

Matthew Ch 20

Chapter 20 kind of brings us another unfortunate place where the ch division was inserted. Because in reality Jesus is still right in the middle of the teaching that we were studying last week and those who made the decisions of where the ch breaks should go, for some reason decided that this was a good place to insert ch 20 instead of including the next 16 vs.

So if you were to just open your bible to Matt ch 20 and start reading you wouldn't really understand why Jesus was teaching this and what inspired Him to instruct His disciples concerning the parable of the workers being sent out into the vineyard. But you recall that Jesus had just instructed the rich young ruler concerning the kingdom of heaven. He wanted to know what he needed to do in order that he might inherit age-abiding, everlasting, eternal life. Because he recognized something about Jesus that he didn't have, and so he approached Jesus saying, (last ½ vs 16-17).

Now we obviously don't have time to get into this again so if you weren't here I would highly recommend you getting the tape, but the short of it is that Jesus wasn't saying that He was no good. He was trying to awaken this young mans consciousness to the fact that he was on to something here and that was the fact that He was God. Because no one is good but God and flesh and blood didn't reveal to him that Jesus was good, Jesus was trying to get him to realize that by calling Him good he was confessing that He was God. But Jesus said, hey if you're looking for a good work, then keep the law. and In reality had he observed the law like it was meant to be observed it would have pointed him to Jesus because Gal 3:24 tells us that *the law is our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith*. But the young man (Read vs18-19) and Again that should have taken this young man right to his knees in his heart if he had a proper understanding of the law. Because he would've realized the impossibility of what God requires of man concerning works righteousness, the bible says that our good works are but as filthy rags before the Lord. But instead he said (vs 20); in other words from a moral stand point he was doing what he thought he should. But he realized that being a young moral, wealthy young man wasn't enough, there was still something missing in his life. So Jesus pin pointed his problem for him and said to him, (vs 21-22)

It wasn't that his having money was the problem, it was that his money had him, it was hindering him from following God whole-heartedly. What is it that hinders you from following God whole-heartedly this morning, Jesus would tell you the same thing, get rid of it and follow Me. You see that was the point, follow Me, and what ever it is that is hindering you from following Jesus needs to go.

Then Jesus taught on the impossibility for one to work their way into the kingdom on the basis of their own efforts, Jesus Christ is the only door into the sheepfold. With men it's impossible, but with God all things are possible and God has made the impossible possible through the person of His only begotten Son Jesus Christ. But Peter was setting there thinking, hey he wouldn't forsake all for the Lord, but we have.

Vs27-30

In other words Peter God's grace will abound to those who have faithfully served Me. But don't be deceived here and think that your faithfulness to me over the long haul will automatically cause you to take rank over those who haven't served Me as long but have been just as faithful with the opportunity they've been given. Because (vs 30) and Now He goes on to amplify this whole principal of God's grace and how it isn't merited, but it's given freely as He wills according to His sovereignty.

Vs1-2

So notice the 1st group of laborers agreed to work for a specific amount, a denarius for the day, and as I've said before a denarius was simply the standard day's wage of that time. So today it would be something like agreeing to work for \$60.00 or so, there's so many variations today that you could probably give or take a few depending on the circumstance. But the point is that he's offering them what is fair, that was what the average day's wage was for an average day's work.

Vs3

The day started for them at 6:00a.m. so the third hour would be 9:00 A.M. and at this point he goes back to the marketplace and finds some more laborers that are standing around unemployed and so it says in vs 4.

Vs4

Now notice these guys didn't make any form of agreement they simply went on the basis that the landowner simply said that he would pay them what was right, they probably thought that they would get a partial day's wage for a partial day's work.

Vs5-7

So it wasn't that they were lazy, they simply hadn't been hired that day or appointed to any work. Now we're not told why the landowner kept going back and hiring more as the day went on, maybe that's all he could fit into his cart at one time, and he lived an hour away and so it took a while to get everybody there. I read somewhere that they harvested their vineyards around August, which was about the beginning of their rainy season. So the foreman would keep an eye to the sky and if in the morning it looked like rain (which could easily ruin their crops) then he would hurry down to the marketplace and hire some day labor. If the skies grew more threatening then he would go down and hire more, and more until he had a sufficient crew to beat out the rains.

But regardless of his reasoning the point is, is that this guy was going back to hire laborers clear up until the last hour of the workday and promised to pay them for their labor.

Vs8-10

In that day you got paid daily for your labor, it was required by law according to Lev 19:13 and Deut 24:15 which says, “*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.*” So when the foreman called these guys in and began to pay them for their labor, the guys that had only worked the last hour got a full days wage. and The given is that so did everyone else that had only worked a partial day, and so when it came time for those who had labored all day to get paid they were thinking man this is going to be sweet. If these guys who only worked an hour got a full days wage, we’ve hit the jackpot, we just might retire after today! But when they each received a denarius as well, they got a little bit upset, quite upset really.

Vs11-

That word “complained” or grumbled, maybe your bible says murmured, is in the imperfect tense indicating a continual process of complaining that went on.

Vs12

In other words, this isn’t fair. We’ve been out here breaking our backs all day in the blistering heat, and here these guys come along and they’ve done a minimal amount of work during the coolest part of the day and you’ve paid them the same thing we made. and You know what, much like I find myself identifying with the unforgiving servant in that parable that we studied a couple of weeks ago. It’s almost frightening to realize how our natural tendencies gravitate and identify with these servants and these servants were actually in opposition to the Lord. Showing no mercy, no grace, no love, and no compassion. and Yet how can we be called the children of God, when His attributes are lacking in our lives. It would have been better had these men rejoiced over the grace and mercy that had been extended to the others recognizing the goodness of the Lord in giving men what they didn’t deserve. That’s what grace is, God’s unmerited favor, not getting what you deserve and in his mercy He gives you what you don’t deserve. That’s what we’re seeing right here before us, but instead these men wanted justice to be executed on them. Give them what they deserve, and that’s us, we want people to get what they deserve and we have with in ourselves a double standard.

We want forgiveness, but we don't want to forgive, we want to execute justice, and receive grace and mercy, that is not the heart of God, God longs for opportunity to extend grace and mercy. Now He doesn't tolerate sin no doubt, but He wants to forgive, He desires to show compassion. May God help us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we might have that same heart and that same desire and burden to be forgiving and gracious and merciful even as God has extended that grace and mercy to us.

Vs13

So he issues a gentle rebuke, he calls him friend, and he says hey I didn't treat you unjustly, didn't we make an agreement and haven't I kept all my word a fulfilled everything to you that I said I would? I'm not doing anything wrong by you.

Vs14-16

This is the way that Jesus started this parable or what inspired Him to share it back in vs 30 of ch 19. So this parable is sort of sandwiched between the 2 vs that state that many who are 1st will be last and those who are last will be 1st. and It seems to all be spurred on based upon the fact of vs 27 of ch 19 where Peter wanted to know what it was that they were going to have as their reward. and Jesus assured Peter that they wouldn't find themselves lacking in the kingdom, but that didn't necessarily mean that they were going to fair better then those who came on board later just because they were among the 1st laborers. Because God deals with us on the basis of grace, not justice, so I believe that what Jesus is teaching us here, is come the day when the master calls His laborers in from the field, in what we refer to as the rapture. 1 Thess 4:16-17 *“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”*

I believe that when that happens, that we are going to be very surprised as to who winds up with what and in what position in the kingdom. We have a tendency to believe that people like Billy Graham and Chuck Smith will receive the greatest rewards in heaven. Because look at the tremendous fruit of their ministries. and No doubt they will be greatly rewarded, but I'm personally convinced that there will be those others whom you and I have never heard of, who have never made the front page, or the back page, or for that matter any page. and Yet they will receive just as great or even greater honor than will either of them, and who knows maybe you're sitting here this morning. People who have just been faithful to the ministry that God has called and appointed them to, be it the ministry of intercessory prayer that no one knows anything about, or what ever it is that God has appointed you to. and When we get to heaven we'll look at those being called to the front and say, “who are they, I've never heard them.” But God will reward them greatly for laboring faithfully in the vineyard as He has appointed them to.

That's one of the points of this parable, to teach us that God will reward us on the basis of our faithfulness to Him and what He's committed to us. It doesn't matter if it seems impressive or big scale as far as this world is concerned, what matters is are you being faithful to what God has called *you* to do.

I want you to notice that the landowner went out and called the men into the field and chose and appointed these men. They didn't go out into the field of their own accord, the Lord called to them and sent them into the vineyard. and They responded willingly and openly to the opportunity to serve, and because they were all sent of God they all received the same portion. They may have all done various tasks, and they were there for various amounts of time but the reward was the same, Jesus said, *“you didn't choose Me, I chose you, and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit.”*

Now God might call various people at various times to do various tasks according to His sovereignty, but their faithfulness to Him will be rewarded just the same as the one who's served God for their whole life. Again that's the grace of God, they won't be penalized for receiving a call and being appointed to the work later in life, if they are faithful to God they will be rewarded the same.

Which brings out another facet of this parable, as far as eternal life is concerned. It will be given to whoever responds to Gods call regardless of when it takes place in their lives, there are those who are dying on their death bed and they receive Jesus Christ as their Savior, and they enter in to eternal life. and Then there are those who received Jesus Christ when they were say 40-50 or maybe even later and they enter into eternal life, but there are also those who serve the Lord from the time that say they were 19-20 what's the end for them? Eternal life, and there are those who have the testimony of an entire life set apart to Jesus Christ serving Him in total abandonment and they to receive eternal life.

Now again we know that salvation isn't earned by service it's a free gift but we also know that *“we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”* and So when we give our hearts to Jesus we are appointed to those works even as these guys were appointed to labor in the vineyard as soon as they submitted themselves to the landowner. But the reward was the same for all of them regardless of what time they entered into service, now again will there be various degrees of rewards?

Yes, and that's something that we don't have time to get into but the reward of eternal life is given to all just the same, it's God's to give and He can give it to whoever, however He pleases, and I will not have an evil eye because He is good. and So when those come to Christ in the last moments of breath, God rewards them, and they receive their place in the kingdom. Now they will have missed the blessing and the joy of what it is to know God and serve God their whole lives or the vast majority of it, but they will enter into everlasting life just the same. But the problem is that you're not guaranteed that you will be given the opportunity to make a death bed confession, you're not guaranteed that you'll wake up in the morning or make it home today. So I would encourage you not to take that risk, because God knows your heart, and who's to say that He will hear the prayer of the one who's tried to "cheat the system". Is that a sincere prayer that lives like hell their whole life, and in their last 2 minutes they try to butter up to God? What if God healed you, would you go right back to your old ways, now God will always hear the sincere heart, but again I wouldn't encourage you to take that chance. Another lesson found in this parable and something that we touched on lightly is watch out for jealousy and envy.

Look again at vs 12 (read)

That's jealousy and envy, we've been out here all day and these guys just worked for an hour and they're getting what we're getting! Be careful 1 Cor 3:3 says, "*For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?*"

In other words that attitude is fleshy Gal 5:19-21 "*Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*"

There can be that tendency of the flesh to say hey, why is so and so getting bless, when I've been faithful for years. Those of you who have been hitting our mid-week studies remember in Num ch 12 when Miriam instigated that little rebellion against Moses saying, how come Moses always gets to be the one to speak God's word to people, the Lord has spoken through us to. and She was jealous and envious of Moses, and you remember what happened, she was struck with leprosy which is a type of sin. and Jealously has much the same results of leprosy in that it starts off small, but in the end it will consume you. Finally I would tell you this concerning the parable and then we'll move on.

Another principle that I believe that can be applied through this teaching of Jesus is that it's never too late to start laboring in the vineyard, it doesn't matter what hour you find yourself in life if you're willing, there's work to be done. But you might be thinking Jeff and I'm on my last leg here, my life's as good as over, I'm old, I'm already 30. (I have to capitalize on those jokes while I still can.) But seriously, ministry is nothing like sports, if you're a 30 yr old basketball or football player you're talked about like you're a dinosaurs. But maybe you're 50, 60, or 70 yrs old, Moses didn't enter the ministry until he was 80. So even if you're at the 11th hour in life if you're willing to submit yourself to the landowner, the Lord of the vineyard, He will appoint you to the field of service.

Vs17-19

2 Things I want to draw out of these vs and then maybe we'll reflect on a portion of them again next week as we partake of communion. 1st of all Jesus has prophesied it times passed of His death and resurrection, but this is it, He's telling them that this is the final time that He will be going up to Jerusalem. and When He gets there (of course it will be the time of the Passover so that all the OT types might be fulfilled) but when they get there all the culminating events that are to take place in the life of Jesus will come to fruition. The reason that He was sent to this earth, which He will clarify even further momentarily. But He's been with them now nearly 3 years and so He's drawing them now into a more intimate awareness of what's to take place in His life, and that's the 1st thing I want to draw your attention to.

The staggering accuracy of which He so clearly prophesies concerning His death, as I said He's prophesied His death and resurrection before but not like this. 1st of all He says He's going to be betrayed in vs 18, and as He stands there speaking; Judas 1 of the 12 will be the one who betrays Him. and Who is it that Judas will betray Him into the hands of? The chief priests and the scribes for 30 pieces of silver (Matt ch 26 vs 14-16) 3rdly Jesus says that they will condemn Him to death, (Matt 27:3, Mark 16:64, Luke 24:20).

Next because Roman law took the right of capital punishment away from Israel, they delivered Him up to the gentiles, speaking of course of the Romans, they condemned Him according to their own law and then they gave Him over to the Romans to carry out the sentence. Then He says they will mock Him, (Matt 27:27-31) they put a scarlet robe on Him and beat a crown of thorns down on his head mocked Him saying Hail king of the Jews. In another Gospel we're told that they put a bag over His head and struck His face with the palms of their hands saying prophesy who it is that's striking you. Next He says they will scourge Him (and Lord willing we'll speak more on this next week) but we find this taking place in Matt 27:26 and in the other gospels as well. Then comes the crucifixion, which again we find in all 4 gospels and then finally He speaks of the resurrection.

When you count how many aspects of prophecy that He gives here you find that there is 8, the 7th aspect is that of crucifixion, I found that interesting, 7 being the number of completion or perfection. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ made complete and perfect atonement for you and me. The 8th aspect is that of the resurrection which interested me as well because 8 is the number of new beginnings. If any man is in Christ he is a new creation, old things have passed away, behold *all* things become new. You are given a new life in Christ, having been born again, you partake of a new beginning, identifying your old nature with the death of Jesus Christ and being resurrected in the newness of life, identifying with His resurrection.

The 2nd thing that I want you to take notice of is the fact that Jesus never spoke of the crucifixion with out speaking of the resurrection. with out acknowledging the hope that He found in the Father and the assurance of victory that He had. and The reason I point that out is because a lot of people speak about the cross in their own lives, in regards to some trial or something, but they never speak of the resurrection. They never speak of the hope that they have in Christ and the victory that they're assured of in Christ. and I would encourage that if you're going to talk about the cross, follow the example of our Lord and speak of the crown or the victory and the hope that you have in the midst of it as well.

If you think it's hard following Jesus, try not following Him, that's what's hard. Going through heart ache, disease, divorce, death, bankruptcy, or even being wealthy but miserable and empty inside, with out hope, that's what's hard. Those of you who are struggling or suffering, need to know that if you weren't following Christ, you'd still go through tough times and you'd still struggle and suffer. Because everybody goes through those down times of trials and tribulations, but if you weren't a Christian, you'd go through them with out any solution, with out any promise, and with out any hope. But since you know the Lord, don't speak of the trying times with out letting people know of the hope that you have in the midst of it. Jesus never spoke of the crucifixion with out speaking of the resurrection.

Vs20

So here this little Jewish mama bringing her boys to Jesus; wanting to take care of her boys. and She came worshipping Him, why because she wanted something from Him, let me just say that, that is not the reason that we worship Jesus, though that is the reason that many do. Because they want something from Him, but we are to worship Jesus because He's worthy of our worship and that's it, we should have no other ulterior motive.

Vs21-22

Now the very fact that they responded so willingly only showed their lack of understanding of what He was referring to. Because we no that He was in reference to His suffering and persecution, and yet at the 1st opposition in the garden, when Jesus was arrested, every one of them took off. Now some followed longer than others did, but ultimately none of them were able.

Vs23

James (we read in the book of Acts) was to be the 1st slain of the immediate 12-with the sword. That's 1 of the 2 John suffered tremendously as well and was ultimately exiled to Patmos where he would receive the book of Revelation. But they both were to be baptized into suffering and persecution, but as far as who gets those particular thrones, Jesus said that wasn't His to give, but it was the Fathers.

Vs24

Why? Probably because they beat them to the punch

Vs25-28

I wish we had more time to look into this but we don't, Jesus was always teaching on the necessity of servanthood and being willing to take the lower seat, and being an example in humility and He pointed to His own life as a model for us. The King of all creation humbled Himself and became a man, not in order to be served but to serve, and Jesus would say to us, now go and do like wise. Because "*whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.*" Vs 28 should be highlighted or underlined in your bible, why because it emphasizes the purpose of the coming of Jesus as described by Jesus Himself. Why did He come, not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom or a redemptive price for all who would call upon His name.

Vs29-31

So these 2 men with out eyesight had tremendous insight, they recognized Jesus as the Messiah, and the more that the crowd tried to hush them, the more they cried out.

Why?

Because the realized that this might be the only opportunity that they would ever get to be touched by Jesus. and They weren't about to let that opportunity slip passed them Even so you're never guaranteed another opportunity to be touched by Jesus either and so I would encourage you to cry out to Him today if you find yourself in need of salvation.

Vs32-34

Jesus knew what they wanted, but yet He wanted to hear a specific request from them. and You know what? Jesus knows that prior to His touching our eyes we're blind as well, but it's important that we recognize our need before Him. and Until you do, He won't minister to your need either. We all come to God as sinners and it's important that we recognize that, because when we do it opens up the door for Jesus to give us sight, so that we might follow Him and again where was He going, to the cross.