



St John Lutheran Church

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Text: St. Matthew 20:1-16

Theme: The Parable of the Workers

This parable tells the story of a landowner and the workers he hires. **One morning, he** goes to hire workers to work in his vineyard. **At 6:00 a.m.**, he agrees with some that they will work for a day's wage ... **a denarius. Later, at 9:00 a.m.... noon,** and 3:00 p.m. he hires more workers. **Finally, at 5:00 a.m.**, he hires the last workers available. **The difference between** workers was great ... **some** worked 12 hours... **others nine**, some six... **and some**, just one hour. **The hours they** worked varied greatly, but all their wages were the same ... **one** denarius. **Each worker received** exactly the same amount for the work they gave. **All were treated equally... no matter** how much of the day they worked.

This is perhaps a troubling thing to you. **Maybe you think, "Now, that's not fair!"** When we speak of our life in the world... **you are** right. **This treatment of** the workers is not fair. **We have differences** in our world. **Those who work** hard and long should get a higher wage than someone who does little. **Generally, it is** not right to pay equal wages for unequal work.

Here we must learn what our Lord Christ has to teach us here. **Jesus does not** teach us how the world should be. **Our Lord was** not endorsing Communism ... **that** evil system of rule that sought to make everyone equal. **No, that is NOT** what Christ is doing. **Our Lord Christ** here teaches us **what kind of Kingdom** He is King over. **Jesus reminds us** that His Kingdom has different principles than the kingdoms of this world... **and in His Kingdom**, what we think as fair or right is not important!! **This is something** critical that we must understand. **Jesus is Lord...we are not!** **Jesus is the One** with All Authority and in reality, we have none!! **What we think** is fair or right matters not one bit!

In the world, there must be some inequality because people themselves are so very different. **Some receive much... others little. Generally, this is** because the level and quality of their work are very different. **The bank president** and the janitor earn different amounts because their jobs and responsibilities are different in every way. **This is not** to say that the bank president's job is more important than the janitor's. **Both work hard** but their work is simply different and is compensated differently. **To our mind** and our experience, this is only fair.

It is not so in Christ's Kingdom. **In Christ's Kingdom ... there are** no differences. **All are equal... one the same as another. Each has... and** is worth as much as the next one. **Whether one is** man or woman... **poor** or rich... **black** or white... **or young** or old ... **all** are equal in Christ! **Together we all** go to church... **we all** hear the same Word. **The Baptism you** have is the same. **The faith that** Peter and Paul had is the same held by the thief on the cross... **and this** is the same that you have now. **The God of Abraham**, of Moses, of David, of Luther is the same Gracious God every repentant sinner has. **Here, all are** the same, even though they may have more or less status and standing in the world. **All have been** purchased by Christ's Blood and suffering. **All have received** Christ's Grace...**His Free Gift. And it is** Grace we are talking about here. **Your salvation is** a gift of God. **You are saved** by Grace through faith and apart from and works...lest any man boast!!!

Now, in the parable, the workers hired first did not like this arrangement did they? **When the landowner** paid them, what did they do? **They grumbled. They muttered and** grumbled saying, **"It's not fair! These last only worked one hour while we worked hard in the sun and did the most work! It's not fair!"** **The landowner**

met their grumbling with the agreement to work, **"Did you not agree to work for a denarius?" He then dismisses them with words of condemnation, "Take what is yours and go your way. I will give to the last the same as to the first. Can I not do as I please with my riches? Or is it that you are envious of my generosity?"**

Yes, the landowner is generous and we are grumblers. Sometimes it is true that we do not like the way that God dispenses His riches and His blessing. We do not like that the new Christian receives the same Heaven that we do. They haven't done much yet, have they? We want to be rewarded for our service in the church. We believe that God really owes us some extra for the things that we do. Have you ever served on a board? Have you ever grumbled about how much work you do and how no one else does anything? Has your heart perhaps thought that God should reward you and place you above those who are new Christians ...or those whose works are not seen by you? Have you stopped your service in the congregation because you thought that it just wasn't fair for you to work so hard while others seemed to do so little? It really ought to be more fair, shouldn't it?

Sorry. In Christ's kingdom, it is different than it is in the world. God is not partial. He favors no one. He treats everyone equally. As the Holy Scriptures say, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" and "There is no one righteous, no, not even one." [Romans 3:10] Each one of us stands under the condemnation and wrath of God for our sins. No matter the sin... all are judged guilty by God's Law!!! All sin kills! Whether you simply tell a lie, or steal or murder ...all sin kills you! Though you may live a good life in the eyes of men... your good works cannot avert your doom. They help and save you never! Again, the Scriptures tell us that those who exalt themselves before men will be humbled before God. Yes, the first shall be last indeed.

The good news is that... though we are all treated equally under the Law... we are also treated equally under the Gospel. Yes, all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God but all are also justified freely through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. [Romans 23, 24] Yes, our Lord Christ has died for your sins and the sins of all people. There is no difference. The one Lord Jesus Christ has died for all. His death is your life. He has paid your ransom. He has literally bought you back from hell with His Blood!

This you must learn.... and then understanding that... here is where you take your joy and hope. Christ's Kingdom is not of this world. It is different. "My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts are higher than your thoughts," says the Lord. [Isaiah 55:10,11] And we say, "Thanks be to God!" This is a very comforting Gospel for all Christians... that we are all equal in Christ. We are part of the one body in Christ. We were called to faith by the same Spirit. We have one Lord, one faith, one Baptism. We all have one God and Father of us all who is over all, in all, and through all. No one has a better word... a more precious Baptism... or a better heaven ... we are equal in Christ. As the blessed apostle wrote for our learning and peace, "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

[Galatians 3:27, 28]

We should learn this truth so that we may serve God cheerfully and sincerely ... whatever our position or station in this life. You are not a great ruler... or one who has great power. Perhaps you don't know anybody who is important in the world's eyes. Yet, you have the same holy Baptism and the One who died to save you from your sins is the same One who died for the most important and influential person in the world. All these good things that we have in Christ ought to make us beam and glow with joy and pride. You do not get what you deserve! You deserve death and hell! But God has been gracious TO YOU! Yes, these Heavenly gifts will give you the right way to look at your worldly goods and riches. Worldly riches will not help you a bit. You must take your courage and comfort from your Lord Christ and what He has done for you. He has

suffered... shed His blood, and died for you. **He has risen** from the dead and ascended into heaven where He sits at God's right hand of the Father... **where** He remains ready to help you out of your sin, your death, and every misfortune. **You are baptized into Christ!**

Knowing this... that we are equal in Christ ...**forgiven by** the One Blood... **you can** go about your daily work with joy. **It does not** matter if you are rich or poor. **It does not** matter if you are a mother at home tending your babies or if you supervise hundreds of people at work. **These differences will** not trouble you. **For you know** that there must be differences in our earthly position and work. **Yet, we go** about doing our work, whatever it is, in the Name of God. **This is God pleasing! We do not** grumble about our status or rank in life... **but gladly** and willingly remain in our place until God sees fit to better our lot. **It does not** matter. **For in Christ's Kingdom** we are all partakers of the same Heavenly blessing and grace. **I am very glad** that God is not fair... **for in** this way... **we get** much more than we could ever earn or desire.

Boasting then in Christ... **go forth** in your life and do what needs to be done. **Go about your** work in a joyful and godly way. **None of us** have any reason to grumble about our place in life. **It is from** God. **Therefore our work** and place in life are good and precious. **Even if we** or others think that it is unimportant, yes, even boring... **we are** to remember that our work and place in life are Christian!! **All we do...all** we have been given...**all** that is to come to us is in Christ!!! **What more can** we desire or need?

Yes, we must understand quite clearly what our dear Lord Jesus tells us in this parable. **There is a** difference between the way the world works and the way Christ rules His Kingdom. **In His Kingdom,** we are all equal since we have the one and same God, Christ, and Holy Spirit. **We all have** the same Gospel... **the same** Baptism... **the same** blessed Supper... **and the same faith.** **In the eyes of** God... **each one** of us is as good, pious, and holy as the next. **None is any** better than another...**all** are in Christ!!

We are very privileged!! We should thank God for all His gifts and praise Him for His mercy. **Let men regard** you how they wish. **It makes no** matter if they consider you inferior or superior. **You have as** much as all the saints and angels in Heaven! **How? Through Christ...In Christ!!! You are baptized** into His death and resurrection. **So go your** way and be a father, mother, and child. **Be a worker** or a supervisor. **Do whatever God** gives you to do with joy, courage, enthusiasm and love. **God has given** you the treasures of heaven in Christ.

The forgiveness of Christ should make your burden easy to bear. **Go to your** work and place rejoicing that God has given to you the same as He has given to Peter, to Paul, and to all the other saints. **He has placed** you, the humble and repentant sinner, first in His Kingdom. In the Name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit...Amen.

Pentecost 18A, 2008

Rev. Eric M. Christiansen

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