

Week 17 – Parables About Discipleship – Part II (Review)

Day 1: Overview

Read Matthew 20:1-16, Luke 14:28-32

1. What did you learn from the teaching last night (if you didn't hear the message, listen to it online at trinitygrace.org)?
2. What, in general, is Jesus teaching in the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard?
3. What, in general, is Jesus teaching in the parables of the Tower Builder and the Warring King?

Day 2: Fairness

Read 1 Samuel 30:21-25

1. In this passage, what did the “wicked and worthless fellows” (verse 22) desire? What was their definition of fair?
2. How did David respond to these men? What was his definition of fair? How does this reflect the character of God?

3. Write down a time that you have been guilty of the “wicked and worthless” definition of fair. Keeping in mind your answer above about the character of God, how should you have been different?

Day 3: God's Goodness and Mercy

Read Matthew 20:1-16

Cultural Information:

- A denarius was usually considered the average daily wage for a day laborer, however it was still barely enough to support a family.
- The workday was about twelve hours, from sunrise to sunset, and working under the Palestinian sun was very difficult.

In *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, Kenneth E. Bailey argues that the master kept returning to hire men throughout the day because he had compassion on these day laborers that were willing to work to provide for their families, to suffer humiliation by their public display of desperation for work, and, in their persistence, to stay as long as it took to make whatever they could (in recent times, Palestinians have been known to still gather at the Damascus Gate in East Jerusalem to be chosen for work, however they are usually gone by noon). Further, Bailey argues that the master paid even the last workers one denarius because they couldn't live on anything less (see Cultural Information above). Bailey's view may be reading too much into the parable, however the point of the master's compassion, goodness and mercy should not be lost.

1. What does the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard reveal about God's goodness and mercy?

2. What does this parable reveal about the human view of fairness? How much of a role does envy play in our definition? How about selfishness?

3. God's mercy and rewards are not limited by “strict calculation” (people get only what they deserve). Why is this good news?

Day 4: The Last Will Be First, And The First Last

Read Mark 9:33-37, Matthew 20:20-28, Matthew 23:11-12

1. The parable of the Workers in the Vineyard was likely originally addressed to the disciples and their frequent discussions about who among them was the greatest. They had a problem of envy. How does Jesus address this problem in the disciples?
2. Reflect on the disciples frequent discussions and the envy and self-centeredness of our human view of fairness and deserving. Does this give more light to the meaning of verse 16 in the parable? How?
3. List some ways that we have mistakenly minimized the meaning of this saying (v. 16)?

Day 5: Preparedness

Read Luke 14:25-33

“[The Tower Builder and the Warring King] differ greatly from the easy believism that marks so much of American Christianity. Churches urge everyone to believe, to accept Jesus, but make no demands on people's lives; the more adherents the better, even if the message is curtailed for “marketing” purposes. Such shallow ideas about conversion create enormous problems for individuals, churches, and societies.”

Stories With Intent (Snodgrass)

1. Reflect on the above quote from Snodgrass. Do you agree? Why or why not?

