

## SUNDAY

March 11, 2012

**READ:** Matthew 19: 16-30 (Focus: 27-30)

**OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS:** What is the rich man's question (verse 16)? What is inferred about the nature of attaining salvation in his question? Did the disciples think that salvation was attainable (verse 25)? What is the key ingredient that Jesus adds (verse 26)? What was Peter's focus, as revealed in his question of Jesus (verse 27)? What is the odd statement that Jesus says in verse 30, and what does it mean?

**KEY CONCEPT:** Those who serve in order to receive a reward will be last, and those who serve only in order to respond in obedience to Jesus' summons will be first.

**QUESTIONS TO PONDER:** What does the phrase "there is no free lunch" mean in the context of the rich man's question in verse 16? Is that generally true in our world today? How does Jesus' death on the cross reveal the true nature of how salvation is received?

What is grace? How have you experienced grace through the love of what others have done on your behalf? Have you extended grace to others in any way?

**PRAY:** Grace, which is unmerited favor, is an amazing concept...as it requires some sort of sacrifice by the giver. Today, consider how you have been the recipient of God's grace...both in the present day as well as the promise of your eternal salvation. Give thanks to God, who has sacrificed His son to provide you with this most amazing gift.

## MONDAY

March 12, 2012

**READ:** Matthew 20: 1-16

**OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS:** Who are the main characters in this parable? What is their relationship to each other? (**HISTORICAL NOTE:** A denarius was generally the wage paid for a day's labor.) Is this parable a bit thorny in your mind? If so, why?

**KEY CONCEPT:** God is sovereign, and will do as he pleases.

**QUESTIONS TO PONDER:** From what we can read in this parable, are any of the laborers better than any of the others in terms of the quality of their work or amount of their production? Are the workers being paid on the amount that they have produced (piece-work)? On some other basis? How would you feel if you were the first person hired in this story, being paid the same wage as the last one hired? How would you feel if you were the last one hired?

**PRAY:** God often does things in a way that we don't understand. Pray that God will increase your faith this week so that you are able to accept Him as He is, not as you want Him to be.

## TUESDAY

March 13, 2012

**READ:** Matthew 20: 1-16 (Focus: verses 1-2)

**OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS:** (Note: The term "kingdom of heaven" as used in Matthew refers to the reign of God that he is bringing about through Jesus Christ...the establishment of God's rule in the hearts and lives of his people and the creation of a new order of righteousness and peace.\*) In this parable, who is the landowner? What is the rate of pay for those he hires?

**KEY CONCEPT:** God provides for us what it is we need.

**QUESTIONS TO PONDER:** Have you ever been a day laborer? How was the rate you were paid established...by the person doing the hiring, or the hiree? A denarius was the expected rate of pay for a person hired for a day. Was anything unusual happening up to this point in the parable? Put yourself in this story. If you agreed to work for a denarius, and were hired by the landowner, are you happy as the day starts out?

**PRAY:** Today, consider the employment that you currently have. Do you understand it as an agreement that you have the your employer to work for what he/she is willing to pay for that job? Are you satisfied by the arrangement? In your prayer time today, consider the work you do as it relates to God. He has blessed you with the abilities you have, and provides for you through your use of those skills. Be sure to spend some time in thanksgiving for His provision.

\*Adapted from the Glo Bible

## WEDNESDAY

March 14, 2012

**READ:** Matthew 20: 1-16 (Focus: verses 3-8)

**OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS:** What is happening in these verses? Recall that the set-up to this parable is a landowner (God) who hires workers for his vineyard. Consider this metaphor as God calling people to work for Him within their everyday lives. Some get God's call early on, some mid-life, some late in their lives. All have the choice to accept His call or not to do so.

**KEY CONCEPT:** God's sovereignty allows Him to choose who he calls to himself, and at what stage in their lives He chooses to do so. As part of His creation, it is our responsibility to say "Yes, Lord" when He calls, trusting in His goodness for our provision.

**QUESTIONS TO PONDER:** At what point in your life did you sense God's calling you to live for Him? What difference has this made in how you live out your life? Do you think it is strange that some people get that call as children, and others as adults?

**PRAY:** As people, many times our nature is to rail against authority...to question the fairness of those who are over us. The walk of faith requires us to trust in the ultimate goodness and justness of God, even when we don't fully understand why He is doing what He is doing (or allowing to happen). Today, ask God for greater faith to trust in His sovereignty.

## THURSDAY

March 15, 2012

**READ:** Matthew 20: 1-16 (Focus: 9-12)

**OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS:** Pay-day! What is happening in these verses? Is everyone pleased? Why or why not? Recall what the landowner agreed to pay the first laborers hired (verse 2). What would workers who were hired after that hour expect to be paid? Is the landowner being fair? Are the workers being fair? How is fairness to be judged?

**KEY CONCEPT:** God does not necessarily compensate based on a human-conceived framework. His sovereignty and grace are radical in nature from our perspective. If we are not fully God-focused, it can cause confusion and misunderstanding.

**QUESTIONS TO PONDER:** What underlies the questions of fairness that are in play in this parable? How is your value as a person determined? Is it by what you are paid? Is it by comparing what you do to another person? How does God determine the value of a person? Is one person of more value to God than another? How does God determine who He will give the gift of salvation to...by how much they do for Him?

**PRAY:** If you evaluate your worth or value as a person based upon your position, income, or fame, spend time in prayer today asking God to help you see through His eyes how it is that He values you. Your work is important, but it is not linked directly with your transcendent value as God's image-bearer.

## FRIDAY

March 16, 2012

**READ:** Matthew 20: 1-16 (Focus: verses 13-16)

**OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS:** How does the landowner address the disgruntled worker (what name does he call him) in verse 13? What question does he ask? Is he willing to pay what was agreed upon? Does the worker have legitimate basis for being upset about being paid what was agreed to? What is the basis for the worker's feelings? What parting question does the landowner ask the worker?

**KEY CONCEPT:** A grateful heart will serve without thought of reward or without comparison to others. To think of rewards and to compare with others will cause us to question the wisdom and fairness of God and to become envious of other disciples.

**QUESTIONS TO PONDER:** Does the landowner have the right to use his money as he wishes? If he wants to be generous, is there anything wrong with that? Envy crept in when the worker took his eyes off of what his agreement was with the landowner, and began to compare his compensation with others. How did that affect his relationship with the landowner?

**PRAY:** Today consider the reasons that you serve God. Is it out of gratitude, or is it to earn favor and reward? The Bible tells us that the heart can be deceitful (Jer. 17:9). Ask God to help you understand your motivations, and confess any that are revealed to be self-serving.

## SATURDAY

March 17, 2012

**READ:** Matthew 19:27-20:16

**SUMMARY\*:** In the parable of the vineyard, Jesus illustrates that gratitude must be a compelling motivation for the discipleship community. Peter's questions in 19:27 reveals that he is motivated by the thought of receiving rewards for his sacrifice and devotion to Jesus. But such self-promotion will produce envy and comparison, which will in turn tear apart the cohesiveness of the group.

We can understand Peter's thinking, but we must look deeply at what God has done for us. We who have nothing of our own have been called to the kingdom of heaven and endowed with the privilege of being Jesus' disciples, with the promise of just recompense. When we properly respect that privilege, with a clear recognition of the dire alternative of not being called to the kingdom, a deep well of gratitude is produced in our heart. All that we are, everything that we have, all that we ever hope to accomplish is a pure gift - and the only proper response is gratitude.

**KEY CONCEPT:** Our proper response to God's grace is a heart of gratitude.

**QUESTIONS TO PONDER:** When you see others experiencing success or receiving a blessing of some kind, do you always react joyfully for them, or is there sometimes a "why not me?" thought lying beneath the surface?

**PRAY:** Gratitude is the response of the believing person to the goodness of God's grace in all creation and redemption. Ask God to increase your gratitude quotient...for your own life situation and for the successes of others.

\*adapted from The New Application Commentary (Matthew) by Michael J. Wilkins

TEACHINGS THAT GOT HIM

WELL KNOWN

Personal Devotional Guide :: March 11 - 17, 2012  
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