



## The Equity of God

July 3, 2022

### **Holy Text: Matthew 20:1-16**

- This Text is commonly known as *The Parable of the Vineyard*.
- While finishing up Matthew 19, we read of the disciples asking Jesus about rewards. They wanted to know what type of rewards they would receive from Him since they had forsaken all and followed Him. (Matt 19:27)
- His reply:

*Matthew 19:28-30 (KJV) And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. 30 But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.*

- The disciples would indeed inherit great blessings! But they were aware of their special status. Perhaps they felt they deserved more?
- Jesus wanted them to serve Him with the right heart. They were asking about blessings and rewards. But they, like us, are just servants.
- Our LORD's statement in Matt 19:30 and again in Matt 20:16 was designed to check any hubris or pride.
- Beloved, we too struggle with entitlement. We too tend to define what is fair by our own feelings and standards. We too need to be reminded that "many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first."

### **First, some definitions: Equality verses Equity**

1. Our current world is consumed with the idea of equality. *Consumed* may actually be a weaker word than needed to describe it. Culture worships its idea of equality.
2. But its idea is a false one. Culture used to define equality as "equivalent or parity of outcome for all." This parable is a correction to that false concept, but in reverse. The householder distributed as he willed! More recently it seems, culture defines equality as "what we feel we deserve at any given moment."
3. These are not only unbiblical concepts, they are sinful concepts. They fly in the face of the sovereignty of God and the depravity of man.
4. When we read the word "equal" in the KJV, it either means "equivalent" or "right" or "just"—as God defines those terms. Scripture knows nothing of equality based on feelings or of effort/results for all.
5. **Rather, equity in Scripture can be defined as "justice or rightness." It is God's equitable or divinely fair distribution of justice, gifts, and treatment. Critically, it is tied to His sovereignty and wisdom.**
6. And this is why *biblical equality* (or equity) is hard for us. Most of us would fully agree with the earlier workers in the parable. If we were them, we too would exclaim that we are owed more!
7. This is popular, but false thinking. Your job may work this way but the Kingdom does not. God (the householder) can do what He wants with what belongs to Him.
8. God creates us differently and orchestrates our lives in diverse ways. Some of us are smarter, taller, shorter, can sing (or can't!), are more or less athletic, are healthier or not,

have big or small families, and will live longer or shorter lives. We are born in different places, into different circumstances, and have different passions. Yes, God's Law applies equally (and there is nothing wrong with equal application of civil laws), but people aren't and never have been "equal."

9. Some will earn more, earn less, and have different "talents:"

**Matthew 25:15-16 (KJV)** *And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. 16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.*

10. All of this is *biblical equality* or *equity*, wherein a good man or woman's steps are ordered by God. Daryl B. Harrison said, "In God's economy, biblical equality means that each of God's image-bearers is judged with a bias toward truth, not outcome." **God does not treat us equally as the world defines it, but He does treat us equitably!**

### **Explanation of the Text**

1. Jesus is teaching his disciples about humility, the place of a servant, and Kingdom equity.
2. Indeed, this is another of those "the Kingdom of heaven is like" parables, where we can glean a greater sense of how God's Kingdom operates. (v.1)
3. In this case, our Lord uses the example of a householder, or a land owner, who owned an vineyard.
4. This householder went out early one day and hired four groups of day-laborers to work in his vineyard for an agreed upon sum of money (a denarius...a day's wage): some at 9:00am (third hour), some at 12:00pm (sixth hour), some at 3:00pm (ninth hour), and some at 5:00pm (eleventh hour). (vv.2-7)
5. At 6:00pm (v.12), he had his steward call them to settle up. (v.8) The whole group received their pennies. (v.9)
6. It seems contextually reasonable that the householder is the LORD and the servants are those he has called into this Kingdom to work in His vineyard. The penny is their reward for their work.
7. However, those that were hired first had a problem. They had worked longer! Those hired at 9am were likely the most offended: they worked all day...and in the heat too! (vv.10-12)
8. Verse 10 says "they supposed that they should have received more!" They were so upset that the murmured (complained) against the "goodman of the house." God hates murmuring by the way:

**Exodus 16:8 (KJV)** *And Moses said, This shall be, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD.*

**1 Corinthians 10:10 (KJV)** *Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.*

**Philippians 2:14-15 (KJV)** *Do all things without murmurings and disputings: 15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;*

9. Friends—and this may clash against our modern sensibilities—the householder did nothing wrong! (v.13) He honored the original agreement.
10. Remember that these laborers had nothing before the householder came along! They were standing idle in the marketplace! Why? They weren't necessarily lazy...they just weren't called!
11. But the householder called them! He gave them work. Purpose. Dignity. Resources! Yet they complained! (v.12)
12. As a result, they left his employ! The household gave them their money and told them to leave. (v.14) Ultimately, they weren't "chosen" because of their rejection of the householder's equity! How many people today reject God because they feel He is unfair?
13. The householder also corrected their thinking. (v.15)
  - He had every right to hire whom he wanted, when he wanted, and pay what was agreed upon. Why? Because the money was his, and so was the vineyard.
  - The landowner owned the land and did not lie to or mistreat the any of the workers. He had the right to distribute as he saw fit according to the agreements that were made.
  - Beloved, may we never forget that it all belongs to God!
14. This parable should do at least three good things for us:
  - First, it should amaze us at God's grace upon sinners. Some of us were "last." We came to God late in life or have done much wickedness. Yet, the Heavenly Householder saved us! We will receive a heavenly reward too!
  - Second, it should expose wrong attitudes. Why are we working in the vineyard? Do we really see ourselves as servants? Are we grateful to simply be chosen? Is this our attitude?

***Luke 17:7-10 (KJV)** But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? **8** And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? **9** Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. **10** So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.*

- Finally, it should strengthen our belief in the "fairness" of God...

**15. The truth is the landowner (householder) did not treat them *equally*; but he treated them *equitably*. This is what God mercifully does and why many reject Him today.**

### **Embracing the Equity of God**

To understand and truly embrace God's Equity, we must affirm that:

1. God loves truth and justice!

***Isaiah 61:8 (KJV)** For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.*

***Jeremiah 9:24 (KJV)** But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.*

2. God IS truth!

**Deuteronomy 32:4 (KJV)** *He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.*

**John 14:6 (KJV)** *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

3. God's ways are perfect!

**Genesis 18:25 (KJV)** *That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*

**Psalms 19:7-8 (KJV)** *The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. 8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.*

**Psalms 18:30 (KJV)** *As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.*

**Psalms 25:10 (KJV)** *All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.*

4. God is our Creator and has every right to rule us!

**Psalms 100:3 (KJV)** *Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*

**Isaiah 64:8 (KJV)** *But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. **Isaiah 29:16 (KJV)** Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?*

**Romans 9:21 (KJV)** *Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?*

5. God's plans for us are good!

**Jeremiah 29:11 (KJV)** *For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.*

**Romans 8:28-30 (KJV)** *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

**Ephesians 2:10 (KJV)** *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

6. God orchestrates life, gifts, and circumstances according to His will!

**Ephesians 1:3-5 (KJV)** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,*

**1 Corinthians 12:11 (KJV)** *But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*

**1 Peter 4:19 (KJV)** *Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*

7. God sees differently than we do!

**Isaiah 55:8-9 (KJV)** *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

**Hosea 14:9 (KJV)** *Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.*

**Romans 11:33-36 (KJV)** *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! 34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? 35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? 36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*

#### **Final thoughts:**

1. We can **trust** God...He is never unfair! He is indescribably equitable!
2. We must serve Him for the right reason: a deep and abiding **love** because of His salvation!
3. We must check *carnal equality* thinking and embrace *biblical equity* thinking lest we develop a sense of **entitlement** while serving our LORD.
4. We must teach our children about the **sovereignty** of God, lest they too be swept away by cultural selfishness and vanities.
5. We can take **heart**! When biblical justice (based in truth) seems delayed—even despite our prayers and best efforts—God will recompense!
6. We can therefore have peace and **contentment** in the LORD.
7. We can live with thankfulness and **joy** for having been called and chosen, regardless of our circumstances.

**Matthew 20:16 (KJV)** *So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.*

Amen!