*Lesson for 11/12/17*

**The Laborers in the Vineyard and Equal Wages**

Matthew 20.1-16

1 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. 2Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, 4and said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.’ So they went. 5Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. 6And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day?’ 7They said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.’

8“So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, ‘Call the laborers and give them *their* wages, beginning with the last to the first.’ 9And when those came who *were hired* about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. 10But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. 11And when they had received *it,* they complained against the landowner, 12saying, ‘These last *men* have worked *only* one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.’ 13But he answered one of them and said, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? 14Take *what is* yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man *the same* as to you. 15Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?’ 16So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.”

*Questions:*

1. How is the beginning of this parable connected with Peter's question (19:27) "We have left all and followed you. Therefore what shall we have?" and Jesus' words in vs 30 "But many who are first shall be last, and the last first?" (Notice this is repeated as the conclusion of vs 16)

2. Who is the main character in this parable (vs. 1)? Who does this represent in the spiritual lesson Jesus is teaching? How does the work of the vineyard represent the kingdom of heaven?

3. Where did the landowner go to find and hire workers? How were the workers' wages determined and what were the agreed upon terms of their employment?

4. What is meant by "early in the morning", "the third hour", "the sixth, ninth, and eleventh" hours? What difference, if any, was there between the promised pay for the early morning and those hired later in the day?

5. How was the landowner showing concern for the workers he hired at the different hours during the day and not just using them for His own purposes to reap the full harvest from his vineyard?

6. At the end of the day, as the steward carried out the owner's instructions, what happened which brought joy to some but a complaint from those hired in the early morning? Was the criticism justified?

7. How did the landowner respond to the complaint of his pay method? What incorrect thinking had developed with the attitude of the early workers toward their labor, the owner, and the other laborers?

8. What is the meaning of "Or is your eye evil because I am good?" (v 15)? How is "evil eye" used in Deut 15:9; Prov 23:6-8 and 28:22? How could we be guilty of having an evil eye?

9. What is Jesus' main point of the parable in vs 16? What is the main warning for those who are laboring in the kingdom of heaven?

10. Who are the "first" and the "last".. who do those who were hired in the early morning represent and those who were hired later in the day.. (1) Those like the apostles who were Jesus' first disciples as opposed to later Christians? (2) Jews and Gentiles who came later? (3) Leaders in the church as opposed to humbler servants? (5) Lifelong church members, as opposed to latecomers or death-bed repenters?