

The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard
(Matthew 20:1-16)

Introduction:

1. This evening we are studying the Lord's parable found in Matthew 20:1-16.
2. In this parable, Jesus compared the kingdom to a "householder" [landowner] who hired laborers to work in His vineyard.

Discussion:

- I. (vs.1-7) THROUGHOUT THE DAY, THE HOUSEHOLDER HIRED LABORERS TO WORK IN HIS VINEYARD
 - A. (vs.1-2) Early in the morning, the householder found certain laborers and hired them to work in his vineyard for "a penny."
 1. This "penny" was a "denarius" [the average wage for a day's work].
 2. The laborers agreed to work for this amount.
 - B. (vs.3-4) The householder went out about the 3rd hour (9:00 a.m.).
 1. He saw people who were standing idle.
 2. He hired them to work in his vineyard.
 - C. (vs.5) He went out about the 6th hour (12:00 noon) and the 9th hour (3:00 p.m.), and he did the same thing.
 - D. (vs.6-7) He went out about the 11th hour (5:00 p.m.) and hired more laborers to work in his vineyard.
- II. (vs.8-9) AT THE END OF THE DAY THE LABORERS WERE PAID
 - A. The law required the Jews to pay their hired workers daily (Leviticus 19:13).
 - B. At evening the householder told his "steward" [foreman] to pay the laborers.
 1. The laborers were to be paid "from the last unto the first."
 2. Every worker received the same pay.
- III. (vs.10-12) THOSE WHO HAD LABORED ALL DAY MURMURED
 - A. They felt that they should have received more pay.
 - B. They had worked all day, even during the hottest part of the day.
- IV. (vs.13-15) THE HOUSEHOLDER ANSWERED ONE WHO MURMURED
 - A. The householder had not cheated anyone -- he had done as he agreed with each worker.
 - B. This worker needed to take his pay, be content, and not be jealous of the others.
- V. (vs.16) THE LESSON: "So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen."
 - A. Jesus told this parable to teach His apostles a lesson.
 - B. To understand this lesson, we must consider what had happened in ch. 19.
 1. (19:16-22) The rich young ruler had come to Jesus seeking eternal life, but he left full of sorrow because he was not willing to pay the price that Jesus demanded of him.
 2. (19:23-26) Jesus explained the difficulty of a rich man entering the kingdom.
 3. (19:27) Peter thought that the apostles should receive a special blessing.
 - a. He and the other apostles had forsaken all and followed Christ (Peter, Andrew, James, and John had left their nets, and Matthew left his position as a publican).
 - b. He asked, "What shall we have therefore?"
 4. (19:28) Jesus did promise them a special position of authority.
 5. (19:29-30) However, Jesus said that everyone who pays the price to follow Him will be blessed in this life and in the life to come.
 - C. Jesus told the parable we have studied to teach the apostles not to think that they deserved a special reward for the sacrifices they made.

Conclusion:

1. The Lord requires His followers to make sacrifices (Matthew 16:24).
2. Some have to make greater sacrifices than others.
3. There is no place for jealousy among those who labor on the Lord's behalf.
4. Regardless of the sacrifices we make, we must leave our reward up to the Lord (1 Corinthians 3:8b).
5. As we work for the Lord, we must maintain the proper spirit (Luke 17:10).