

# The God We Never Expected

Matthew 20:1-16

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*Then Peter said in reply, "See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?"<sup>28</sup> Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."<sup>29</sup> And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.<sup>30</sup> But many who are first will be last, and the last first.*

Matthew 19:27-30 (English Standard Version)

**Question:** To whom is the parable directed?

**Answer:** To the twelve disciples and, by extension, to all future disciples.

**Question:** To what heart-need within the disciples is the parable being directed?

**Answer:** A transactional mentality toward God and a begrudging attitude for God's goodness toward "less worthy" disciples.

**The Take-Home Truth: OUR GOD IS ALWAYS GOOD, BUT NOT ALWAYS "FAIR".**

*"For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.<sup>2</sup> After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.<sup>3</sup> And going out about the third hour [9 am] he saw others standing idle in the marketplace,<sup>4</sup> and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.'<sup>5</sup> So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour [noon] and the ninth hour [3 pm], he did the same.<sup>6</sup> And about the eleventh hour [5 pm] he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?'<sup>7</sup> They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.'<sup>8</sup> And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.'<sup>9</sup> And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius.<sup>10</sup> Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius.<sup>11</sup> And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house,<sup>12</sup> 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.'<sup>13</sup> But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?'<sup>14</sup> Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you.<sup>15</sup> Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?'<sup>16</sup> So the last will be first, and the first last." Matthew 20:1-16 (ESV)*

## Key Observations

- Believers tend to relate more to the first-hour laborers than the last-hour laborers.
  - First-hour laborers = high performing disciples
  - Last-hour laborers = the less deserving disciples
- The parable is about God, not the workers.
  - Two invitations are extended.
    - To give thanks for His generosity to you: *“And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.’”* (Matthew 20:8)
    - To give thanks for His generosity to others: *“Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?”* (Matthew 20:15)
  - “generous” = Greek word = *agathos* = “good”
    - . . . *God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* Romans 5:8 ((ESV)
  - “begrudge” = a Greek idiom = “evil eye”

**Application Tip:** In the week to come, quiet your heart and spend some moments in prayer. Ask yourself: “In what ways do I think of myself as ‘less worthy’.” Then imagine yourself as the “less worthy” servant, coming at the end of the day to receive from the Master. As you do, think of how God has been good to you. Think of specific examples of His goodness, expressed by His love, His grace, and His patience. End by thanking God for His goodness to you.