

Redeeming the Time - Part 4

FAIR SALARIES Matthew 19:27-20:16

STIMULATE

** Last week we learned the importance of becoming the "**Forgiving Saint**" that the Lord redeemed us to be. Did you find yourself to be more aware of your calling to forgive and at the same time where you resistant to all forms of bitterness that would give rise to unforgiveness? (cf. Hebrews 12:15)

Absolutely - As we encounter the lost individuals around us, it becomes abundantly clear how much forgiveness is needed in this world. The Lord continues to lay upon my heart the need to forgive, even as much as I have been forgiven!

** In Part 3 of "**Redeeming the Time**", we saw what we must avoid at all cost if we hope to redeem our time here on earth. Do you recall what that was?

Failing to forgive others, especially in the light of how much we ourselves have been forgiven!

MOTIVATE

** Besides unforgiveness, there is another enemy of the Body of Christ. Another characteristic, that left unchecked can cause division and dishonor to the name of Jesus Christ. To learn what this is, please join me again in Matthew's gospel, this time in chapter 19 and verse 27. We will be reading the passage that concludes in chapter 20, verse 16 to hear what Jesus has to say about the equality of believers in His parable that discusses "**Fair Salaries**".

Read passage (V.27-30) (V.1-5) (V.6-10) (V.11-16)

Opening Prayer

Fair Salaries

INVESTIGATE

V.27 ** Our passage today begins in a similar fashion as did last week's, what has just taken place which prompted Peter to ask his question?

Jesus had encountered a "rich" young man who thought that he was righteous, but he loved his possessions more than the Lord. Jesus proclaimed that "it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven" because they must abandoned their love of money, then "come and follow" Jesus. That phrase is the defining characteristic of one who is truly born-again.

cf. Matthew 19:16-24

** All of the disciples were astonished at the concept that a rich man would find it hard to get into heaven and asked, "Then who can be saved?" (Matt.19:25)

Still not completely understanding the Lord's answer in verse 26, Peter now asks his pensive question. What is Peter concerned about?

If rich men cannot get into heaven and "with men it is impossible" what is going to happen to us who have left everything to follow You?

V.28 ** He does not have to wait long for the answer. What specific role awaits the twelve as a reward for following Jesus?

In the "regeneration" they "shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."
cf. Daniel 7:21-22, Isaiah 1:26

** What is the "regeneration"?

The term used here for regeneration [paliggenesia] literally means new birth. Paul uses it to refer to the personal new birth of believers in Titus 3:5. Jesus uses it here to represent the rebirth of the earth under His sovereign dominion at the time of His second coming. During His 1000 year earthly reign, the disciples will share Christ's rule as they over see the affairs of the 12 tribes of the restored nation of Israel. cf. Revelation 20:4

V.29 ** If that is what the "disciples" (or apostles as they came to be known) will receive, what about the rest of us who also gave up everything for Christ?

Whatever we "gave up" for Christ's sake, we shall receive "many times as much, and shall inherit eternal life."
cf. Mark 10:29-30

** What about our role, what will we be doing during His 1000 year reign on earth?

The same thing as the disciples, only ours will be relative to the rest of the world outside of the nation of Israel. cf. Revelation 2:26, 3:21

V.30 ** What statement does Jesus now make to eliminate any envy or petty jealousy among Christians?

"But many who are first will be last; and the last, first." This "jealousy" proves to be the next characteristic which can divide the body of Christ.

Chapter 20 -

V. 1 ** We know that the disciples did not understand this statement and so did Jesus, so He now launches into a parable that will explain what He meant. What is being compared in the parable before us?

"...the kingdom of heaven..." **and** "...a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard."

** As this parable develops, let's see the significance of each component. To begin with, why do you suppose that Jesus used the setting of a vineyard?

He was comparing the landowner (God) and his vineyard (the kingdom of heaven) to everyday things that the disciples could understand. cf. John 15:1-8

** When did the landowner go out to look for workers?

"...early in the morning..." This would be at the start of the work day, 6:00 am in Jewish custom.

V. 2 ** What salary did the landowner agree to pay the hired laborers?

"...for a denarius..." This was the daily wage of a Roman soldier and as such it was good pay for these workers. They were the unskilled, desperate, poor and downtrodden of their day. God has a particular concern for such as these. All see - Leviticus 19:13 and Deuteronomy 24:14-15

V. 3 ** What happens at 9:00 am to this little group?

It gets bigger! The landowner finds others standing idle in the market place.

** Where does God find us?

In the same place doing the same thing! When it comes to doing the work of the kingdom of heaven, we were doing nothing for the Lord, when He reached down and saved us by His grace, letting us become His workers in the "vineyard". cf. Proverbs 19:15-16

V. 4 ** When he hires this new group, what does he agree to pay them?

"...whatever is right I will give you..."

** How do you know that these workers trusted the landowner?

"**And so they went**". They took the landowner at his word, knowing that he would pay them a fair wage, and went into the vineyard to labor. It is important to realize that they did not fully understand what they would receive as a reward for their labor. That is a direct parallel to us, we too do not fully understand what we shall receive, but trust the Lord for our future.
cf. 1John 3:2, 1Corinthians 2:9

V. 5 ** Does the landowner stop offering opportunities for work, since the day is nearly half gone?

Absolutely not! He continues to call for workers in the sixth and ninth hours of the day.

V. 6 ** How late in the day is he willing to offer work to the downtrodden of the world?

Right up to the last hour! "And about the eleventh hour he went out..."

** What question does he ask of them?

"Why have you been standing here idle all day long?"

V. 7 ** What is their answer?

"Because no one hired us".

** Did the fact that no one else wanted these folks discourage the landowner from hiring them?

No, he said, "You too go into the vineyard".

V. 8 ** What time was the end of the Jewish work day?

When evening had come, 6:00 pm, a 12 hour workday!

** What did the landowner do?

Exactly what Leviticus 19:13 had told him to do, he called his laborers to himself for payment.

****** What unusual thing does the landowner ask his foreman to do, relative to the order of payment?

He instructs him to pay "the last group" first.

V. 9 ****** What rather shocking payment did those who had only worked for one hour receive?

A denarius - a whole days pay for a trained Roman soldier, rather amazing for an unskilled laborer who only put in one hour's work.

V.10 ****** While the text does not tell us, it is implied that those who had been hired in the third, sixth and ninth hours all received the same denarius. What impact did that have on those who had worked all day long?

They thought that they would surely receive more, having out worked all of the others.

****** What did they receive?

The exact same wage, one denarius!

V.11 ****** How did they receive it?

With "grumbling", directed at the landowner. They were trying to publicly dishonor the one who had graciously given them work to do, as well as a very generous wage.

V.12 ****** What was their complaint?

"These last men have worked only one hour, and **you have made them equal to us** who have borne the burden and the scorching heat of the day."

****** If they would accept it, the disciples would learn the meaning of "the last shall be first, and the first last" from the heart of the complaint put forth by these workers. Do you see it?

It is in the little word "equal". No matter when you are called, all receive the same wage, the gift of eternal life!

V.13 ****** How does the landowner respond to this public humiliation?

Respectfully! He uses the term "hetairos" for friend, which meant casual companion, and lets them know firmly but courteously that they are out of line. "I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius?" He reassures them that he has held up his end of the agreement.

V.14-15

****** What principle is the landowner establishing in the eyes of these workers?

He (the landowner) is in charge. He can do whatever he desires and in this case it was to pay everyone the same, regardless of how long or how well they had worked.

****** What very sinful trait was being displayed by these workers?

Their eye had become "envious". The word used here is "poneros", which literally means "to toil". It is translated as "evil" some 49 times in the New Testament. We must guard our hearts to not become envious or jealous of one another in Christ!

V.16 ** As Jesus wraps up this parable, what statement does He now repeat?

"Thus the last shall be first, and the first last". cf. Matthew 19:30

** What does the "day" in this parable represent?

Our lifetime here on earth. Will we spend it just standing around in the market place, or working for the Lord in His vineyard?

** What does the denarius in this parable represent?

Salvation. It does not matter if you receive Christ at the end of your life (day) or as a young person at the beginning of their "day", the reward of eternal life is the same!

EXTRICATE

** There are ten principles from this parable about "**Fair Salaries**" that will prevent us from becoming envious or jealous about our fellow Christians that God has blessed. Being freed from that sinful trait, we are better prepared to "**Redeem the Time**". Those principles are:

- 1) God sovereignly initiates and accomplishes salvation. [V.1] (John 6:39)
- 2) God alone establishes the terms of salvation. [V.2] (John 3:16)
- 3) God continues to call men into His kingdom. [V.5] (John 5:17, 2Peter 3:9)
- 4) God redeems everyone who is willing. [V.4] (John 6:37)
- 5) God is compassionate to those who have no resources and acknowledge their hopelessness. [V.1] (Luke 18:9-14)
- 6) All who came into the vineyard worked. [V.8] (John 15:8)
- 7) God has divine authority and ability to keep His promises. [V.13] (Romans 5:20-21)
- 8) God gives more than we deserve. [V.13-14] (Romans 6:23)
- 9) Humility is the only right attitude in which a person can come to the Lord. [V.15] (1Timothy 1:15)
- 10) God's grace oversees all that we do! [V.2] (Romans 3:21-24)

DELINEATE

** What is the main point of this parable, relative to how all of us compare to one another in the Body of Christ?

We are equal!!! V.12 - "...you have made them '**equal**' to us who have borne the burden and the scorching heat of the day." cf. Galatians 3:28

EVALUATE

** If it is your desire to be "**Redeeming the Time**" while here on earth, which of the 10 principles listed above might you want to focus on so that you avoid becoming envious of your brother or sister in Christ?

ACTIVATE

** Please choose two or three of those principles to pray over this next week. Thank the Lord for His faithfulness in all things and ask Him to keep you humble, even as you observe Him blessing others.

Closing prayer