◇ The landowner chooses more laborers at noon and 3p.m.
- ◇ He goes out one more time at 5p.m. - one hour before the day is finished. He tells the laborers he will pay them what He thinks is fair, and they are happy to agree. However, they must have assumed they would be paid very little.
- ◇ Notice that “no one hired us.” These people seem to be undesirable - or could be considered the last!
- ◇ It would appear from the human perspective that the best or *first* were hired at 6am while the undesirables or *last* were hired at 5pm

# Matthew 20:8

◇ “So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, ‘Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.’”



- ◊ The Law given by God to Moses states,
- ◊ “Each day you shall give *him* his wages, and not let the sun go down on it, for he *is* poor and has set his heart on it; lest he cry out against you to the Lord, and it be sin to you.”  
(Deut. 24:15)
- ◊ Notice again that the last are getting paid first.



# Matthew 20:9

- ◇ And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius.
- ◇ The crowd must have been shocked to hear that the landowner gave a full day's wage to people who worked for 1 hour! This shows the kindness of God.
- ◇ They must have assumed that the landowner was going to give those who worked longer even more!

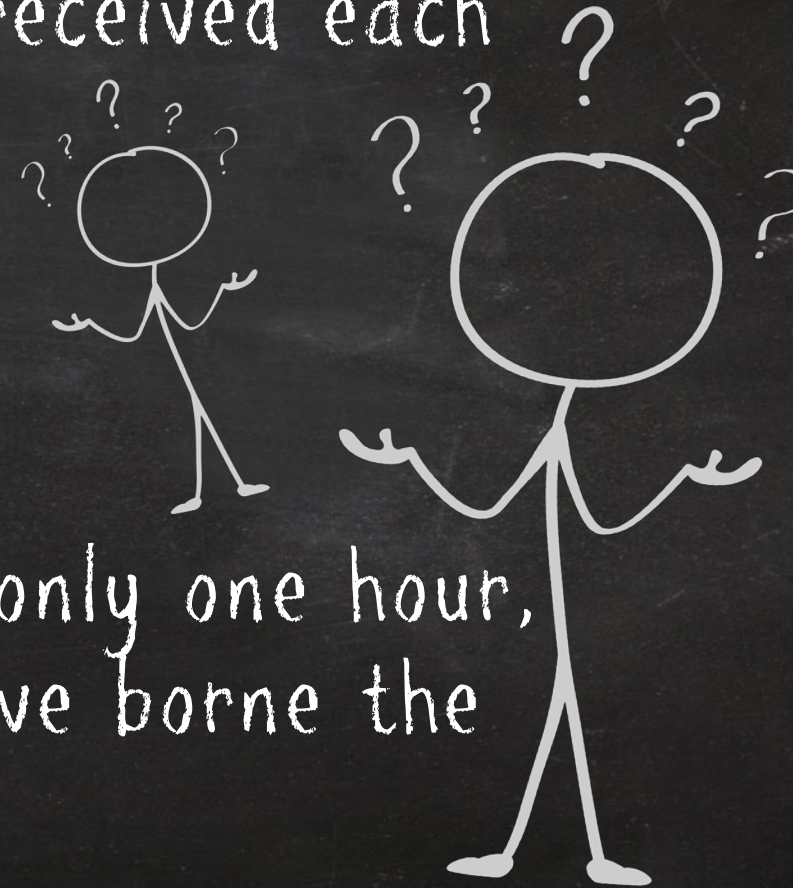


# Matthew 20:10-12

◇ But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius.

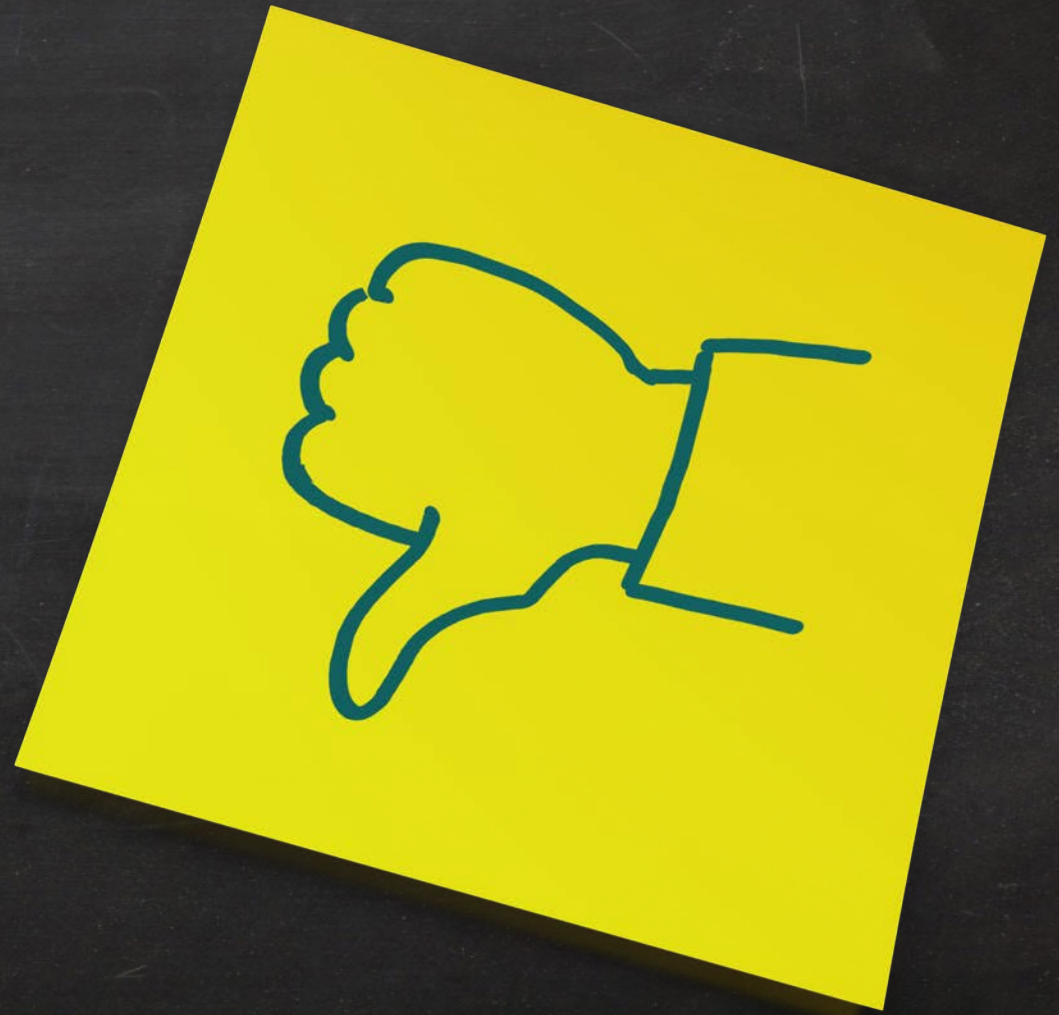
◇ And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner,

◇ saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.'



# Matthew 20:10-12

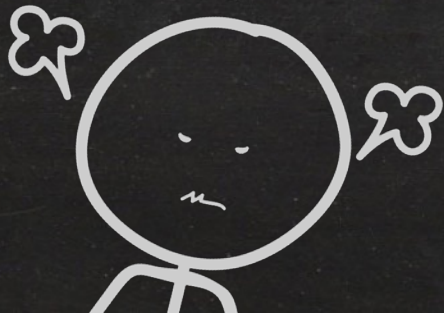
- ◊ The men are angry that they received the same amount as the undesirables!
- ◊ The people hearing this story must have thought this was unfair!
- ◊ How could the very best workers, the first workers who showed up at 6am be treated the same as the undesirable, last workers who should up at 5pm?



# Matthew 20:13

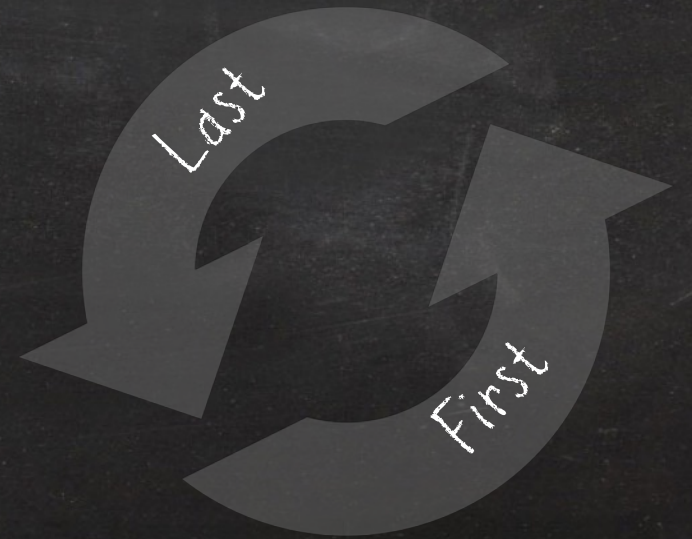


- ◇ But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?'
- ◇ The landowner had done nothing wrong.
- ◇ After all, the workers had agreed to 1 denarius. However, their hearts were hard and bitter, and pride got the best of them!
- ◇ They wrongly believed they should be treated better than the others because they came 1st!



# Matthew 20:14-16

- ◊ Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you.
- ◊ Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?’
- ◊ So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.”



## Matthew 20:14-16

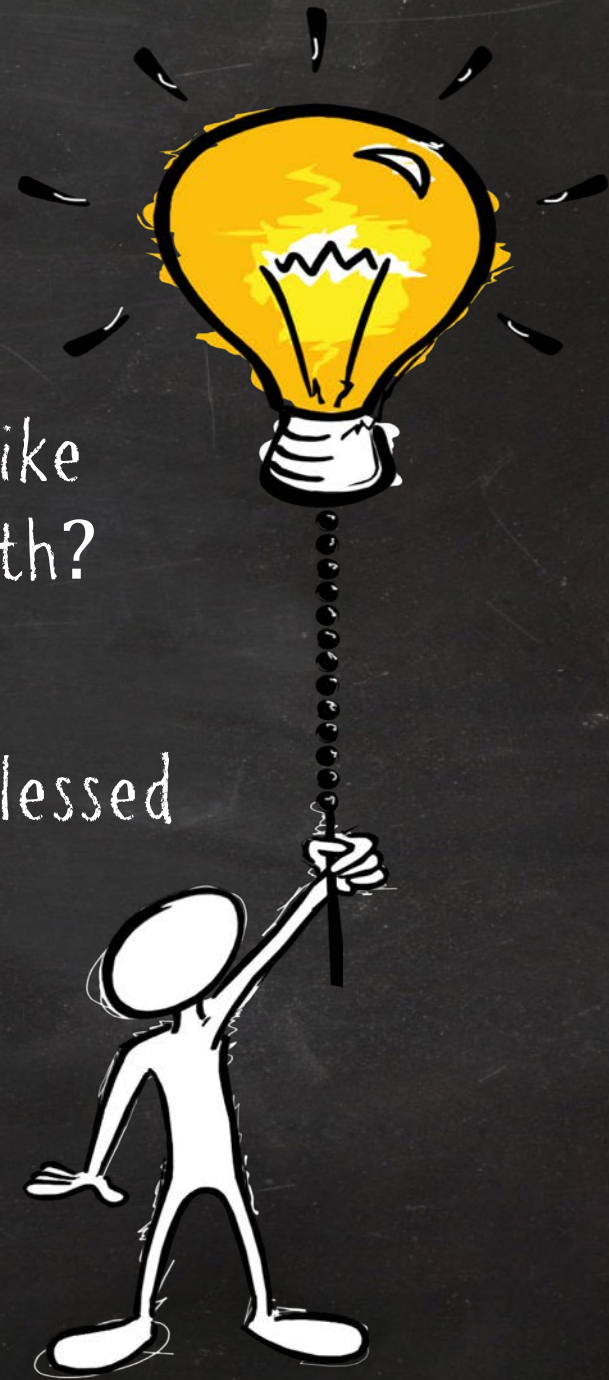
- ◊ God is God. Who are we to question His goodness?
- ◊ God was just to give the full day workers a full day's pay. He was kind to give the others a full day's pay! This parable shows us the kindness of God in giving the same eternal life to all who He chooses!
- ◊ In the bigger context of Matthew, we see that Jesus is referring to the disciples and those would believe later.
- ◊ The Disciples had come early, but many others would come late. However, if God wanted to show kindness to those who come late - the disciples should not be angry.
- ◊ Jesus ends His parable by saying that in the Kingdom, the first (the seemingly great) are last, and the last (the seemingly undesirables) are first. Both classes receive the same gift – eternal life!
- ◊ Many are called for the Kingdom, but few are chosen.

- ◊ So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.
- ◊ On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.
- ◊ Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, *That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.*'"
- ◊ Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

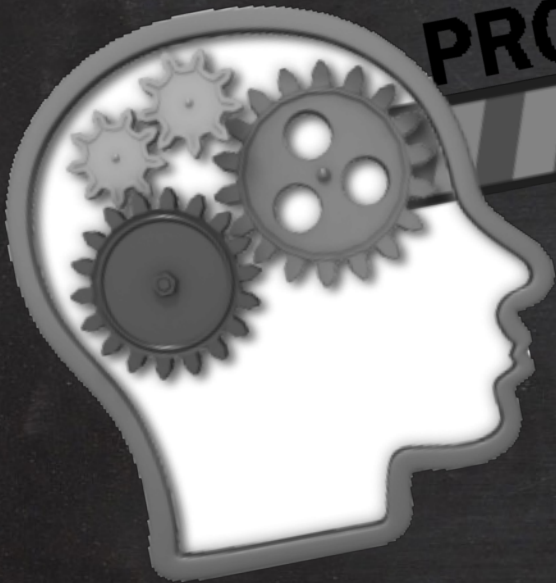


# Think About It

- ◇ Are you like those day laborers who work hard for the Future Kingdom, but you become jealous when it seems like God is blessing another Christian who is new to the faith?
- ◇ Check your heart. Rejoice when other Christians are blessed or exalted!
- ◇ Remember, you should simply be glad to be in the Kingdom!



PROCESSING...



## Employment Point

Do not envy those who come late to salvation - for by God's grace they will share in the Kingdom with you!



# Theological Question

*How does this Bible Study challenge your view on Theology (how you view God)*

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