

The Generosity Of God's Mercy

– Matthew 20:14-15

One of the complaints that the right-living and religious people made about Jesus Christ was His treatment of the more disreputable members of society.

Jesus Christ accepted such people immediately, He did **not** wait to see the outcome of their contact with Him before He committed Himself to them.

Jesus Christ actually gave the impression that He preferred the company of the rejects of society. He even accepted invitations to share a meal with them, which no ordinary rabbi would and appeared to genuinely enjoy such an occasion.

When Jesus Christ was challenged for this unconventional behaviour, His reply was that this was how God treated sinners and He told several parables to reinforce this lesson.

One such parable includes the statement we are studying.

Matthew 20:1-15 [New King James] *“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the labourers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.’ So they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day?’ They said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.’ So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, ‘Call the labourers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.’ And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, saying, ‘These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.’ But he answered one of them and said, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?’”*

Such a parable would be very disconcerting to any trade union leader of our day.

For a vine-growing farmer the need to gather the crop at its prime state lasted a very short time, so needed a large supply of labour for a short period of time. **In the time of Jesus Christ such labour was to be found in the local market place, where “day labourers” were to be found who did not have full-time employment.**

These men were dependent on being employed each day to support their families.

Jesus Christ could have told these unhappy men who had worked all day that these men had families who needed to be fed, but He simply said, *“Can I not do what I like with my own money?”*

The law-abiding people whom Jesus Christ knew tended to feel that they had made a bargain with God if they kept His Commandments and that He would give them the blessings that such conduct promised.

Those who started to do the will of God late in life were in no position to strike a bargain with God, they could do nothing but cast themselves on His grace, His mercy, like the tax collector in a similar parable who said, “*God, have mercy on my, a sinner,*” [Luke 18:13].

What could such people expect?

The lesson of the parable seems to be this; when people make a bargain with God, He will honour His promise and give them no cause for complaint, but there is no limit to what His grace will do for those who have no claim at all on Him but trust entirely on His goodness.

If we feel this gives such people an unfair advantage, but let us consider that they were terribly disadvantaged to begin with.

No time when the active Holy Spirit within them could be producing the very “*fruits*” of God’s character in them, no time to prepare for a future job in the Kingdom of God, [John 6:44].

God the Father knows exactly when and how long we need to mature into a being He can bless with the gift of eternal life within His created family, the Kingdom of God.

Let this parable encourage all who are “*late-comers*” when it comes to having a relationship with our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ.