

Introduction:

- Chapter 20 stands as a commentary on the discussion at the end of chapter 19. The very fact that vs 1 starts with 'For' confirms that the thoughts are connected to the rewards discussion.
- The parable is framed between Jesus comment, *"So those who are last now will be first then, and those who are first will be last."*
- The passage has much to do with the reversal of human expectations which are a major theme of chapter 19.
- The theme that stands out most in the chapter is that of God's divine generosity. God is gracious! 1 Tim 1:13-14 Gods generosity to Paul. Sermon on the mount - God clothes lilies and feeds birds how much more will He lavish on us.

I. The Kingdom Culture

- A. A theme of Matthew is the Kingdom of Heaven. In the past few weeks we are seeing how Jesus is confronting the human understanding of life verses the perspective God.
- B. Jesus compares the operation of the Kingdom to a man who needed workers for his field.
 1. God is landowner. And His activity in the parable reveals how He rules.
 2. Workers are members who have come into the Kingdom at different times.
 3. The two groups that are in focus are the first group and the last group. This is to make plain the diversity of the workers experience. Only the first and last groups are found in the main point, *"The first shall be last and the last shall be first."*
 4. The reward for labor is the same for each who come into the field at different times.
- C. The main point of the parable is that everyone gets the same reward. (eternal life). Gen 15:1 *"I am your great reward."*
 1. The parable confronts human concept of fairness. God does not reward work, he rewards faith.
 2. No one who has given up the most to follow Jesus should expect that the chief place in the Kingdom is to be given to them.

II. The Disappointing Work Day

- A. Why, when we read this parable, do we feel that something is wrong here? Our first reaction is like those who were first hired and how they react to the landowner?
 1. Jesus tells this intentionally because He intentionally wants us to feel/relate to the first ones hired. That is His point: You cant see the generosity of God if you are looking at life fairly. Like we saw of Peter a few weeks ago: How many times must I forgive, seven? If you are counting you cant forgive. If you are judging fairness you cant see generosity. Generosity has nothing to do with fairness.
 2. Why do we feel something is wrong in the parable? *"Because we cannot detach ourselves from the ruling convention that rewards should be commensurate to the*

services rendered." France, R. T. (2007). The Gospel of Matthew (p. 748). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.

3. To look at life fairly is to miss the generosity of God. To look at life fairly reduces the generosity of God to an earned paycheck.
- B. We take for granted that the harder you work the more you should be paid. God does not consider reward based on works. God considers rewards based on His generosity!

III. The Generosity of God

- A. The reward of Matthew 19:29 is a hundred fold return and eternal life. Jesus spoke that in response to Peter question: "*We've given up everything to follow you. What will we get?*"
 1. Hundred times return
 2. Eternal life
 3. In other words, no one loses out in becoming a disciple of the Kingdom.
- B. Jesus wants us to understand how big it is/how meaningful it is to get a 'paycheck' or reward from God. This is who God is: *He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.* Heb. 11:6 Like Abraham to have God is your reward.
- C. The picture is much like the Luke 15 picture of the Prodigal, the older brother resents the fact that the Father is so generous to the younger brother while only treating him fairly.
- D. When God is your reward it matters only that you have entered the work not how long you have been working! And the parable ends bracketed by *the first shall be last.*

IV. Jesus Predicts His Death

- A. A simple paragraph of Matthew that keeps us aware of where this story is going.
- B. It also speaks to Peters question, "What do we get?" in that it reveals how little is has cost them.
- C. You want reward? Then take up your cross and follow me. Mt 10:38