

The Parables

#16: Matthew 20:1-16

"Let God Be God"

Annual Celebration Next Week!

- Details...

Dismiss Children

3-minute break

Introduce Tucker and Grace Grose

- Explain our support plan
 - 10% giving
 - We prefer to support those we have a direct relationship with, and whom are training up pastors/leaders in that specific local community
 - Tucker Grose is Adam's brother
 - He and Grace train up pastors and leaders among Native Americans in Black Diamond, AB
- **10 minute update**
- PRAY for NAIM and the Grose's ministry

Open your Bibles to Matthew 20

Phrase of the Day: **Let God be God.**

Context for Matthew 20:

- Go back to Matthew 19...
 - Jesus is approached by the Rich Young Ruler, who goes away sad because he wasn't ready to accept Jesus' challenge to sell everything he had, give to the poor, and follow Jesus for the rest of his days.
 - This prompts a conversation between Jesus and his disciples about those who choose to follow him at various points in their life (older/younger), and at what level (hot/cold).
 - Jesus' last statement (Mat 19:30), "But many who are first will be last, and the last first."
- And then begins the parable in 20:1...

Mat 20:1 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.

Mat 20:2 After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

Mat 20:3 And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

Mat 20:4 and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.'

Mat 20:5 So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same.

Mat 20:6 And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?'

Mat 20:7 They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.'

Mat 20:8 And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.'

Mat 20:9 And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius.

Mat 20:10 Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius.

Mat 20:11 And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house,

Mat 20:12 saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.'

Mat 20:13 But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?'

Mat 20:14 Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you.

Mat 20:15 Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?'

Mat 20:16 So the last will be first, and the first last."

First, let's be clear about 3 things:

1) If this happened today... there'd be lawsuits, a youtube video, lawyers involved, and dozens of congressmen pounding the podium, demanding fairness for all workers.

- The answer to the question in v15 would be "no, you're not allowed to do what you want with what's yours, because it's not FAIR."
- Every now and then the Bible reminds us that God is not "fair". And we feign shock.
- God is not a fan of fairness, and He doesn't demand it.
 - In fact, the ultimate "not fair!" policy of God is found in Ephesians 2:8-9:
 - **Eph 2:8** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.
- Now, of course, this DIDN'T happen today.
 - It happened in a time when people would have backed off at the question, and said, "Oh yeah, I guess since it's his money, he can decide how to use it. I just don't like it."

2) This parable is primarily about Heaven's citizenship.

- It is about God's grace being extended – even to the late arrivals.
- It is about Jews – the longtime chosen people of God – and Gentiles both being invited
- It is about the Jews chastising God for His error in judgment and thinking toward outsiders
- It is about the Gentiles being invited in BECAUSE the Jews reject God's Son – as I laid out in the parable of the Banquet on Resurrection Day.
- And it is about any "older" person who spends much of their life either denying Christ or having not heard of Him, and putting their trust in Him late in life.
 - Tucker and Grace – I'm sure – deal with this in Black Diamond as well.
 - As all missionaries who come across many who have yet to hear the gospel.

3) In the same way, This is God's Kingdom

- The Kingdom of Heaven is God's Kingdom
- It is not my job, or your job, to dictate to the King how the kingdom should be operated.
- He sets the rules and because He's perfect, He keeps the rules unchanged regarding the citizens of His Heaven.

- We don't always like His rules – and we challenge them sometimes.
 - This is not a bad thing – relationship with God often means having some good, hard conversations with him.

Let God be God.

Let's put ourselves into the parable for a moment...

- You're a mom or a dad, out of work, with a few applications out there, but today, the best chance for work is to stand in the marketplace and hope a foreman comes looking for laborers.
 - My construction boss used to do what the master does in this parable every now and then.
 - Construction guys know where to hang out if they need to work.
 - The lumber yard parking lot was always a good spot.
- Fortunately, you're one of the first ones up and ready, and at 6 AM (first hour), a foreman offers you \$100 to work a full day, and you hop in, get to the job site, and start digging a ditch that takes literally all day.
- Throughout the day, you notice others are showing up, doing similar work, but you don't think much of it.
- One guy even shows up when the sun's just about down.
- Finally, the whistle blows, and you head toward the foreman to receive your \$100.
- You're a good worker, so you take a little more time putting tools away, sweeping up some dirt that scattered onto the driveway, etc.
- So you're last in line to get paid.
- The guy who just showed up an hour ago is first in line, and is given a crisp \$100 bill.
 - Your first thought: Wow, if that guy got \$100, how much will *I* get??
- You finally get to the front, and the foreman says thank you, and hands you a \$100 bill.
 - You pause.
 - Your hand still a bit open, not yet putting the money in your pocket.
 - In fact, it's blistered from using the shovel all day.
 - You give him a half-smile.
 - You're sore, sunburned, exhausted from pouring yourself out all day...
- And the conversation goes something like...
 - "Sir, you gave the guy who worked just an hour the same as me."
 - "Yes, I did."
 - "But sir, that doesn't seem right."
 - "Why not?"
 - An involuntary snort escapes, as you fumble with your thoughts... "Because I worked 11 more hours than he did!"
 - And the master says, "Oh, would you rather I gave him \$10? That would make you feel 'right' about all this?"
 - "Yeah! Well, no, actually, I was thinking since you gave him \$100, maybe you could give me a bit more."
 - "But, you and I agreed on \$100 for the day. At 6 AM this morning, that was OK with you. What's changed?"
 - "Well, the fact you gave that lazy shmuck the same for 90% less work!"

- “You are quite worked up over things you can’t control. 1) Why are you so upset about what someone else gets paid? 2) Why are you so bothered by how I run my business?”
- And you can’t answer him any further than you already have, so you take your money and leave.

Sometimes, if you’re truly LISTENING to God when you converse with Him, you’ll hear him say, **“Because I said so.”**

- I used to hate that phrase until I became a parent of children whom I knew wouldn’t understand certain things until they were older.
- This is God’s World.
- Take a look at some of the ways He tries to remind us of that:

Scriptures about God’s Ways...

- **Job 38:1-5 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me. "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know!**
- **Job 42:2 "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted."**
- **Ps 135:6, Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.**
- **Col 1:15-16, He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.**

Let God be God.

- **Remember Turner and Hooch?**
 - Great scene where Tom Hanks takes Hooch around the house, into each and every room, saying “this is not your room” until he finally gets to Hooch’s room.
 - Why did Hanks have to do that?
 - Because Hooch totally ruined the house, when left alone.
 - In the same way, when we start trying to run God’s world with our own rules, He often walks us through His house, saying, “This is not your room.”

(next) Let God be God.

Applications:

- The SPD does not exist.
 - **SPD = Spiritual Police Department**
 - Before I have some fun with this, the parent-to-young-child relationship is the one exception to this rule!
 - Outside of that relationship:
 - We do not write tickets for Sabbath breakers.
 - We do not patrol our neighbors and fine them for coveting one another.
 - We don’t pull people over for not giving a sandwich to the beggar on the corner.
 - We do not issue warnings for people who failed to have their quiet time in the morning.

- And we do not call the authorities on those who choose to bless some people more than they bless others.
 - In the scriptures, the Spiritual Police Department doesn't exist.
- ***We – as a people in general – hate the idea of someone getting off easy, or getting away with something.***
- The Bible has quite a few passages related to this:
 - The Prodigal Son's brother:
 - Luk 15:29-32 the elder brother said to his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"
 - John 21:18-22:
 - After his resurrection from the dead, Jesus told Peter how he would die—apparently by crucifixion.
 - Peter heard that, but immediately pointed to John, and asked Jesus, "What about him?"
 - Answer: "What is that to you? You follow me!"
 - And just a few weeks ago, I pointed out that a man interrupted Jesus in a crowd, saying "Tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."
 - And Jesus says...? ("no" – basically), then telling a parable that addresses man's deep desire for "fairness".
 - And as we see over and over in scripture, "fairness" is not a Biblical principle.
- Again, in the scriptures, the Spiritual Police Department doesn't exist.
 - ***What does exist is an all-knowing God who LOVES each of His creation, and by His Holy Spirit, He convicts the heart in His perfect timing.***
 - God is the Police Department.
- ***God is the Authority*** in all justice, truth, grace, mercy, and love, and of course, in the citizenship of Heaven.
- Now, you might say, **What about accountability partnerships?**
 - "Accountability Doesn't Work" seminar
 - Because people don't tend to be truthful, or open up, or simply like the idea of accountability, but only because they want to HOLD SOMEONE accountable, not the other way around.
 - Accountability WORKS when humility, honor, discretion are priorities, and when God's Spirit does the convicting, not human beings.
 - It's a lot of work! And worth it!
 - But unless you've been invited by another person to hold them accountable to their walk and faith, it is not your role to police them.
- **Let God be God.**
 - My hope with this phrase today is that when you experience "unfairness" in the world, you'll think of this phrase.
 - And it will not only ease some unnecessary stress, it will also challenge you.
 - ***Why? Because letting God be God is not PASSIVE.***
 - It is not just 'Hands off,' and a "Fine!" attitude.

- You are created to PARTICIPATE with God in His generosity.
- You are commanded – as His child – to be an instrument of undeserved grace!
- I read an article this week by a man named Stephen J. Cole.
 - In it, he shares a story:
 - Just over a century ago, a man named Shamel was the leader of a guerilla group fighting against the Czarist regime in Russia. The unity of his group was threatened by a rash of stealing amongst the members, which included the soldiers’ families. So Shamel imposed a penalty of 100 lashes for anyone caught stealing.
 - Not long after that, Shamel’s own mother was caught stealing. He didn’t know what to do. He loved his mother and didn’t want her to suffer, but he also knew he had to uphold his law or anarchy and infighting would ruin his army. He shut himself in his tent for three days, agonizing over what to do.
 - Finally he made up his mind: For the sake of the law and the whole society, his mother must pay the penalty. But before three blows had fallen on her back, Shamel had his real and final solution. He removed his mother and he himself took her place. The full price had to be paid, but he bore the penalty she deserved. His law stood, but his love prevailed.
- The first step to Letting God be God is this:
 - **Change the terminology from “unfair” to “grace”**
 - Stop seeing God’s generosity to those who don’t deserve it as a negative
 - See it as God revealing His grace.
 - See his generosity as a springboard for the undeserved to come into communion with Almighty God.
- **Heads up:**
 - ***Once you begin down this road...***
 - When you become the dispenser of grace....
 - Your habit of extending grace to undeserving people when God clearly shows you to do so ***will cause others discomfort.***
 - And then you’ll have the opportunity to preach this message.
 - And God’s Way will be honored.

Let God be God.

Pray

Announce:

- ***Do you need prayer this morning? Stuart and Tim will be in the upper right corner!***
- ***And Tucker and Grace will be at their table in the back – please visit them.***