

AI: Artificial Injustice
Matthew 20:1-16

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“For the kingdom of heaven is like . . .” (20:1a)

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“But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” (19:30)

“So the last will be first, and the first last.”
(20:16)

Main Point:

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The kingdom of heaven is filled with
surprising grace, not meritorious reward.

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.” (1)

The master hires FIVE SETS of laborers:

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Third hour (3-4) = 9 am

Sixth hour (5) = noon

Ninth hour (5) = 3 pm

Eleventh hour (6-7) = 5 pm

“And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’

“They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’” (6-7)

Three Agreements

Early agreement = one denarius for one
day's labor

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“After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius
a day, he sent them into his vineyard.” (2)

Mid agreement (third, sixth, and ninth) =
“whatever is right”

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“whatever is right”

“and to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.’”

Mid agreement (third, sixth, and ninth) =

“whatever is right”

“So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same.” (4-5)

Late agreement = “you go too”

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““Why do you stand here idle all day? . . .

You go into the vineyard too.”” (6b, 7b)

One Wage

“Call the laborers and pay them their wages,
beginning with the last, up to the first.’

“And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius.

“Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius.” (8b-10)

Response to the one payment

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What they thought - they **presumed**

Response to the one payment

What they thought - they **presumed**

What they said - they **grumbled**

“How long will this wicked congregation
grumble against me?”

Numbers 14:27a

“Friend, I am doing you no wrong . . .” (13b)

“... Did you not agree with me for a denarius?
Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to
give to this last worker as I give to you.” (13c-14)

“Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?” (15)

“Must you be jealous because I am generous?”

J.B. Phillips

“the last will be first, and the first last.” (16)

A Merit-based Mindset with the Master

1. **Jealousy** – Am I jealous (envious) when someone receives good that I didn't receive?

“For I was envious of the arrogant when I
saw the prosperity of the wicked.”

Psalm 73:3

“When we envy, we are playing by the rules of hell.”

Tilly Dillehay

2. **Grumbling** - Do I grumble when others receive gifts that they don't deserve?

“Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches.”

Psalm 73:12

3. **Anger** - Am I mad when God doesn't give me the life or the things I expected?

“All in vain have I kept my heart clean
and washed my hands in innocence.”

Psalm 73:13

4. **Arrogance** - Do I assume that I should receive more/better than others who don't perform as well as I do?

“you have made them equal to us” (12b)

Theology: Top down, or bottom up?

The kingdom of heaven is filled with surprising grace, not meritorious reward.

Do you want a relationship with God built on
your merit or **his grace**?

“The wages of sin is death”

“The wages of sin is death
but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ
Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 6:23

“What good deed must I do to have eternal life?”

Matthew 19:16b

“When sinful men and women are faced with a holy, good God, they have no clothes to hide their nakedness.

“Merit is excluded. All depend on grace alone.
Without it they would not have a chance.”

Michael Green