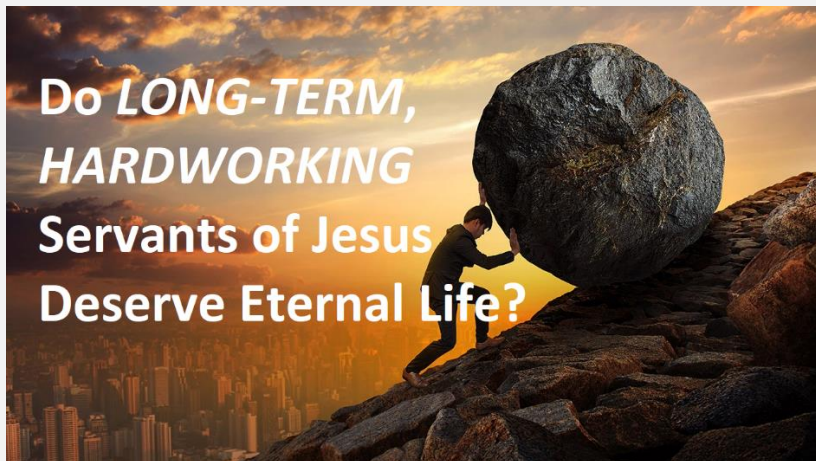


17th Sunday after Pentecost, 16th Sunday after Trinity – 2023

Saturday, 9/23 at 4:00 | Sunday, 9/24 at 9:00



Do **LONG-TERM,**
HARDWORKING
Servants of Jesus
Deserve Eternal Life?

Text: Matthew 20:1-16 NAS 1995

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: Through our **Great God** we have → **life**, → **strength**, → **abilities**, → **time**, and → **eternal life**! *So, it is proper for us to express our thanks with our faithful service in God's kingdom! Consider these two outcomes:*

- **Positive:** I can no longer drive, so I gave my grandson my car. Now he takes me to my church and my doctor.
- **Negative:** I can no longer drive, so I gave my grandson my car. Now, when I need a ride, he always seems to have a poor excuse as to why he cannot give me a ride.

Okay, we understand, we should thank our **Great God** by serving Him with our lives. However, *there is a **GRAVE DANGER***. Near the end of **chapter 19**, Jesus told His twelve apostles about *the great blessings His followers would receive in eternity*. But then He said, *“many who are first will be last; and the last, first”* (Matt. 19:30). Now, as recorded in **chapter 20**, Jesus told a parable to help us understand the meaning of the phrase: *many first will be last; and last first.*

Remember, a parable is an *earthly story* with a *heaven meaning*. In other words, Jesus will tell us something that is *easy to understand in this life*, then He will apply it to the *kingdom of heaven*.

1. **Hiring the Workers:**

- a. At **6 AM** – for a denarius: ¹ **“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning [during the fourth watch of the night, between 3 and 6] to hire laborers for his vineyard. ² When he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius for the day [the typical payment for a laborer working for one day], he sent them into his vineyard.”** // Many people who work know how much they will be paid **before** they do their work. That was true of those laborers, “a denarius”.
- b. At **8 AM** – for whatever is right: ³ **“And he went out about the third hour [between 8 and 9 AM] and saw others standing idle in the market place; ⁴ and to those he said, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.’ And so they went.”** // The “third hour” refers to the time *between 8 and 9 AM* – first hour: 6 to 7, second hour: 7 to 8, etc. Going forward in this sermon, I will use the time at the **beginning** of each hour mentioned.
- c. At **11 AM**, **2 PM**, and **4 PM** – for whatever is right: ⁵ **“Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did the same thing. ⁶ And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day long?’ ⁷ They said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go**

into the vineyard too.” // How many hours were worked – from first to last: **11** hours (6 to 5), **9** hours (8 to 5), **6** hours (11 to 5), **3** hours (2 to 5), **1** hour (4 to 5).

2. **Paying the Workers:** At the time of Jesus, many laborers worked *from sunrise to sunset*. ⁸ **“When evening came** [at sunset], **the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last group to the first.’**
- a. Those hired at 4 PM: ⁹ **When those hired about the eleventh hour came, each one received a denarius.** // They worked during the last hour of daylight, then their work ended, and then they were paid a denarius. They didn’t know what they would receive, but the owner told them he would pay **“whatever is right”**. After that group, *those hired at 2, 11, and 8 also received a denarius.*
- b. Those hired at 6 AM: ¹⁰ **When those hired first came, they thought that they would receive more** [because they had worked longer; and in comparison to some, **MUCH LONGER**]; **but each of them also received a denarius.** // So, those who worked **11 hours** received the **same pay** as those who worked only **1 hour**! Imagine being one of those 11-hour workers, *it’s easy to understand why they expected more than a denarius.*
3. **A Valuable Lesson for Each of Us:**
- a. The complaint of those who worked for 11 hours: ¹¹ **When [those men] received [a denarius], they grumbled at the landowner** [complained, expressed dissatisfaction], ¹² **saying, ‘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.' // Their complaint *seems legit!*

- b. The landowner's response: ¹³ But he answered and said to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? ¹⁴ Take what is yours and go, but I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. ¹⁵ Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?" // The owner was right, *he could pay the others whatever he chose.*
- c. The point of the parable: ¹⁶ **"So the last shall be first, and the first last."**
- i. An Example: Moses served in the wilderness for 40 years – ***eternal life***; John the Baptizer served and was beheaded – ***eternal life***; the crucified criminal confessed his faith in Jesus – ***eternal life***. Each life of service was VERY DIFFERENT, yet each received the same GIFT – ***eternal life!***
- ii. The meaning: ***NEVER trust in your own work!***
1. Last ones – FIRST: Heaven seems **impossible** for last ones, yet they die in Jesus and enter!
2. First ones – LAST: Heaven seems **certain** for first ones, yet they ☹️ trust in their work, ☹️ die without Jesus, and ☹️ ***do not enter heaven!***

Let Us Pray: Dear Jesus, since You have done **all** to save us, may **all** our trust for heaven ➡ **NEVER** be in anything we have done to live for You but ➡ **ALWAYS** remain in You alone.

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