



Entitlement and Servanthood

Understanding the economy God's grace is essential to experiencing joy, contentment and fruitfulness in this life.

Matthew 20:1-15, Luke 17:7-10

GREETING

announce

mission dinner 28 deadline 21

INTRO

This morning we dive into a parable that really isn't one of those that you would naturally think of in the top 5. When we hear the word "parable", we often think of ***the prodigal son, the lost sheep or lost coin, the Good Samaritan, or the house built on the rock and on the sand***. Most people don't initially think of the parable of the undeserving laborers in Matthew 20.

This is what we call a "Kingdom parable", where Jesus uses a practical, relevant, real-life example to depict the DNA and operation of God's kingdom; the kingdom which we now live in and are called to emulate through our lives. We should be daily falling in love with this King, His kingdom, and its ways because when Jesus returns and establishes

His physical kingdom here on earth for 1000 years, I believe these principles will govern it.

The interesting thing about this particular parable is that it really kicks against the value system of our American culture. All of Jesus' teachings seem contrary to the system of the world in which we live, but this parable identifies something specifically that is a point of great conviction and challenge to a paradigm we've become accustomed to.

ILLUSTRATION

You almost get the sense that we grow up in this world looking out for number 1, and making sure we get what we believe and feel we deserve from life and from others.

• Life ought to be fair, and of course, fair means whatever is best for me! And that's also why God ought to be fair.

[Gen 3:6 NKJV] 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

The first act of disobedience was rooted in entitlement. Eve wanted what she thought was in her own best interest, and her desire for what seemed right to her overtook her obedience to God.

I'm not saying that there isn't a place for our desires and opinions, after all, when we delight ourselves in the Lord, He gives us the desires of our heart, but even that starts with a delight in the LORD, where selfishness begins with a delight in oneself.

I will say that it is obvious that we as humans have a natural proclivity towards self-absorption!

In the context of today's message, the word that I'll use to identify the attitude that Jesus deals with in this parable is the word "**Entitlement.**"

- I'm not talking about government welfare programs. I'm talking about the attitude within people that says, "I deserve the things I need or want simply because I am."
 - I deserve them because I exist. I deserve them because I worked hard, I deserve them because _____.
- ***And YES, in case you were wondering, this can become a major problem!***

- ***It's a problem for industry, society, the church, and THE PULPIT.***
- ***An attitude of entitlement causes the death of essential qualities like sacrificial giving, hard work, generosity, gratitude, and compassion and namely SERVANTHOOD.***
- ***WHY? At the center of entitlement is a love of self. It's more than an attitude, it's a philosophy of life that is centered around the promoting of self above every other interest.***
- You might say, "Well, I'm not entitled." Maybe not, but here is a good test to see if entitlement really resides in you or not:

QUOTE

“ Identifying Entitlement (slide) – “Entitlement in our lives is revealed by the way we react when we don't get what we think we deserved.”

APPLICATION

APPLICATION: You see, we tend to naturally calibrate everything in life around ourselves.

Cahlan and game: “Dad, how do I will this game? I want me to win and you to lose.”

- How does this affect me? What's in it for me? Is this going to fulfill me?
- ***And the purpose of the gospel is to re-calibrate us toward God and away from self.***
- This is why an attitude of entitlement is such a problem; it is contrary to the gospel of grace.
- The Bible describes the gospel-centered life as,
 - **As being crucified with Christ.**
 - **Being dead to the world**
 - **As being alive together with Him**
 - **As considering others higher than yourself**
 - **As becoming the servant of all**
 - **As daily dying so that the life of Christ might be revealed**

You could say that the Christian life and the life of the one who is called to shepherd the flock with the heart of Jesus is, ***“A downward spiral into invisible greatness.***

CONTEXT

The parable found in Matthew 20 is a parable that deals with a group of workers that gain an entitled attitude toward the owner that hired them. What brings forth the true substance of this parable are the two events which it is sandwiched between.

- **In chapter 19, Peter brings an observation and an expectation to Jesus.**
 - He observes, “Look, Jesus, we have left all to follow you!”
 - And as a result, what’s the expectation? “What are we going to get from you for our great sacrifice?”
 - Jesus tells them they will be rewarded, but they also might be surprised to see the scale God uses to reward people.
- **In chapter 20, after the parable,** Jesus tells his disciples that he is going to be betrayed and condemned to death. In the very next sentence, full of compassion and empathy, James and John, and their mother (*You want Jesus to do something? Just rope your mom into doing the dirty work for you*) approach Jesus and ask Him to give them the highest places of prestige and authority in His kingdom.
 - Jesus has to teach them again about the order and rank of his kingdom. The greatest is the servant of all!

In between those two events Jesus tells this parable.

CUSTOM

As we read the parable, this will become evident to you... In fact, I'll say that as we read this parable, you might find your own sense of justice and fairness being pricked. You might find yourself arguing with yourself, trying to justify the events that take place.

SO – we will quickly move through the parable and dissect that context, then we will give several application points to take home.

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Mat 20:1-2 NKJV] 1 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. 2 "Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

CONTEXT

In this story, we have a landowner and 5 different groups of workers. Here we are introduced to the first group. These laborers were probably people of a lower class whose livelihood depended upon wealthy landowners to hire them on a daily basis.

- *They would gather in certain spots where all the landowners would go to find workers.*
- *These were hired early in the morning, say 6:00 (sunrise) to start working in the vineyard.*
- *It was a first come, first serve economy. These are the hard workers, go-getters, and self-starters.*
- *They agreed on a price beforehand (important) of one denarius, which was a fair price for a days wage.*

Now verse 3 introduces us to the second group of workers:

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Mat 20:3 NKJV] 3 "And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, [Mat 20:3-8 NKJV] 3 "And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, 4 "and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. 5 "Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise.

CONTEXT

The landowner goes out now three more times: (9:00, 12:00, 3:00) These were the workers that didn't make the early cut. We don't know why.

- Maybe they overslept and didn't make it to the marketplace on time.
- Maybe they just didn't get chosen because they were new in town, or they didn't have a dependable reputation.

So imagine it, you're in the first group, out to work at 6:00 am, and 3, 6, and 9 hours after you start, more workers come rolling in... maybe they're not a diligent, hardworking, or dependable as you are.

- You might start thinking, ***"This landowner is crazy always looking for more workers to bring into His field!"***
- I sure hope the landowner appreciates the fact that I've been out here since early in the morning!
- Then the landowner goes out one final time around 6:00 pm. It is the end of the workday and everyone is about to get off work and get paid.

BIBLE PASSAGE

6 "And 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?' 7 "They 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.'

CONTEXT

- Now, I think it's safe to say that if these guys have been there all day and no one hired them, they might not be the cream of the crop. Maybe some are disabled or older and

not fit for manual labor.

- But this doesn't stop the landowner. **It's obvious the landowner seems to really care about the work and the workers even at the very end of the day.**

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Mat 20:9-16 NKJV] 9 "And when those came who [were hired] about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. 10 "But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. 11 "And when they had received [it], they complained against the landowner, 12 "saying, '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.' 13 "But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? 14 'Take [what is] yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man [the same] as to you. 15 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' 16 "So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen."

TRANSITION

So there's our story. Now let's look closer at what we find about entitlement. First, I want to point out three seeds, or attitudes that feed entitlement. Finally I want to point out three safeguards that protect us against entitlement

1 I deserve more than what has been promised

APPLICATION

When the workers who worked the least got paid a denarius, the workers further down the line began to tell themselves a story. They began to create their own narrative about themselves and the landowner. The guys at the end of the line are thinking, ***“Hey if the guy who worked one hour gets a denarius, that must mean he’s paying 1 denarius/hour! We are going to get 11 or 12! What a day! This is going to be awesome.”***

Then, they get to the payment desk and get 1 denarius.

They are angry! “We’ve been wronged”... wait a minute!

- They haven’t been wronged, they simply forgot that the master told them at the beginning of the day that they would get 1 denarius. The master justly kept His word. He didn’t miscommunicate or set any false hopes or expectations... the workers did that themselves!
- **If they had been paid first, they probably would have gone off content, maybe even feeling as though they had been dealt with generously, but because they were paid last, they used their waiting time to consider their own superiority to the other workers.**
- **By the end, instead of being happy for the other workers, they were only concerned about themselves.**
- **IT’S NOT FAIR! It’s only not fair if you expected something you had never been promised in the first place.**

QUOTE

“Most disappointment and discontentment stems from misplaced or misguided expectations.”

Josh, Quote

APPLICATION

I find that this can be especially damaging during the Inst-gram age. Comparison is the name of the game.

- You see, the Bible teaches is that each one will receive his praise from God for what is done in the body when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, but in the waiting

time, we have to beware looking at the perceived reward of others.

- We really do have to live and serve as though nothing is of true consequence this side of heaven. Instagram followers, quotable tweets, viral posts, are not signs of God's rewards. They might be signs of some fruit, but not necessarily or automatically.
- We need to stop looking at the rewards of others that we think we are more worthy of, and rejoice in the promises that God has given to us!

2 It's my right to complain about my circumstances

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Mat 20:11 NKJV] 11 "And when they had received [it], they complained against the landowner,

QUOTE

“We are born crying, live complaining, and die disappointed.”

Thomas Fuller

APPLICATION

You see, entitlement is not a situational disease, it's an attitudinal disease. A disease of perspective. In other words, entitlement doesn't rear its ugly head because our situation is bad, but because our internal perspective and attitude of the situation are wrong.

Complaining is the fruit of an ungrateful heart. Complaining is yet another seed that feeds a self-centered outlook on life. The Bible calls it grumbling... it is the antithesis of

thankfulness. ***And you know that everyone loves a complainer!***

Complaining states that I have been wronged, ripped off, or the recipient of undeserved unfairness! That's really coming from an overinflated view of yourselves and forgetfulness of all that God has already done.

ILLUSTRATION

The children of Israel: their Exodus from Egypt and decades of wilderness wandering were riddled with complaining, representing a greater and deeper problem of unbelief in their hearts.

- God miraculously delivers them through horrible and divine plagues in Egypt. At the first sign of trouble, as Pharaoh's army corners them at the Red Sea, they complain. "You brought us here to die, why couldn't you just leave us to serve the Egyptians?"
- Hey! The worst day of freedom is better than the best day of slavery! Yet, that marked their attitude for the next 40 years.
 - God gives protection: They complain
 - God gives provision: water from rocks, food from heaven: They complain – it's not good enough for us; we want better food.
 - God gives leadership: They complain – Moses is in it for himself! What's so special about Moses and the Levites anyway? We can all do this job!
 - God gives them supernatural guidance. Fire by night and a cloud by day: They complain about the journey.
 - No wonder God said, "I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest."
 - ***The 40 years journey was not because God didn't know where He was going, but because the people didn't know how to receive God's promises without faithlessly approaching God with a sense of entitlement.***

Paul would say, "Let them serve as an example of how NOT to live!" Pastor, reaching ministry destinations is going to take a lot longer if you spend time bitter at God for not giving you what you believed you deserved from him as a pastor.

APPLICATION

How can we really complain! The promises we have received in Christ are exceedingly better than the ones received in the wilderness!

Deliverance from sin, divine protection and guidance, eternal salvation, and we can find a reason to complain?

QUOTE

“As long as a man is alive and out of hell, he cannot have any cause to complain.

Spurgeon

APPLICATION

I'm not making light of the serious hurts and disappointments in your life and ministry. To some degree we all have them, and some people's suffering is greater than others. But in love, I say, "Stop complaining."

Complaining is disempowering. It takes away from you the power in Christ to overcome diversity and difficulty by faith. Choose rather the empowering act of rejoicing and thanking God in all things... even when life hurts. This is a path that Christ Jesus provides for you!

Philippians 2:14 – do all things without complaining.

In ministry, there is always something tempting us to complain. But all complaining really is a declaration that God didn't really do a good job.

3 I deserve more because I did more

QUOTE

“ We live in a world where our contribution often determines our value.

- Do more, get more.
 - The most talented get the biggest platform.
-

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Mat 20:12 NKJV] 12 "saying, '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.'

EXAMPLES

Interpretation: They did less, we did more = they are worth less, we are worth more.

“How dare God by His grace make people equal to each other when one person deserves more for what they’ve done!”

- You’ve seen this in people in churches:
 - I’ve been living a life of singleness for years faithfully asking the Lord for a mate and that person who just got saved 2 months ago already has an awesome godly fiance.
 - I’ve been serving in this ministry for 20 years and some new guy comes to the church and gets put in charge of the ministry.
- But what about us!

- Hey, Jesus recognizes your contribution! If that isn't enough for you now, all the praise of man in the world will never be enough.
- I'm not suggesting we don't need encouragement and opportunity. I am saying that God sees.
- Remember Luke 17 when Jesus talked to His disciples about the duty of a servant?

EXAMPLE: PRODIGAL SON

Not the son, but his brother, the one who said, "How dare you give what was mine to him who doesn't deserve it."

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Luk 17:5-10 NKJV] 5 And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." 6 So the Lord said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you. 7 "And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'? 8 "But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'? 9 "Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. 10 "So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.' "

APPLICATION

Christian, there is something so much more valuable in our life than our comfort or our physical well being, or our material wealth... ***and that is doing the will of our master!***

- **Remember Peter's question to Jesus about the fate of John? He asked Jesus, "Jesus you just told me I'm going to die a martyr. What about Him? What's your plan for His life? Is he going to die too?" Jesus responds, "If he remains till I come, what is that to you? You follow me."**
- Yes God is our Father and our friend, but He is also our king and master. **"Why do you call me Lord, but don't do the things I command?"**
- The good news in that is our master will not demand anything from us that doesn't reflect His heart as a Father, but when He does issue a command or direction in our life, it is our duty to do it without the expectation that we deserve more than what He has already promised.

So how does this story teach us to combat these seeds of entitlement? We must remember 4 things:

1 God always keep His promises

CONTEXT

Instead of believing we deserve more than what God promises, we need to remind ourselves of His promises and how undeserving we are of them.

APPLICATION: Just as the landowner was true to His promised payment, God is always fair to what He said He would do, and that always ought to be enough for us.

At the cross, God agreed upon a payment and a certain set of terms. Jesus looks at everyone, despite their worthiness or unworthiness, and tells them all that if they come to the cross, they will receive this generous gift. At the cross, Jesus:

- **He forgave you of all your sins.**
- **He promised you eternal life.**
- **He delivered the guarantee of the Holy Spirit and the promise to never leave or forsake you.**
- **He gave you all you needed for life and godliness**
- **Seated you in the heavenly places in Christ.**
- **Wiped out the handwriting of requirements against you.**

- ***Gave you resurrection power, a relationship with God, and restoration with others.***
- ***And the list is just starting! All the promises of God in Christ are yes and amen!***

But we must be careful not to put promises in God's mouth that He never gave and expect from God things He never promised.

- ***He never promised us worldly comfort and security.***
- ***He never promised us exemptions from trials and tribulations.***
- ***He never promised us that all our dreams and passions would be fulfilled in this sin-torn world.***
- ***He never promised that your marriage would be easy or your kids perfect.***
- ***He never promised you a big church, worldly recognition, and affirmation, a full church bank account, or 5 young worship leaders!***

APPLICATION

This is one of the things I love about Jesus! He is honest about the world. He doesn't give us the impression of a world in which we will not experience tribulation, some pie in the sky existence...

So let's be careful not to reach God unrighteously angry because He didn't give us things that he never told us He would give in the first place. Rather, let us learn, as Paul said, **to give thanks in all things** and rejoice in the fact that we have Jesus! He is our reward. He is our rest in a world that has gone haywire.

2 God always gives what is right

CONTEXT

Instead of complaining about God not meeting our expectations, we need to realize that God is never unjust.

Notice the phrases. To the first group, the master promises a denarius. To the next 4 groups, he simply says, ***“I will give you what is right.”***

- The last four groups trusted the master’s word and were just grateful for an opportunity. Anything they received was more than they were expecting as they were desperately waiting in the marketplace. You know they went away grateful and blessed by the generosity of the master.

CUSTOM

Gratefulness overtakes entitlement when you consider God’s blessings compared to where you were before God found you and called you.

QUOTE

“When you take away entitlement, you are left with grace.”

APPLICATION

The first workers were just as fortunate as the last workers to even be hired at all and have the opportunity to work for a reward. They could have sat all day, not having been hired, and made nothing, but instead, the master gave them an opportunity out of His own resources and his own purposes.

- But in the process of working all day and becoming entitled, they seemed to forget that the money was the masters and not theirs. Just because they would have been stingy and greedy with that money doesn’t mean the master has to!

Brother and sister, don’t forget that every blessing and reward that the Lord gives us or someone else is because it is right in His sight to give it... let’s never forget that God’s resources are His, not ours to give.

3 The problem is my perception, not God's promise

BIBLE PASSAGE

[Mat 20:15-16 NKJV] 15 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' 16 "So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen."

QUOTE

“An evil eye was a phrase in use, among the ancient Jews, to denote an envious, covetous man or disposition; a man who repined at his neighbor's prosperity, loved his own money and would do nothing in the way of charity for God's sake.”

Adam Clarke

CUSTOM

When the first workers saw the generosity of the landowner, they only considered how it might benefit them. Their perception of God's goodness was viewed through the lens of a selfish eye.

- As long as His goodness benefits me, great.
- But what about when God's goodness extends beyond the boundaries of what you consider is fair? What happens when God decides to show grace when you think judgment is deserved? What happens when God's goodness promotes someone else but asks you to take a back seat?

- Is it a problem with God's goodness? Is God's goodness to be blamed because things didn't work out your way? No, it's my perspective (my evil eye) that needs to be transformed and changed.
- Let's not suggest a lack of goodness from God due to our own selfish desires!

APPLICATION

So how is your eye?

- How do you see what you've been given? Thankful or ripped off?
- How do you see what has been given others? Joyful or jealous?
- How do you view the way God has treated you? Fair or unfair?
- If the answer is one of the negatives, it's not a problem with God's goodness, but with the way you're choosing to look at it.

APPLICATION

At the cross, the God who solely deserves everything gave everything. The cross of Jesus is the single greatest and most extensive expression of self-sacrifice that has ever been demonstrated, and it came from the only one who actually deserved the opposite.

- It was there that the only thing I truly deserved was taken by the only one who never deserved it, and the only thing I could never earn or deserve was given to me freely as a gift of grace! And to think that I would ever have the audacity to stare in the face of that great contrast and demand from God, or complain against Him, or question His goodness in the face of His eternal kindness is absolutely embarrassing.
- To complain or declare that His grace and favor to others is somehow uncalled for or unfair because God should have done it for me is a direct insult to the undeserved goodness that He has already bestowed upon me in Christ. And yet, I do.

CONCLUSION

From a 10,000 foot view of this passage, we see something incredibly beautiful and stunning about salvation.

- You can come to know Jesus at 5 years old and live your life for him, and you might come to find Jesus on your death bed, 10 minutes from passing into the next life, having denied and rejected Christ your entire life. That's the beauty, of God's grace. It might be at the beginning of the day or at the last moment. God shows no favoritism.
- I believe that we are at the end of the day now, in our current time. It seems clear that the clock is winding down on the world scene. God's salvation is still near. He is on a mission, seeking and saving the lost, even at this final hour. At this desperate time, will we be workers only consumed with how God's goodness can get us more of what we want, or will we, with great joy, encourage as many as we can to come into this field and experience the master's goodness and graciousness?
- Will we live a life of entitlements and self-orientation, or will we find joy, contentment, and fruitfulness in living out God's lavish, elaborate grace every day?

Understanding the economy God's grace is essential to experiencing joy, contentment, and fruitfulness in this life.