

Workers Wanted!

Franklin Church of Christ
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PM Assembly

Introduction:

We all have different perspectives on work. Some of us are blue-collar. Some white-collar. Some are labor. Some management. Some are in unions. Some probably are opposed to unions. But no matter the background and outlook, the story of the workers in the vineyard in **Matthew 20:1-16** causes us to stop and scratch our heads. For all the questions we may have about the wage policies of this landowner, one thing is sure—workers are wanted. Examine this parable and learn what God expects of us as workers in His kingdom.

Discussion:

- I. We are either working in the vineyard or idle in the marketplace.
 - A. What is the kingdom like? It is like a landowner who saw two kinds of people—people who were working in his vineyard and people who were idle. If a person is not working in his vineyard, then they were idle no matter what they were doing.
 - B. We are either working in this kingdom or we are idle no matter what we are doing. There are lots of good things to do in our society. We can be active in Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, 4-H, PTA, Junior Achievement, Red Cross, American Cancer Society, Habitat for Humanity, inner city soup kitchens. But if we are not working in Christ's kingdom, we are idle. If we are not working in the kingdom, we may be helping produce good, healthy, wealthy, intelligent citizens for our great nation, but when they die they will all go to hell.
 - C. Only the work in the kingdom of Christ has eternal significance. Only the work in the kingdom brings souls into Christ and allows them eternal life. Do not misunderstand me. I am not suggesting that we should not be involved in the other works I mentioned a moment ago. We live in this world and are part of its workings. We should strive to make it the best place we can. But do not lose perspective. Everything else is pointless if the work of the kingdom is not done.
- II. Kingdom members are supposed to be workers.
 - A. What is the kingdom like? It is like a group of people working in a vineyard. It is an ever growing group of people working in the vineyard. It is not people snacking on the grapes. It is not people lounging in hammocks. It is workers. They get sweaty and dirty. Their hands, knees and backs ache. That is Christ's kingdom.
 - B. In **Matthew 20:6**, the landowner asks some people why they were standing around idle. Their claim in **vs. 7** was no one had hired them. How sad it would be if the landowner had to come up to people he had already hired to quiz them on their idleness.
 - C. God expects us to be workers. I am reminded of **John 15:8**. Our job is not to bask in God's glory but to bear fruit that glorifies Him further. Jesus set the example in **John 4:34-38**. He knew He was here to do His Father's work. So are we.
 - D. Too many people come into Christ's vineyard and just want to bask in the promise of the reward. They do not want to get "sweaty and dirty." They do not want to have "backaches." They do not want to deal with toil and labor. But they want to believe they will be paid at the end of the day. We must each ask ourselves, if the Landowner came into our part of the vineyard, would He have to ask us why we are standing around idle? At the close of this lesson, I am going to offer an invitation. It is not an invitation to be a warm body, but to be a worker.
- III. Our reward is by grace.
 - A. What is the kingdom like? It is like a group of workers who get paid the same amount, even if they have worked different amounts of time. Now that is the most striking part of this story, because it is absolutely unlike what any of our employers would do. In fact, if any of our employers tried that, they would have to deal with unions, strikes and lawsuits.
 - B. The reason this is the most striking part of the parable is because it highlights the parable's purpose. This parable was part of Jesus' answer to Peter. And it actually extends from what Jesus said to the rich young ruler in **Matthew 19:21**. "... go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven ..." The rich ruler left disappointed and Jesus carried on the teaching with His disciples. But Peter was bubbling to ask, "If that ruler would have

treasure in heaven, what will we, who have already left all to follow you, get” (**vs. 27**)? Jesus’ explanation to Peter is they would receive a great reward. But once again, Peter misunderstood. Jesus had to explain that Peter would not receive a greater reward than any other Christian because the first would be last, and the last first. In Christ, there is no seniority or rank. We are all equal and will receive equal reward.

- C. Our natural reaction is, “Why? If I have been a hard working Christian twice as long as you, I deserve a better reward. If I maintain my faithfulness more consistently than you, I deserve a better reward. If I accomplish a greater amount of work than you, I deserve more.” Isn’t this the way it should work? Not before God. Why is our reward the same? Because our reward is not based on merit. We do not deserve any reward, no matter how long we have worked. Therefore, we cannot possibly deserve a greater reward than anyone else. Remember Jesus’ words in **Luke 17:10**. When we work in Christ’s vineyard, bearing fruit to glorify God, we are doing only what we should have done. We are not earning anything. God does not owe us anything. But, as with this landowner, He has agreed to reward us. He is faithful to His promises. We should not condemn Him for His generosity, but be thankful for what He has promised us. Notice our reward in **Matthew 19:29**—eternal life.
- D. Of course, some would say, “Why should I join the work force now if I can sign up later and get the same reward? I will live it up now, repent later and I get the best of both worlds.” First, can I convince you that following God’s law typically provides the best of this world? Because even when this world offers hardship, following God’s will provides the comfort to face it all. Second, can you tell me what hour it is for you? Which invitation to work is the one you will hear today? Is it the early morning? Is it the third, sixth, ninth hour? Or is it the 11th hour? How do you know? Treat this invitation as though it is the 11th hour. If you accept the work and come to find out it is only the third hour, you will have the comfort of knowing you are prepared. But if you do not accept, payday may come tonight and then it will be too late.

Conclusion:

As we conclude this look at this parable and the kingdom of God, take note of **vss. 6-7**. The landowner came at the 11th hour and asked these people, “Why are you idle?” They responded, “Because no one has hired us.” Have you ever looked deeply at that response? These men claimed their idleness was not their own fault. Their idleness was the fault of all the employers out there. But were they really idle because no employer had hired them? This landowner had come to the marketplace hiring any and everyone who would work four times already? Where were these men? Were they sleeping in? ... not paying attention? ... avoiding the call? These men would like to say that their idleness was someone else’s fault, but a closer look demonstrates only the men themselves were to blame. But in the 11th hour, these men changed, they were no longer idle but became workers in the vineyard and they were rewarded. But notice, only those who became workers in the vineyard were rewarded. When it came time to reward the workers, the landowner did not go again into the marketplace and find idle people and give them the reward as well. And anyone still idle in the final hour, during the time of reckoning and reward, went unpaid. And they had only themselves to blame. If you have been idle, do not continue in idleness, step into the vineyard and get to work, bearing fruit to the glory of the Father (**John 15:8**). If you have already been hired, but have been lounging about the vineyard, repent and get to work. If you are still standing in the marketplace, when payday comes you will not be able to blame the Landowner. You will find judgment and can only blame yourself. Even now the Lord is seeking to hire you into His vineyard. It may be your 11th hour, do not wait any longer, arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, becoming a worker in God’s vineyard.