

“LAST SHALL BE FIRST AND FIRST LAST”

MATT. 19:27-30; 20:1-16 (Hold Reading)

INTRODUCTION:

A. This **parable** in chapter 20, which has been given the title "**Laborers In The Vineyard**", is an **exposition** (explanation) by Jesus Himself on the statement He made in the last verse of chapter 19. **That statement being:** *"But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first."*

1. Notice, He begins chap 20, vs. 1 with "**FOR**" meaning "**because**."

B. By studying this exposition we discover several important truths for *believers as workers* in the vineyard, and what we can expect "in the evening", or when we are called and reward is given for our labors in the kingdom of God.

2 We're going to look closely at this parable and seek to discover new truths as it relates to our service in His kingdom, **and why** *"The Last Shall Be First And The First Last."*

I. THE HOUSE-HOLDER WENT TO HIRE LABORERS INTO HIS VINEYARD *(Notice that he did so on 5 different occasions in one day)*

Mat 20:1 *"For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder [the head of a family --master of the house], which went out early in the morning to **hire labourers** into his vineyard."*

A. Three important things to notice in his actions.

#1. There's no mistaking the landowner's purposes - "*hire laborers*"; there was a **harvest to be gathered**.

#2. There's no mistaking what he wanted them (us) to do. It was the basis of His relationship with them - "*hire laborers*"; who's purpose was working and producing *for him*. (Gather the harvest.) *(This is why we're saved.)*

#3. There's no mistaking where He wanted them (us) to work - "*in his vineyard*."

B. Every believer who is **truly in the Kingdom Of God** is there because of the Master's call or "**hiring**" of him/her. **Amen??**

1. **NOW**, By the same token, we will also have to agree that **every one the Master calls** is called to work in His Vineyard (kingdom).

2. **Important to understand:** The highest and most noble work in the kingdom is that of "*fishers of men*". *Christ came to seek and save that which*

*was lost. He called disciples to be fishers of men -- so he calls us also as His disciples!
"As the Father hath sent me, so send I you."*

a. It's amazing that it requires no special qualifications other than the Holy Ghost Baptism and a proclaiming of the Gospel (Acts 1:8).

b. Those which Jesus called were: *"ignorant and unlearned fisher-men."*
GREATEST ABILITY REQUIRED IS AVAIL-ABILITY.

c. The greatest need of the *"spiritual fisherman"* is that of the **power to witness**, (provided by the power of the Holy Ghost), and then *"speaking those things which we have both seen and heard."*

Mark 16:20 *"And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord work-ing **with** them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."*

III. VERSE 8 TEACHES - EVERY ONE CALLED TO LABOR WILL BE CALLED TO THEIR REWARD.

A. This means that our labor is not in vain in the Lord! **Paul realized this!**

1 Cor 15:58 *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, **always abounding in the work of the Lord**, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."*

B. It also means every one called must have labored in His vineyard **unto the end of day** to receive his/her hire (v.8).

1. No walking off the job and still getting a full reward.

2. We must fight the good fight of faith, run the race and finish the course.

C. From verses 9 and 10 we learn: **It is not the length of service** that is most important, **but the quality of service.**

1. This is the reason for the last receiving the same as the others. **NOTE!** Christ is no respecter of persons and doesn't show favoritism.

1. The attitude of **those called last** was that of proving themselves so as to have **another opportunity** to work again. **Our involvement now will deter-mine our involvement in eternity.**

2. This means that though we labor but for a short while, if our labor is of highest quality (***due to excelling***) then we may receive more than we ever hoped.

a. It also means that, though we labor long, we may receive less than we thought. It will be according to the quality of our labor and our ability. **Important factors are: zeal, perseverance, pressing forward.**

Rev. 22:12 *"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*

3. Many will find themselves as these in verse 10 ***"they supposed that they***

should have received more:.. "

C. **Lesson in Verses 11-13** = What ever agreements, bargains, vows, etc., we make with Christ He will hold us to it. (**Note Verse 13**).

III. CHRIST DOES NO WRONG - HE WILL BE JUST AND GRACIOUS. VERSES 14-15

A. Although God acts in His sovereignty, His actions are not arbitrary (absolute, or imperative).

1. He can do what He wants to, with what there is, because everything belongs to Him.

1. This we know: Men reap what they sow, and according as they sow, **whether bountifully or sparingly**.

2. First place is not lost unless it is disregarded, or the opportunities and privileges promised in it are neglected. **How do you feel about first place?**

a. The **message is this**: *We must maintain our zeal, perseverance, and pressing forward to the prize before us*, otherwise our good start will mean nothing.

b. **Don't leave your first love!!** Don't allow yourself to become *lukewarm*!

B. **The complaint** was that the last labored but one hour, or a short period of time and received the same as those laboring all day. **Jesus responded with the following statement:**

1. **"So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called but few chosen."**

a. **Question:** Few chosen from the FIRST OR the last?? - Or from the total called??

1. **Answer to why few will be chosen:**

Matt. 22:4-6 *"Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them."*

2. It is dangerous to make light of, or take lightly the importance of responding to the call of God. **IT IS DANGEROUS TO:**

a. Go our way, giving priority to the things of this life.

b. Mistreat the servants of God. (II CHR. 36:16).

c. Fail to have on the wedding garment, **OR** keep it spotless, without wrinkle, blemish or any such thing (Matt. 22:11-14; Eph. 5:25-27).

d. Make excuses. See Parable of Great Banquet (Luke 14:17-24)

3. **Rev. 17:14** "...the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful."

CONCLUSION: We have many examples in the scriptures where many have been called but few chosen.

1. Noah preached the coming flood to the old world for 120 years; but only eight souls were saved. **WHY?**

a. They ignored the warning and **did not** move with fear to make preparations to escape. **Have you made preparations or have you lost your fear?**

2. Lot preached to the cities of the plain, but only three souls escaped from them.

a. His own children disregarded his warning as one that mocked. **Lot had lost his testimony.**

3. Six hundred thousand men, besides women and children, passed through the Red Sea; but only two of the men over 20 years old entered the promised land. **Why? Because of unbelief!**

4. Gideon went to fight the Midianites with 32,000 men; but only 300 were allowed to participate in the victory.

5. **The Message is this:** We must seek to be first in pleasing God.

B. How can WE stay first? **Answer: BY BEING:**

1. The first in praying and seeking. These are the first in receiving!!

2. The first in faith, **first in righteousness**, knowing we will be rewarded.

3. The first in self-control, first in self-conquest.

4. The first in well-doing and in well-being ...leading the way! **Not as the young man who admitted the only thing he was consistent at was in being inconsistent.**

C. **Remember, much has been given to us, and much will be required of us.**

Heb 4:1 "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."

Heb 4:9-13 "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. (10) For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. (11) Let us labour (BE EAGER TO DO SOMETHING) therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. (12) For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (13) Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

Rev 22:14 "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they **may** have right to the

*tree of life, and **may** enter in through the gates into the city."*

D. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT FIRST PLACE? ARE YOU SEEK-ING FOR IT?

1. Our involvement now will determine our position in Heaven for all eternity.

2. Don't be like those in Noah's day and Lot's day and fail to make preparations to escape the soon coming judgment on this earth, and generation.

F. Don't be like those millions in Israel that were not allowed to enter the promise land because of unbelief. Seek to please God by having faith.

1. Be first in praying and seeking Him. Be first in receiving from Him.

2. Be first in well-doing and well-being, "*always abounding in the work of the Lord*" in His harvest.

3. Be first in faith and in righteousness, knowing you will be rewarded.

Lakeland COG - Sun. PM 3/12/95

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