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Grounders:

Have you ever asked, “What’s in it for me?” If we answer honestly we might begin to realize that we ask God the same question. That’s what Peter asked Jesus when He answered with His parable, *The Workers in the Vineyard* (Matt. 20:1-16).

Flanked by Peter and the rest of the disciples, Jesus had just encountered the rich, young, ruler who was unwilling to sell his possessions and be generous to the poor (Matt. 19:16-22). Jesus had told His disciples that it was difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, but with God’s grace, all things are possible (Matt. 19:23-26). Then Peter reacted, “*We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?*” (Matt. 19:27).

Service is Varied (Matt. 20:1-7). Jesus began His parable likening the kingdom of heaven to a landowner of a vineyard who needed workers at harvest. He went out early to hire men to work, agreeing to pay the customary day’s wage of a denarius. They would work from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm.

A little before 9:00 am, the landowner hired more workers for “*whatever is right*” (Matt. 20:3-4). He did the same thing at about 12 noon, again at 3:00 pm, and yet again at 5:00 pm with only an hour remaining in the workday (Matt. 20:5-7). A sense of urgency filled the air as a result of the bumper crop.

Reward is Generous (Matt. 20:8-12). When 6:00 pm rolled around, it was time to pay the workers. The landowner asked his foreman to call in the workers and pay them their wages for the day which was customary in the Law (Deut. 24:14-15). But, the landowner did something uncustomary. He paid the one-hour workers first with a full day’s wage! The first group hired who had worked the entire day in the hot sun saw what had happened. They compared their service to that of the latecomers. Eagerly expecting more than their originally agreed per diem, they began to grumble when they received only the originally agreed upon amount of a denarius.

Motive is Revealed (Matt. 20:13-16). The landowner responded to one of the grumblers from the first group hired, revealing their motive. “*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?*” (Matt. 20:13-15). Whereas the latecomers had served the landowner with an attitude of gratitude, the first group had served themselves.

Jesus concluded the parable with the same point that He used to begin it, “*So the last will be first, and the first will be last*” (Matt. 20:16). God’s grace in Christ evens the score with everyone (2 Cor. 8:9). It’s a tie. In fact, we are all the latecomers in the parable, and His grace of abundant and eternal life, compels us to serve the Landowner with an attitude of gratitude (Matt. 19:28-30). This week, don’t use your gifts to serve yourself, use them to serve God as you generously administer His grace to others (1 Peter 4:10).

With an attitude of gratitude,
Mitch