



Sept. 20, 2020 Mt. 20: 1-16 & Ex. 16:2-15

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ENTERING THE SCENE:

In Jesus' day things were different. "the system was extremely difficult for peasants and small farmers. Not only did they have to meet the demands of the elite, they also had to supply their own household's needs through their own production and through barter or purchase, as well as ensure sufficient livestock and seed for the next year, while at the mercy of weather, soil quality, political events, the whims of the elite. If the yield could not sustain a household, some left to eke out a living in the city, perhaps as day laborers (especially during planting and harvest, as in Mt. 20: 1-6, or in some service or trade employment. The system meant that many peasants lived constantly close to famine and subsistence, with poor nutrition, poor health, endless hard work, and perpetual vulnerability."

How does knowing this affect your understanding of the parable?

Carter, Warren. [Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations](#) Harrisburg, PA. Trinity Press. International. 2001. Pg. 47

Mt. 20: 1-16

1 For the kingdom of heaven is like a **landowner** who went out **early** in the morning to **hire** men to **work** in his **vineyard**. 2 He agreed to **pay** them a **denarius** for the day and sent them into his **vineyard**. 3 About the **third** hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace **doing nothing**. 4 He told them, 'You also go and work in my **vineyard**, and I will **pay** you whatever is **right**.' 5 So they went. "He went out again about the **sixth** hour and the **ninth** hour and did the same thing. 6 About the **eleventh** hour he went out and found still others **standing around**. He asked them, 'Why have you been **standing** here all day long **doing nothing**?' 7 Because **no one has hired us**,' they answered. "He said to them, 'You also go and work in my **vineyard**.' 8 When **evening** came, the **owner** of the **vineyard** said to his **foreman**, 'Call the **workers** and **pay** them their wages, beginning with the **last ones hired** and going on to the first.' 9 The **workers** who were **hired** about the **eleventh** hour came and each received a **denarius**. 10 So when those came who were **hired first**, they **expected** to receive **more**. But each one of them also received a **denarius**. 11 When they received it, they began to **grumble** against the **landowner**. 12 These men who were **hired last** worked only **one hour**,' they said, 'and you have made them **equal** to us who have borne the burden of the **work** and the **heat** of the day.' 13 But he answered one of them, '**Friend**, I am not being **unfair** to you. Didn't you **agree** to **work** for a **denarius**?' 14 Take your **pay** and go. I want to give the man who was **hired last** the same as I gave you. 15 Don't I have the **right** to do what I want with my own money? Or are you **envious** because I am **generous**?' 16 So the **last** will be **first**, and the **first** will be **last**."

DISCUSSION QUESTION: By paying the last hired first, Jesus sets up a teaching moment. What lesson have you learned from this parable?

PRAYER: Teacher Jesus, you reach for every conceivable way to stretch my understanding of God's unconditional love. I find myself coming to this parable with different responses each time I encounter it. When I am feeling secure, I celebrate that everyone has enough and marvel at God's generosity. When I am feeling afraid or unappreciated, I find my first response like a two year old screaming "that's not fair". Help me to grow into a secure adult understanding of what God is teaching me through you in this parable. Amen.