

Title ideas:  
The King's Grace!  
The King's Gracious Rewards!

## Matthew 20:1-16 - The King's Gracious Rewards!

### Scriptures:

Ephesians 2:8-9 - For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Mark 9:33-34 - Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, "What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?" 34 But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest.

John 4:35-38 - Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! 36 And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. 37 For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' 38 I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.

<sup>M</sup>  
1 "For the kingdom of <sup>R</sup>heaven is like

<sup>L</sup>  
a landowner who went out early in the

G3617 -

<sup>L</sup> morning to hire <sup>W</sup>laborers for his <sup>L</sup>vineyard.

G3409 -

G2040 -

### Notes:

Start with Matthew 19:16-30. Verse 20:16 says the same thing. They make bookends to this section.

This parable is only recorded by Matthew. It follows immediately after the account of the rich young ruler. He had come asking Jesus what he needed to do to get eternal life. He went away sad because Jesus told him that his wealth was standing between him and God. Peter then asked what he and the other disciples would get since they had sacrificed everything to follow Jesus. Jesus promised a great reward for their faithful service. Jesus then tells this parable to illustrate what He means.

The key to understanding this parable is that it is focused on rewards for following Christ. Some interpret it to be about salvation. Salvation is not a reward. If it was, it would not be the gracious gift the Bible teaches it is ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#)). No one can earn salvation. That is what the rich young ruler believed and went away sad because what he believed couldn't save him.

Jesus is responding to Peter about the rewards of faithfully following Jesus in this life. Jesus responded by telling Peter that the rewards would come 'in the regeneration', or when Jesus came at the Second Coming.

This parable was directed to the disciples but applies to all who choose to follow Christ. Jesus' disciples were not exceptional people. Many of them were common fishermen, called to serve the Savior-King. They had flaws like all of us have. Peter was impulsive. James and John were vengeful. It was not uncommon for them to quarrel with one another ([Mark 9:33-34](#)).

If you have responded to Jesus' call to follow Him – meaning you are a believer – this parable is for you.

When it was time to bring in the harvest, additional laborers would be hired to get the work done quickly before the harvest over-ripened and before the rains come and spoil the harvest.

The landowner is Christ. The vineyard is the lost world. The laborers are believers called by Christ to labor in the fields ([John 4:35-38](#)).

Scriptures:

Ephesians 2:10 - For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

<sup>L</sup> 2 Now when he had <sup>w</sup> agreed with the laborers

G4856 -

Notes:

A denarius is a Roman coin and was equal to a day's wages. A day or work was 12 hours.

'he had agreed' – The landowner contracted with them to compensate them for their work.

As believers, Jesus has promised a reward for faithful service. Eternal life in heaven is not our reward – it is the gift of God's gracious love through faith.

As believers, we are all called by God to go into His vineyard and labor. For each of us that means something different. Every believer was created by God and equipped for the thing God assigned them to do ([Ephesians 2:10](#)).

<sup>#</sup> for a denarius <sup>⌚</sup> a day, <sup>L</sup> he sent them into his <sup>w</sup> <sup>L</sup>

G1220 – "denarius (coin) n. — a Roman coin called a "denarius" equal to a day's wage (or 16 "assaria"); could be either silver or copper."

vineyard.

Scriptures:

<sup>L</sup> 3 And he went out about the third <sup>⌚</sup> hour and

Notes:

The Jews reckoned time starting at sunrise or about 6 am. The third hour would be about 9 am.

<sup>w</sup> saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

G2476 -

G692 -

Scriptures:

<sup>4</sup> and said to them, 'You also go into the

Notes:

'whatever is right' – no set amount of compensation is agreed upon, just 'whatever is right'.

vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.'

G1342 – just, upright, righteous. G1325 – pay.

So they went.

Scriptures:

<sup>5</sup> Again he went out about the sixth and the

Notes:

Sixth hour = 12 pm. Ninth hour = 3 pm.

ninth hour, and did likewise.

<sup>6</sup> And about the eleventh hour he went out

Notes:

The eleventh hour was about 5 pm, just one hour before the end of the workday.

and found others standing idle, and said to

them, 'Why have you been standing here idle

all day?'

7 They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.'

Notes:

These laborers had been standing in the marketplace for eleven hours waiting for someone to hire them. They were willing and available but hadn't been given a task to do.

He said to them, 'You also go into the

vineyard, and whatever is right you will

receive.'

Scriptures:

Leviticus 19:13 - You shall not cheat your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning.

8 “So when evening had come, the owner of

Notes:

Jewish law required laborers to be paid at the end of the day so they could feed their families ([Leviticus 19:13](#)).

‘Last to the first’ – This was done to illustrate the point Jesus is making in the parable.

the vineyard said to his steward, ‘Call the

laborers and give them *their* wages,

G3408 -

beginning with the last to the first.’

Scriptures:

9 And when those came who *were hired*

Notes:

Even though they had only worked one hour, they needed the same as those who had worked all day to feed their family. Each laborer received exactly what they needed regardless of how much they labored.

about the eleventh hour, they each received a

denarius.

Scriptures:

<sup>10</sup> But when the first came, they supposed

G3543 – think,  
expect, consider.

Notes:

Jesus is describing how most people would view this situation. If this were the first time you heard this parable you might have been thinking the same this these men are thinking.

that they would receive more; and they

G4119 -

likewise received each a denarius.

Scriptures:

11 And when they had received *it*,

Notes:

*they* complained against the landowner,

G1111 – grumble,  
mutter.

Scriptures:

12 saying, 'These last *men* have worked *only*

Notes:

These men are comparing themselves to those who only worked one hour. Their primary focus is on themselves. They see this as a matter of unfairness.

one hour, and you made them *equal* to us

G2470 – same.

who have borne the burden and the heat of

the day.'



Scriptures:

13 But he answered one of them and said,

Notes:

'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not

G2083 -

G91 – unjustly,  
mistreat.

agree with me for a denarius?

Scriptures:

14 Take *what is* yours and go your way. I wish

G2309 – desire.

Notes:

It wasn't a matter of fairness; it was a matter of grace. The landowner gave those who worked all day what he promised to give them. He gave to those who worked less what he wanted to give them as an expression of gracious generosity.

to give to this last man *the same* as to you.

The problem is not with what the landowner did, but with the attitude of these laborers regarding what he did.

Scriptures:

Proverbs 22:9 -

He who has a generous  
eye will be blessed,  
For he gives of his bread  
to the poor.

Psalms 51:12 -

Restore to me the joy of  
Your salvation,  
And uphold me by Your  
generous Spirit.

15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish

G1832 – allowed,  
permissible.

with my own things? Or is your eye evil

G4190 -

Notes:

'Is it not lawful...' It is not illegal to do what you wish with your own things. God had placed financial requirements upon His people. But once those obligations were met, they could use whatever was left any way that was not sinful. There was an expectation that they would be generous (Proverbs 22:9). God's people should be generous because God is generous (Psalms 51:12).

'...is your eye evil...' – This carries the idea of envy or jealousy.

because I am good?

G18 – "generous ⇔  
good adj. — willing to  
give and share  
unstintingly; conceived  
of as being morally  
upstanding."

Scriptures:  
 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 - According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. 11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

<sup>16</sup> So the last will be first, and the first

last. For many are called, but few chosen.”

G4183 -

G2822 – invited.

G3641 -

G1588 – elected.

Serving God is not a career or a job. Serving God is not a duty. Serving God is not a pathway to fame, fortune, success, or popularity. Serving God is a calling. Jesus calls and we respond. Jesus assigns us the tasks He wants us to do. He is the Master and we are the servants. And as servants we are expected to be faithful. When we stand before Jesus, we will be evaluated based on our faith and faithfulness. It is our faith that will bring into Christ's presence and it our faithfulness that He will reward. It is not the works themselves that will be rewarded but the faithfulness to the works Jesus appointed to us. The person who is faithful to the one thing Jesus called them to do will be more blessed than the person who was faithful 99 times if he was appointed 100 tasks by Jesus. Be faithful.

It is never too early to serve Christ and it is never too late.

Second trait – **A faithful servant of Christ is Focused.** In the parable, the servants who worked all day were upset when they compared themselves with the others who they feel didn't worked as hard as they did. God is omniscient and sovereign. He knows perfectly what needs to be done, who needs to do, and how it needs to be done. Because we are not God, we probably won't be able to understand why God chooses who He does to do His work. We won't understand why some seem to be very successful while others who seem to be working just as hard are not. To be a faithful servant we must focus on our own service and not on the service of others.

Third trait – **A faithful servant of Christ trusts God's character.** The servants who complained were questioning the goodness of the landowner. Because we are human, we cannot see the entirety of God's plan. We might see ourselves as more talented than others God is using. Or we might think we are serving God more faithfully or working harder than others. And as we think these things, we might think God is not being fair in how He is using or blessing us. Listen – God is not fair – at least not in the way we decide fairness. God is just, holy, good, perfect, and loving. Everything He does is right or just, holy, good, perfect, and is an expression of His love for you and for the rest of the world. A faithful servant trusts God even when it seems like things are not fair.

Notes:  
 Many are called to follow Christ. Few are chosen to labor in the heat of the day and be burdened by the work.

This parable calls us to examine our attitude toward serving God. Why does anyone serve God? The right answer is because that is what they were made to do. I was created by God to serve Him. It is not about the rewards I will get, but it blesses me that there are rewards for serving Him.

There are three things we should consider about serving Christ.

First – **Who should serve Christ?** Everyone who hears Christ's call to serve. To hear Christ's call, we must be listening and willing to serve. Everyone who is willing will be equipped to serve where Christ wants them.

Second – **When should we serve Christ?** As soon as we hear Christ's call. In the parable, the landowner when out several times and found laborers who were willing to respond to his call to go out into the vineyard. Some people respond early in their lives, like David. I was in the middle of my life when I responded. Others might not respond until very late in their lives. The right time to respond is when you become aware of Christ's call to serve Him.

Third – **How should we serve Christ?** In this parable we have a bad example of how to serve Christ. It is possible to serve Christ in a manner that is not rewarded (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). The key to serving Christ in a manner worthy of reward is faithfulness.

Three traits of faithful laborers in Christ's vineyard are:

1. Humility
2. Focus
3. Trust

First trait – **A faithful servant of Christ is Humble.** There is no place for pride in the heart of a servant of Christ. You did not choose to serve Him, He chose you. You simply responded to His call. Your service was appointed to you by Him. The Holy Spirit equipped you to do the work. Any success you might experience was Jesus working in and through you.

[Top of section](#) [Top of chapter](#)