

- God has sovereign rights over His world, kingdom, subjects. (Romans 9:15-24)
- Begrudge His generosity? He was gracious with us too! (Romans 3:22-31)
- Are we like the “Good Son” in “Prodigal Son” story? (Luke 15:11-32)
- How long had the “Thief on the Cross” served, believed? (Luke 23:39-43)
- Rejoice! “many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.” (19:30)
- Accept it: “the last will be first, and the first last.” (20:16–ESV)

Read these passages, and see if you find a similar theme:

Luke 15:11-32; 23:39-43

James 2:1-13; 4:1-12

Romans 9-11

Examine your heart. Whose salvation would cause you pain or pause?

A Discipleship Tool of Christ Community Fellowship

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GOD’S KINGDOM IS A GRACE-PLACE

Is that okay with you?—from Matthew 20:1-16

Oh, the joyous thought of God’s rich mercy to us! His love, and pity for us helpless sinners leads us to burst into songs of His amazing grace. However, the tune changes at the thought that He would share the same generosity and grace with certain people. Are you ready to share kingdom space and praise in heaven beside repentant abusers, redeemed terrorists, forgiven enemies? Who do you hope is not in heaven? Who are you glad you do not have to toil alongside in God’s vineyard: an ex, a parent, a politician, a certain celebrity?

We need to face the ugly truth that sometimes we have a problem with God’s generosity. When latecomers, underachievers are given the same reward as long-time toilers, it feels wrong, unfair, and unjust. For *them* to be treated the same *as us*, after all we have done, for so long? Who has not read Matthew 20:1-16 and felt that Jesus was advocating unfair treatment of the harder working, more deserving? Yet, God’s kingdom is a place of rich grace, where we are to repent of begrudging His generosity. Lord help! We all forget and succumb to pride.

The Setting: Jesus is Heading to Jerusalem—Matthew 19

- Nobodies (like kids) are welcome in His Kingdom (19:13-15)
- Somebodies—seeming Kingdom shoe-ins—need to repent too (19:16-26)
- “Peter answered him, “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?” Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.” (19:27-30–NIV; cf. 20:16—an *inclusio*, bookends)

A Startling Story of a Gracious Master: Another Kingdom parable (cf. 13:1-52)

1, 2 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

3-7 “About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went. He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. 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?’ ‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered. He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

8, 9 “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.’ “The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. **(20:1-9–NIV)**

- “Kingdom is like” this outrageously generous, welcoming Master
- The Master is looking for workers! Harvest exceeds workers (cf. 9:35-38)
- Israel is often referred to as a vineyard in Old Testament: Isaiah 3:14; 5:1-2; Jeremiah 12:10
- A denarius = a day's wage for laborers, who were paid daily. “Do not defraud or rob your neighbor. Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight.” (Leviticus 19:13–NIV)
- Times: 3rd Hour = 9 am; 6th Hour = Noon; 11th Hour = hour before sunset (Psalm 104:20-23)
- An evil or envious eye = idiom for jealousy (v. 15; cf. 6:23; Deuteronomy 15:9; 1 Samuel 18:9)

Beware Grace-Begrudging, Arrogant Attitudes:

“Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ **(vs. 10-12–ESV)**

- Matthew’s gospel was to Jews, who often begrudgingly welcomed Gentiles (Acts 6; 15)
- They dared to grumble at the Master’s generosity! Do we? (Luke 15:11-32)
- They felt they were being wronged. Have you ever? (19:27-30; Psalm 73; Job)

The Master’s Mercy-Exposing, Gracious Reply

13 But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?’

14 Take what belongs to you and go.

I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you.

15 Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?’

16 So the last will be first, and the first last.” **(vs. 13-16–ESV)**

Our Master is Generous with His Mercy!

Do you gotta problem with that?

- God does us no wrong. He is just and keeps His promises. 19:30; Psalm 73; Romans 9-11
- Do you want fair? Really? Review Romans 1-3; Ephesians 1-2
- Are we so puffed up we dare to tell the King He’s unfair?