

“The landowner and the hired workers parable” helps us understand the merit system of this world doesn’t work in God’s kingdom it only produces one ugly thing... envy. Today we’ll discover God never operates on the merit system but always in the realm of grace.

The Merit System Doesn’t Work

Matthew 19:16-30

God ALWAYS Operates On
_____ And Not On _____

Three Truths About God’s Grace & His Kingdom

1. Everyone Gets _____

*“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the market place doing nothing. He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went. “He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing. About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’ “‘Because no-one has hired us,’ they answered. “He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’”
Matthew 20:1-7 (NIV)*

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no-one can boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)

2. No One Gets _____

“When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’ The workers...each received a denarius.” Matthew 20:8-9 (NIV)

“When those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner.”

3. Some Get _____

“These men who were hired last worked only one hour ... and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’ But he answered one of them, ‘Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’”

Matthew 20:12-15 (NIV)

Three Things To Stop The Leak How To Know If I Have A ‘Merit’ Mentality

Stop _____

Stop _____

Stop _____

(Titus 3:3; Galatians 5:19-21 Job 5:2; Proverbs 14:30)

Personal Study - Growth Homework

GETTING STARTED

Here are two questions to get you started. First, who is the best employer you’ve ever had and why? Second, what is the most generous thing some one has ever done for you? How does it compare to what God has done for you?

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

What really stood out to you in this message?
What really caught your attention – convicted you?

The Bible tells us God's Kingdom is a Kingdom of Grace and not Merit. In what ways does God's grace seem unfair - not make sense in our world? How does our world's way of thinking impact grace making us strange and making it difficult to live out a life style of grace?

How do we know if we really believe and live in a world of grace? How do we know when we forget this truth?

Even though we know this we still tend to struggle with it. In what ways do we as believers struggle with God's grace in the lives of others? (i.e. deathbed or death row conversions – those last minute decisions – unfair things)

How does this parable in Matthew 20 address issues like death row and deathbed decisions – those last minute conversions?

In ways has or does God's grace seem unfair to you? How do you feel about sharing heaven with murderers, rapist, child molesters and people who at some point in their life – even if it was at the last minute – they became a Christ Follower and are going to heaven?

Aren't we really thinking we are better than them? Why do we think we are better than they are? How are we all really the same? Why do we like the merit system?

GOING DEEPER

Titus 3:4-6 in the NIV translation says, *"When the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."*

How does this reinforce the parable Jesus told?

How do we keep this truth that God's kingdom is not about merit but about grace in focus so we don't go down the road of envy?

In the parable of the Landowner and the hired workers Jesus gave three powerful truths.

In God's Kingdom everyone gets more than they deserve,
In God's Kingdom no one gets short changed.
In God's Kingdom some get more than others.

Which of these three is hardest for you to live with? In other words, which one is the easiest for envy to leak into your life? When is it you find yourself struggling with envy and feeling others have gotten more than they deserve – you've gotten shortchanged – or haven't gotten what you think you deserve? What's whacked in our thinking?

In light of this message and Titus 3:4-6 what would you tell someone who felt they weren't getting what they deserved from God – who felt they were getting shortchanged by God – that others were getting more and that life was unfair?

Would you agree envy and merit is one of if not the hardest and strongest tools of the enemy? Why is it so easy for us to slip into "merit thinking and living" when it comes to God?

How does the lack of grace impact our relationships with others and our desire to share Christ with others?

BOTTOM LINE ... What's God telling you in this lesson? What do you need to change in your life to be living in Graceland?

One exercise we can do to help us keep envy and it's cousins of bitterness and resentment from taking up residence in our lives is to write down things we're thankful - things we've gotten that we don't deserve. Take a few minutes and write down all the things God's given you.