

"You are invited please RSVP!"

Matthew 20:1-16

¹ "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who owned land. He went out early in the morning to hire people to work in his vineyard. ² He agreed to give them the usual pay for a day's work. Then he sent them into his vineyard.

³ "About nine o'clock in the morning he went out again. He saw others standing in the market place doing nothing. ⁴ He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard. I'll pay you what is right.' ⁵ So they went.

"He went out again about noon and at three o'clock and did the same thing. ⁶ About five o'clock 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 spoke to the person who was in charge of the workers. He said, 'Call the workers and give them their pay. Begin with the last ones I hired. Then go on to the first ones.'

⁹ "The workers who were hired about five o'clock came. Each received the usual day's pay. ¹⁰ So when those who were hired first came, they expected to receive more. But each of them also received the usual day's pay.

¹¹ "When they received it, they began to complain about the owner. ¹² 'These people who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said. 'You have paid them the same as us. We have done most of the work and have been in the hot sun all day.'

¹³ "The owner answered one of them. 'Friend,' he said, 'I'm being fair to you. Didn't you agree to work for the usual day's pay? ¹⁴ Take your money and go. I want to give the ones I hired last the same pay I gave you. ¹⁵ Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Do you feel cheated because I gave so freely to the others?'

¹⁶ "So those who are last will be first. And those who are first will be last." (NIRV)

Intro

Grace, mercy, and peace from our Lord and Savior,
Jesus Christ!

The bride and groom sent out 250 invitations for their wedding and reception. Only 100 people RSVP (answered) back to the couple. The couple didn't know what to do. Maybe some of you have sent out fancy invitations for a party, a meeting, or some special occasion (thrill), and you expected an RSVP, either "Yes!" or "No!" And you have found those people who do not RSVP are especially frustrating. You didn't know how to count for them and their meals. You could never be sure if they were coming or not. You must assume (guess) they are not coming, yet they have an invitation. This is also true many times in hiring a person. A realtor, (sells land- RE) I know, told me that 8 out of 10 agents that call him and set up an interview

to be hired never show up. Only a small 20% actually show up for an interview that they, themselves set up, imagine.

In our reading today, a wealthy land owner has gone out early to hire workers for his vineyard (farm). This is really a picture of God who has set up his church on earth. God has hired men to be in charge of his people [the church]. God has hired pastors, Bible teachers, Sunday school teachers, choir directors, council officers and etc. And even though they are most often not paid with money, they still receive earthly benefits and are surrounded by the gracious promises in God's Word. Like the workers in the field eat a few grapes as they gather in the harvest during the heat of the day. So in the church, it is everyone's duty to serve God and HIS people, to bring in the harvest of souls (grapes). Our text says that the

laborers who were hired early first made an agreement with the rich land owner. They agreed to work for 1 DENARIUS (\$.15) or one full days pay for a Roman Soldier of that time. Some people mistakenly think that they earn eternal life. Those people wrongly think by doing good things, or teaching the Bible, or being the pastor, or some other duty in the church, that God will give them eternal life. THIS IS NOT SO! Grace cannot be earned! "If grace is earned it is no longer grace [Romans 11:6] but is only pay for a days work." The 15 cent is simple pay for simple work.

The owner goes out at 9 am, 3 pm, and 5 pm. He hires more laborers but no mention of pay or of an agreement is made. The laborers simply go and begin work. Apparently, they will be happy with any money they get. This is true in the church too. Many Christians are not concerned that God is treating them

justly. They are not asking silly questions like; are people honoring me for all I have done for the church? I give more \$ than anyone, I must be the best. People should not be wishing for God's justice. They don't want to receive payment for what they have done or left undone. True believers really want God's mercy, not God's justice. God's justice says "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God [Romans 3:23]. The payment for falling short is death." As God said to Adam and Eve, "The day you eat of this fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil you shall surely die!" The wages (earn) of sin is dead! We want grace! "God's grace is the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23)." Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest

for your souls." These are the comforting and warm words that we want to hear from our Lord. Not of our good works and good life. We cannot do anything of ourselves but only through God's power can we accomplish good and mighty things. And God's lets us share in that glory. When we do a good deed and we receive praise, we say thank you and feel good inside. But if the person honors us anymore, we say it is not me, but it is God who deserves the glory. Because he gave to me first, so I could give to you. If we preach a good sermon it is to God's credit. If we cook a good meal for the church people it is God who deserves the complements. If we do a good job painting outside the church, it is God who gave us the strength. God is due the glory and honor, not us. However, God is gracious and allows our name to be linked (join) to HIS name. We get to say thank you and feel good inside. This is a

Denarius (15 cents)! This is a payment. It is a bonus. It is a bonus which comes with doing what is only our rightful and lawful duty. But the best is a gift that cannot be earned. Eternal life with Jesus!

The reading for today, says that when the landlord comes to pay the wages, he decides to pay first those who come to work last. So, the generous landlord pays first the men that worked for only an hour. He pays them 15 cents they take their pay and leave. The landlord pays each in reverse order of their work. Those who came to work last get paid first. Those who came to work early, or first, in the morning get paid last. These early, or first workers, are excited they think they will get more pay since they worked longer. But they are wrong. They get exactly what they agreed to get in the beginning 15 cents and they are angry at the landlord. They say, "These last workers only did

one hour of work and you paid them the same as us. And we did the heavy work during the hottest time of the day." People who take this attitude with God will find no pleasure in meeting HIM. People who accuse God and blame HIM for being unfair will never be happy with any pay. Besides God owes no man or woman anything. The landlord says, "Friend, I do nothing wrong. You agreed to work for me for 15 cents correct? Take your money and leave. I want to pay this last worker the same money I pay you. I can spend my money my own way, correct? Maybe your eye is jealous because I am good, correct? People hate God because he is good. Jesus says the world has hated me. And we see that sinful men crucified Jesus. And Jesus warns, the world will hate you too because you are MY children. The Devil, the world, and our sinful flesh hates God because HE is good and gracious. The

eyes of many people are jealous of God and HIS great glory. The first workers got their rightful pay, but they hated the landlord for his kindness to those who only worked an hour, or a couple of hours. So, it is that way with grace. God can show mercy to those people HE wants too. God says at the close of the 10 commandments. "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep My commandments (Ex. 20:5-6)."

There many that are CALLED (sent and invitation) and few that are CHOSEN (RSVP- in faith). Why some believe God's Word and promises, and are saved, and some don't believe go to Hell, is a mystery. But those who do not believe cannot blame God who is a generous

and good Lord of Heaven and Earth. God has done everything to make them believers. "God desires all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4)." Like the land owner, God has done nothing wrong in giving out grace in HIS Son. God has done all and accomplished that HE desired to do! "The last will become first and the first will become last." Grace & Peace to You! Amen!