

Discussion and Reflection Questions

Sunday 24th of September - Formed for the benefit of Others

Read: Matthew 20:1-16

'For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. ²After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. ³When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the market-place; ⁴and he said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." So they went. ⁵When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. ⁶And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, "Why are you standing here idle all day?" ⁷They said to him, "Because no one has hired us." He said to them, "You also go into the vineyard." ⁸When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, "Call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first." ⁹When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. ¹⁰Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. ¹¹And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, ¹²saying, "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." ¹³But he replied to one of them, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? ¹⁴Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. ¹⁵Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?" ¹⁶So the last will be first, and the first will be last.'

Discussion and Reflection Questions

1. Do you have a favourite parable? What is it about the parable that you really connect with?
2. Is there a parable that you particularly find difficult? What is it about that parable that you find challenging?
3. Why do you think that Jesus taught using parables?
4. How do you feel if you are the labourer hired first? Or last? Which one should we see ourselves as?
5. Verse 16 is a recurring teaching in the gospels but what does it mean for our practical day to day lives? How should we apply it to ourselves?
6. What kind of world do the parables create? Is this a better world? Do you see evidence of it today?
7. What would it mean for Christians today to speak in parables? Not to give black and white answers?

Prayer

Loving and righteous God,
your boundless generosity exceeds
all that we can desire or deserve,
and you give to the last worker all you promised to the first: liberate us from all
jealousy and greed,
that we may be free to love and serve others,
and in your service may find our true reward;
through Jesus Christ our Lord