

Unfair Wages?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 09 November 1997

Preacher: Hilary Roath

[0 : 00] This is the AM service On November the 9th 1997 The preacher is Hilary Roth The sermon is entitled Unfair Wages?

And is from Matthew 20 Verses 1 to 16 In the name of the Father And of the Son And of the Holy Spirit Amen Can you picture that scene That Jesus painted for us?

It's set in the marketplace The marketplace where people From all around the city congregate Children running around playing games Calling to their friends Shoppers squeezing the fruit And handling the goods And bartering with the merchants Dotted around maybe There are scribes in long robes And in all that commotion Are those who are there Hoping to find work Some stood in groups Some stood in groups Talking to friends Some quietly waiting for the work to turn up A shout is heard The grapes are the grapes The grapes are ripe and ready for harvest Come on everyone who is willing to work There's plenty for you all to do The unemployed Joy eagerly pyta And thequisay Before they substituted there was to do and how much that they would be paid.

The landowner negotiated with his labourers and it was agreed that everyone would be paid the usual daily wage. The workers were sent off into the vineyards to begin harvesting in the cool morning air. Three hours later the landowner returned to the marketplace. Perhaps there was not such a commotion there now. But there were still people standing around who were willing to work. In fact that they were so willing to work they didn't even ask about the wages. They were happy to accept the landowners that the landowner would pay them what was right for them. Twice more during the day the landowner returned to the marketplace and each time he employed all who wanted to work.

And then one hour before the end of the day he invited others who were standing idle in the marketplace. He invited them to work for him for that final hour.

[2 : 53] And then when evening came all the workers were called in from the vineyard to be paid. Beginning with those who had worked for only one hour. those people were paid a day's wage just for the hour that they'd worked.

The next group were paid a day's wage for their three hours. As were all the people who had worked that day regardless of the amount of time they had worked.

And I think it's quite understandable that those who were hired first thought that they would receive more.

Up to this point they probably had no problem with what the owner had done. But because he had paid the others a full day's wage for a part day's work they assumed that they would receive more than a day's wage.

But of course their hopes were dashed. They were dashed when they too received the usual daily wage. And they reacted exactly as we would expect.

[4 : 11] They grumbled. They grumbled at the landowner saying These last worked only for one hour and you've made them equal to us.

Us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat. That was a very normal human reaction. A reaction which is saying this is not fair.

Those labourers only worked an hour a day. We worked hard all day long including during the scorching heat. Why should they get paid as much as we did?

The owner replied to one of them probably the spokesman for the group. He said Friend I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage?

That word friend in Greek is a word not used for close friendship but more of a casual companion.

[5 : 25] But the owner let them know firmly but courteously that they were out of line. He was doing them no wrong because they had a clear agreement early in the morning in the marketplace.

In verse 2 it was a clear agreement that they would be paid the usual daily wage which was a fair wage.

wage. You worked 12 hours you agreed to work and I paid you the usual daily wage that I agreed to pay you.

We both lived up to our side of the bargain so you have no legitimate complaint. Take what belongs to you and go.

it shouldn't be any of your concern if I choose to give to these last the same as to you. And anyway am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?

[6 : 40] What the landowner paid to those late coming workers or any others was strictly his own business and he was perfectly within his rights.

He could do with whatever he chose with his own money. The problem here was not injustice on the part of the landowner but it was jealousy on the part of the workers.

Are you envious he says because I am generous. The landowner had completely lived up to his agreement and that should have been their only concern but jealousy and envy are not based on reason.

They are based on selfishness. Selfishness sees only what it wants to see and all those envious laborers all they could see was that they did not receive the bonus that they expected and that they thought that they deserved.

It was not that they did not get the wage that they had earned and agreed to be paid but they couldn't stand to see someone who was hired at the last minute paid the same as them.

[8 : 27] So instead of being happy for the good fortune of their co-workers they envied them and were bitter. It's quite possible that the 11th hour workers were less capable and perhaps more needy than the all-day workers.

The all-day workers who were hired first perhaps they were hired first because they were better workers. but regardless of the differences between their situations between their capabilities or their needs none of them was wrongly paid.

In fact all of them were well paid by the landowner who was not obliged to hire them in the first place. the important point here is that of the owner's right to pay the workers the same wage.

The owner's right to pay the workers at the same rate. Jesus of course was not teaching here economic or business principles.

But he was teaching something infinitely more wonderful. He was teaching God's principles for salvation.

[10 : 07] And God's principle for salvation is that every person who comes to faith in his son Jesus Christ receives the same gift of eternal life.

There are no exceptions. variations. There are no variations. Whether we come to God as a small child and live a lifelong life of faithful obedient service to him or whether we come to him on our deathbed.

All come to him all come to the kingdom on the same basis and receive the same gift of eternal life. that penitent thief who turned to Jesus on the cross practically in his last breath received the same salvation as the apostles.

They received the same heavenly home as the apostles. apostles. He died justly as a criminal whereas the apostles some of them died unjustly because of their faithfulness to Christ.

The thief did not even have one hour to serve Christ whereas some of the apostles served him far into their old age.

[11 : 43] The thief knew just enough about Christ to be saved whereas the disciples were given divine revelation from him and about him.

Yet all of them were received equally by their Saviour and King and they stand equal before him in heaven there's a story told about Charles Spurgeon and one day he found a boy in the street a boy who was ragged and hungry so he took him home and he fed and he clothed him and he knelt down and prayed for the boy as only he could pray and several times in that prayer he referred to God as our father and when the prayer was finished the boy said did you say our father yes my boy your father and my father a is from us you we have heard we have found hy