

What's in it for me?

Matt. 19:27-20:16

“Then Peter said in reply, ‘See, we’ve left everything & followed you. What then will we have?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive 100-fold & will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, & the last first.’” (Matthew 19:27- 30)

Notes: “*In the new world*” (19:27) “This is the restoration in the coming kingdom age (Acts 3:21), after the Lord’s 2nd coming... In the coming kingdom the...first 12 apostles, including Peter, will judge the 12 tribes of Israel...” (RcV) “*New world*” (Gk *palingenesia*, lit., “renewal,” “regeneration”). The term occurs in the NT only here & in Titus 3:5. In Titus it refers to present, individual regeneration, but here it looks forward to the future end-time renewal of the world...In this new world, the 12 apostles...will participate in God’s kingdom.

“The kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. Going out about the 3rd hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, & told them, ‘You go into the vineyard too, & whatever is right I’ll give you.’ So they went. Going out again about the 6th hour & the 9th hour, he did the same. About the 11th hour he went out & found others standing, & said, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ They replied, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’ When evening came, the vineyard-owner said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers & pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.’ When those hired about the 11th hour came, each of them received a denarius. When those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. On receiving it they grumbled at the master, saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, & you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day & the scorching heat.’ But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I’m doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you & go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?’ So the last will be first, & the first last.” (Matthew 20:1-16)

Notes: “*a denarius*” A typical day’s wage for a laborer. *3rd hour*. 9:00 a.m. The workday was typically divided into 4 three-hour increments, from approx. 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. *11th hour*. 5:00 p.m., near the end of the workday. These workers are desperate enough to continue waiting for work. “*Each of them received a denarius*” Surprisingly, the last laborers hired are paid a complete denarius, the same as those who had worked all day. “*Friend, I’m doing you no wrong.*” The landowner addresses the worker gently, explaining the fairness of his actions. “*do you begrudge?*” Lit., “Is your eye evil?” The laborer failed to be thankful for his own wage, blinded by his self-interested lack of compassion for his fellow worker. ESV

“*So the last will be first, & the first last*” (20:16 cf. 19:30). Jesus’ disciples shouldn’t measure their worth by comparing it with the accomplishments & sacrifices of others, but focus on serving from a heart of gratitude in response to God’s grace. Jesus isn’t denying degrees of reward... but affirming God’s generosity is more abundant than anyone expects: most laborers got more than they deserved. It’s probably...a warning that Jesus’ early followers (such as the Twelve) shouldn’t despise those who would come later. (ESV)

I Peter’s Question – What will we get?

A What do we get for leaving everything and following Jesus?

In response to Peter’s elf-seeking and perhaps self-pity, Jesus acknowledges the rewards that his disciples will receive. But his parable in 20:1-15 will be a subtle rebuke. (ESV Study Bible)

1 To the twelve disciples

- a. In the coming age [after Jesus' return] they will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel
 - i. In this new world, the twelve apostles (except for Judas, Acts 1:12-26) will participate in the final establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth. (ESV Study Bible)
 - ii. The 12 apostles (including Peter) have a unique role & will receive a unique reward—to sit on 12 thrones—which won't be the portion of any following apostle or servant of the Lord. This unique role of the 12 founding “apostles of the Lamb” is depicted in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:14).
- 2 To everyone who has left everything for the Lord's sake
 - a They will receive a hundred fold
 - b Rewards: “Jesus proclamation of the kingdom included metaphors for judgment & discussion of reward. Reward is *not* a bad motive; it is a way to talk about what pleases God & assures that following Christ is not a fruitless endeavor.” [Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, p. 376]
 - c And inherit eternal life

II The Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard – Matt. 20:1-16

- A The master hires labourers throughout the day. It is “an error to assume that the 5 stages of hiring represent various ages of history or times of human life...” [K. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, p. 373]
- B All receive the same pay
- C Those who worked all day murmured and complained about the “equal pay.”
A denarius was a typical day's wage for a labourer. The workday was typically divided into 4 three-hour increments, running from approx. 6:00 am to 6:00 pm. The 11th hour would be 5:00 pm near the end of the workday ...Each of them received a denarius. Surprisingly, the last laborers to be hired are paid a complete denarius, the same as those who had worked all day. To those who grumbled, the landowner explains the fairness of his actions. The laborer failed to be thankful for his own wage because he was blinded by his self-interested lack of compassion for his fellow worker. (ESV Study Bible)
- D “Implicit [in the parable] is the assumption that God's judgment will be contrary to human expectations. Implicit as well is that envy—displeasure at someone else's success—is contrary to the kingdom. Jealousy and all thoughts of ranking or privilege must be jettisoned.” [K. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, p. 377]

III The danger of comparing ourselves with others

- A Comparing how much we do with how much others do. “Humans...are continually comparing themselves with others, trying to assess fairness and level of accomplishment, which is exactly what the disciples were doing. The only fact that causes the 1st workers to complain is the comparison...” [K. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, p. 376]
- B Produces envy, jealousy, and criticism
- C “The parable focuses on the goodness of the owner & the complaint, *the envy*, of those who thought they should get more for their work. The parable instructs us that God's treatment of people, his judgment, is not based on human reckoning & standards of justice.” [Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, p. 376]
A disciple of Jesus should not measure his/her worth by comparing it with the accomplishments & sacrifices of others, but should focus on serving from a heart of gratitude in response to God's grace. Jesus is not denying degrees of reward...but is affirming that God's generosity is more abundant than anyone would expect; all the laborers except the very first got more than they deserved. It's probably...a warning that Jesus' early followers (the Twelve) shouldn't despise those who would come later. (ESV)

IV What should we do?

- A Realize God's abundant generosity toward us
- B Prepare to be surprised! “The parable warns us that we should expect to be surprised at God's judgment; it will not occur along the lines of human calculations...The parable assures that no one will get less than

promised or be treated unfairly & that many will get much more than they deserve.” [K. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, p. 378]

- C Avoid the sin of Comparison. “The life of God’s kingdom...cannot be experienced as long as we are comparing ourselves with others & calculating what is due us or being envious of what others receive.” [K. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, p. 378]
- D Appreciate how others who have gone before us have sacrificed for us
- E Sacrifice for those who come after us – 2 Cor. 12:14
- F Know that the reward we will receive in the coming age is based on how we serve the Lord today.
- G Serve and work as to the Lord – Eph. 6:7; Col. 3:23-24
- H The motivation for our service is love and thankfulness; not fear, not even reward. – Gal. 5:13

“In this parable the emphasis is on the sovereign authority of God & the fact that reward is according to His grace. Some have suggested that this parable refers to salvation. This is wrong, because salvation was accomplished by the Lord & is not gained through work. The householder here is God...During the time of the reward, there will still be grace. If a man deserves a dime and only 8 cents is given, that is unrighteous. Only grace can give the same reward to those who do not work as long as others. This is God's sovereignty. [This means that the Lord was saying, "Peter, you should not be self-boasting and self-righteous. In everything you have tried to be one step ahead of others. Yet my reward—the throne—did not shortchange you. God has the right to give to the latecomers, who sacrifice less, the same reward as He gives to you."] Through this [parable] the Lord destroyed Peter's concept of legality & commerce. Peter had altogether forgotten God's grace & God's right. God cannot exercise His right to do unrighteous things; yet He can exercise His right to bestow grace. Those who emphasize reward too much will forget the Lord's love. That's why, after the Lord's resurrection, He asked Peter 3 times, "Do you love Me?" After that He said "Feed My sheep," which means to labor (John 21:15-18).... One must forget what he has forsaken for the Lord. In this way he will receive his denarius with satisfaction & thanksgiving. Otherwise, he will only remember his own sacrifices; he will not be satisfied with a denarius & will be stumbled. (W. Nee, Matthew)

“Measure your life by loss instead of gain
Not by the wine drunk, but the wine poured forth
For love’s strength stands in loves sacrifice
And whoever suffers most has the most to give.”
By Hugo Bassi (from Sermon in the Hospital, 1885)