

Sermon Discussion Guide- Week of September 12, 2021

Jesus Stories: Parables For People Like Us

Playing Favorites, Matthew 20:1-16

Pastor Conway- 8:30 & 10:30 Contemporary, Pastor Temple- 10:30 Traditional

Getting Started- Life Updates, Prayer Requests & Opening Question (15 min)

- Anything to share about personal events or faith experiences since you last met?
- Are there joys or concerns that you would like to share with the group for the closing prayer time or for group members to hold in prayer during the week? (please note them below for later)
- **Opening Discussion Question-** In an ideal world, should compensation be based on results, effort, the degree of need in the person's life or a combination of all? How do you think it usually works in this world that is not ideal?

Review the Sermon (15 min)

Please read aloud the scriptures from this week's sermon message and then discuss the questions which follow as time allows. There are more questions than you will have time for, so it is ok to be selective.

Matthew 20:1-16

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ² He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. ³ "About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. ⁴ He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' ⁵ So they went. "He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. ⁶ About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?' ⁷ " "Because no one has hired us,' they answered. "He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.' ⁸ "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.'

⁹ "The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. ¹⁰ So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. ¹¹ When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ¹² 'These who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.' ¹³ "But he answered one of them, 'I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? ¹⁴ Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. ¹⁵ Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?' ¹⁶ "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

1. If you had to give a one-minute summary of the sermon message this week, what would you say?
2. The vineyard is a metaphor for the kingdom of God and the people of God throughout the scriptures, including several parables in the New Testament. How are the workers described here an apt representation of the people of God?
3. What can we know about God from the way Jesus describes the landowner in this parable?
4. What expectations can we rightfully have for what God is going to give us compared to others? Why?
5. When it comes to salvation, how is the judgement made in that 11th hour above our paygrade?
6. What qualities does the landowner appear to seek for workers in His vineyard?

Other Related Reading (10 min)

1. Would a volunteer please read aloud Luke 18:9-14.
2. Aside from jealousy and envy arising from “the comparison game,” how does this parable illustrate other negative attributes that can arise from it and why?
3. How does Jesus confront this negative attribute here in this parable?
4. What additional lessons about God’s grace does this parable offer us?

Personalizing and Applying The Message (10 min)

1. As you reflect upon the sermon and the scripture readings above, what are points of encouragement or challenge for you personally?
2. Are there situations you anticipate facing this week in which envy or jealousy might be especially tempting? Which ones?
3. Were you surprised that grumbling was taken so seriously in this passage? Why or why not?
4. Pastor Conway said the cross of Jesus Christ is both the means of our salvation as well as a landmark in the journey to keep us from losing our way. How has this observation proven true in your life?
5. How can we, like the landowner, be both fair and just as well as generous and gracious this week?

Witness and Closing (10 minutes)

- If evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread (D.T. Niles), how would you talk with people hungry for bread today?
- A volunteer may conclude by leading the group in prayer about the joys and concerns shared earlier in the meeting