

And he quoted Jeremiah chapter 7, 17, verse 9, which says this, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick.

And then Jeremiah ends this verse with a question. Who can know it?

The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick. Who can understand it? Last week, Pastor made clear that only God can fix the human heart.

[5 : 41] This condition that we have. He said that God does so by giving us a new heart.

Brothers and sisters, when the Lord gives us a new heart, he also gives to us eternal life. The text that we come to today, Matthew 20, 1 through 16, tells us how he does it.

The point of this text is through his sovereign grace alone, God elects some for eternal life.

eternal life. Through his sovereign grace alone, God elects some for eternal life. I've organized my thoughts around two primary points.

The first, the idle laborers, and the second, the gracious master.

[7 : 07] The first, the idle laborers, and the second, the gracious master. the key word in our message today is grace.

Such will do well to define it. J. Parker, I thought, had a very good definition of grace.

This is what he said. grace is God's love freely shown toward guilty sinners contrary to their merit and indeed in defiance of their demerit.

Grace is God's gift, God's love freely shown toward guilty sinners contrary to their merit and indeed in defiance of their demerit.

Shorter version, grace is the favor of God that we do not deserve. Let's talk now about the idle laborers.

[8 : 35] The idle laborers. And as we do, I think it's important that we ask ourselves a fundamental question.

What was the cause for this parable that we come to? What was the impetus for this parable? Why did Jesus give us this parable?

I think context matters. it's important to establish context. Let's take a look at the very first word in this chapter.

The very first word is for. Jesus starts this parable in Matthew chapter 20 with the word for.

He says for the kingdom of heaven. And right away, if you are observant, the first question you're going to ask yourself is why is he starting a sentence of this chapter indeed with the word for?

[9 : 44] for. When used at the beginning of a sentence, the word for likely means because or since.

And therefore, it functions as a word that is coordinating a conjunction or introducing a reason or an explanation for something that comes before it.

you just don't say for whatever without context if you're not referring to something that came before it. So there was something that came before this that Jesus was referring to.

Now we also know this because when we take a look at the verse preceding Matthew 20 verse 1, this is what we find.

This is what it says. But many who are first will be last and the last first. Interestingly, Matthew 20 verse 16 says essentially the same thing.

[11 : 09] So the last will be first and the first last. Do you see that? So it suggests that this is, that those two verses are somewhat of a bookend. Jesus says in one, but many who are first will be last and the last first.

So the last will be first and the first last. So here Jesus is telling his disciples about the kingdom of heaven.

And he says to them that the kingdom of heaven is different, it operates differently. For in the kingdom of heaven, he says, the first will be last and the last will be first.

Now that that sounds a little mixed up. But essentially what Jesus is saying to us is that in the kingdom of heaven there is equality. We're all the same.

But the point that I'm seeking to make is that what Jesus, this parable that we come to today, Jesus gives it because of what happened previously.

[12 : 24] and what happens previously is we see in Matthew 19 beginning at verse 16, Jesus has an encounter with a young man, a young wealthy man.

And this account that we see in Matthew 19 verse 16, it is interesting because it's recorded in all of the gospels except the gospel of John.

And this man, he comes to Jesus and he says to him, teacher, what good deed, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?

And then Jesus responds to him. Jesus says, first of all, Jesus said, you calling me good? He says, good, there is none good except the father.

And then he says to him, then you need to keep the commandments. And he lists them out. Now, Jesus knew, as we know, that no one can keep the commandments perfectly.

[13:42] this man, in the end, Jesus said to him, because he responded to Jesus, this is what he said to Jesus, he said, listen, all of these commandments I have kept from my youth.

And then Jesus says, well, if you want to be perfect, go and sell all that you have and come and follow me. And the Bible says that this man left sorrowful.

And Jesus said to his disciples, it's very difficult, not impossible, but very difficult for a rich person to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

But here we see, here is the point. The point is that Jesus was talking to this man about the kingdom of heaven, about eternal life.

death. Now, the parable that follows is only recorded in the gospel of Matthew.

[14:59] Although the account with this rich man is recorded in three gospels, only Matthew records this parable that we come to.

Perhaps it is that Matthew, who was a tax collector, was fascinated with numbers. That's the way numbers people are. Anytime they see numbers, they get excited.

You know, and there's several guys in here who can say amen to that. But Matthew, he records this parable.

Now, you know what a parable is. A parable compares something that we have some familiarity with to make a clear point, a clear point about a spiritual matter.

answer. It's a story designed to make a point. And so Jesus tells his disciples this parable, really a very interesting parable indeed.

[16:23] Jesus says about this parable that there was this man, and in this parable, the man, this man who Jesus refers to, he is God himself.

Jesus says of this master of the house that he had this vineyard and he needed laborers.

And he went into the marketplace, went into the marketplace and he saw people standing in the marketplace when they are at 6 a.m.

in the morning. And he stood there and he negotiated with them and he says, I'm going to offer you, I'm going to pay you one denarius to work for me.

And they said, no problem, let's go. And they went with the master of the house. And three hours later, the master went back into the marketplace at 9 a.m.

[17:45] Remember now, the work day started at 6, not 9 or 10 like, you know, it's in the Bahamas. started at 6 a.m.

So Jesus went into the marketplace and there he saw idle laborers. Idle laborers.

And he said to them, come with me to my market, to my vineyard. Notice though, what is really interesting about this encounter is that there was no discussion about compensation whatsoever except that Jesus said, I'll pay you just whatever is right.

He didn't establish an amount. He just says, whatever is just, I'll give to you whatever is right. And then Jesus goes back into the marketplace.

He goes back at 3 p.m. He goes at 3 p.m. at noon and at 3. And he does the same thing. He saw idle laborers in the marketplace and he brought them into the vineyard.

[19:10] And then guess what he did again? He wasn't done. He went back again at 5 p.m. And he saw laborers, idle laborers in the marketplace standing.

And he said to them, why do you stand here idle all day? And they said to him, because no one has hired us. And he said to them, you too go into the vineyard.

And guess what happened? those who got there at 5 p.m., those who got there at 3, at 9, at 12, and at 6 a.m., they all got off.

Guess what time? At 6 p.m. They all got off at the same time. Brothers and sisters, everyone who has ever lived was an idle laborer from birth through all idle laborers.

Idleness is indeed the human condition. Indeed, this parable distills all ungodly human activity to idleness.

[20:37] we were all standing in the marketplace, idle in our minds, idle in purpose and pursuit.

If you don't believe me, consider this rich young ruler again. he was idle. Despite his wealth, despite his youth, despite his position, despite his morality, he was idle. He was without God. Despite all he had, he stood idly in the marketplace, empty. The laborers, before being called, chosen by God, had not opportunity. They could do nothing. [21 : 51] Without God, we, you and I, can do nothing that is fully pleasing to him. You and I can do nothing that is fully pleasing to him.

Our motives, our desires, our thoughts, our efforts, our priorities, something gets in the way of what God requires.

Of God, brothers and sisters, you and I cannot make our way into the vineyard. we can't get there. The standard is too high. The standard is holiness. This is what Paul writes in Romans 5 verse 12. Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned. Brothers and sisters, all of us condemned to die, standing idly in the marketplace, separated from God, away from his vineyard, dead in transgressions and sin.

[23 : 18] Yet, brothers and sisters, sisters, yet, brothers and sisters, countless stories abound.

Each one of us in here who serves the Lord, we can tell stories. And we know of stories of people who once stood idly in the marketplace until they heard the voice of the Savior saying, come into my vineyard.

Paul, who was a persecutor of the church, he was a religious zealot, but he was spiritually blind. Peter, unstable, impulsive, sinful, unself-aware, before the Lord called him.

Samuel, raised in the temple, he was serving outwardly but did not know God. the woman at the well, morally broken life, relationally unstable, socially isolated.

[24 : 54] Brothers and sisters, whether you were hostile like Paul, weak like Peter, unaware like Samuel, or broken like the woman at the well, you too were standing highly in the marketplace.

Then the Savior called and extended his grace to you, his unfathomable grace to you.

That leads me to my second and final point, the gracious master. master. Brothers and sisters, the first thing we see about the master is that he goes into the marketplace time after time and he selects specific ones to walk in the vineyard.

Do you see that? He goes in time after time and he selects specific individuals to walk in the vineyard. The laborers did not come to him.

He went to them. Now, you know, that's really interesting to me because, you know, typically, if you got a job, if you have a work site in Nassau and, boy, people hear that you have something going on, they come into you.

[26 : 34] And Tim is laughing because he knows that that's true. If you have something going on, the workers are coming to you. All they got to do is hear that something is happening and they are coming to you.

But not so here. The master, he goes out into the vineyard. not once, not twice, but he goes throughout the day up to the very end of the day, of the work day.

From the beginning to the end, he patiently goes and he selects, he elects workers.

Here we see unconditional election. The master chose whom he wished. And not everyone, notice, notice that not everyone he chose was brought in at the same time.

And not everyone in the marketplace was chosen either. So he didn't, everyone who ended up in the vineyard was not chosen at the same hour and not everyone in the marketplace was chosen.

[28 : 03] But he has that authority. It's his vineyard. He is the master. He chose whom he wished, when he wished.

And everyone he chose accepted the invitation. There was not one person, according to this parable, whom he chose who said no.

Ephesians 1, 4 through fire, tells us, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

In love, he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will.

Brothers and sisters, what is the point? The point I'm making is that Jesus here is teaching us in this parable about God's election, how it is God who chooses, who decides, who will walk in his vineyard.

[29 : 35] When we come to Matthew chapter 20 verse 8, it's quite interesting. The scripture tells us that when evening came, when it was time to knock off.

Now, it's quite interesting because it's a good thing Jesus wasn't talking about the Bahamas because if he were talking about the Bahamas, a lot of these workers would have been gone long time.

But some of them would have been, listen, I went to a certain place on Friday, and I went there at 4.30. Now, I noticed when I arrived at 4.30, I did notice that there were only a couple cars in the parking lot, right?

But I said, you know, I don't know, maybe, you know, I said, you know, I'm just going to ignore that. But I went inside whereas there used to be three receptionists seated at front.

There was just one. And so I asked, I said, may I see such and such? She said, she said, what?

She said, they're all gone. I said, what do you mean they're all gone?

[30 : 53] She said, they're all gone. I said, tell me what does that mean? She said, you don't see what time it is? I said, yes, it's 4.30. So she said, yes, they're all gone.

I said, oh my goodness, only in the Bahamas. But here, what we find in this parable, we're told that when evening came, the owner of the vineyard, get this, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last up to the first.

Can you believe this? Beginning with the last one, the people who came at 5 o'clock, this is what Jesus says, Jesus says, now, brothers and sisters, I want us to get this point.

Because Jesus says, this, the kingdom of heaven is like this. We are a part of the kingdom, so Jesus is helping us to understand what we are a part of.

Jesus says, call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last up to the first. And then, and when those hired about the 11th hour, when those hired at 5 p.m.

[32 : 13] came, each of them, guess what they got? A denarius. The people who came at 11 got a denarius. Verse 10, now, when those hired first came, they thought they would have received more.

What do you think they thought they would have received? Now, they worked 12 hours. What do you think they thought they would have received? 12 denarius. That makes sense, right? If you pay the people who came at 5-1, surely you will pay the people who came at 6-12.

Now, I tell you all, do this now. I tell you all, this is the parable. Some of you all looking at me scared. That's not the point here, but let's go through this.

Now, when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. and on receiving it, they grumbled at the master of the house, saying, these last were only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.

now, if I were to ask for a show of hands, of those who believe that the laborers who started at 6 a.m.

[33 : 44] and worked 12 hours should have gotten more than those who started at 5 p.m. and worked one hour, who would raise their hand in agreement?

Okay, you agree? Everybody who agrees that they should have gotten more. You see that? He's adjusting my question.

Unruly student, an F. Okay, so, how many of you, who, show of hands of those who disagree? disagree? Disagree? Really? You think that, really? Okay, so she's trying to preach the sermon. An F. No.

Okay, very good. Very good. So, okay, all right. But, here's the, here's the point. In fact, let's come back to that point.

[34 : 49] Let's come back to it. There is no evidence that those who claim later in the day negotiated their wage at all.

In fact, nope, there's no, nothing at all in the parable. Brothers and sisters, no doubt that they were just too eager to have been chosen.

if you'd ever been in a similar situation, broke, without work, and someone gave you an opportunity to work, perhaps you wouldn't take time to negotiate either.

money. I would suggest to you that this is not just about money. Indeed, I am reminded of an accounting scripture, Luke 7, that talks about what Luke, a lady, Luke described as a woman of the city.

This woman of the city, she heard that Jesus was going to be visiting with a Pharisee, going to be having lunch with a Pharisee.

[36 : 28] When Jesus arrived to have lunch, as was the custom, Jesus sat down on one arm with his feet behind him.

And this woman of the city, she came into the house. The scriptures tell us that she came with a flask of oil.

and then she arrived in the house. She stood behind Jesus. And the scriptures tell us that the tears from her eyes rolled down her cheeks onto Jesus' feet.

And she knelt down. and she used to hear to wipe Jesus' feet, to wipe the tears as she cried.

She wiped the tears with the hair from her head. And she poured the oil on his feet.

[37 : 51] feet. And the Pharisees and others who were present said, surely Jesus is not a prophet because if he knew who this woman was, he would not have allowed her to wipe his feet and to kiss his feet also.

Also, Jesus said to them, therefore I tell you, her sins which were many, are forgiven for she loved much.

But he who is forgiven little loves little. brothers and sisters, this woman, she was idle in the marketplace.

Way down with sin. Then she met Jesus and she expressed her love for him in this way.

While she was being belittled by others, called into the vineyard of the Lord.

[39 : 33] Despite her background, I considered this account, the words of a song made popular by C.C.

Winans came to mind. You weren't there the night he found me. you did not feel what I felt when he wrapped his love all around me.

You don't know the cost of the oil in my alabaster box. I can't forget the way life used to be.

I was a prisoner to sin that had me bound and I spent my days poured my life without measure into a little treasure box I thought I'd found.

Brothers and sisters, praise the Lord. Every one of us, every one of us can look back over our lives and see the grace, the amazing grace of the Lord.

[41 : 01] And were we as humble as this woman, we would do as she did bow before the Savior's feet.

Because how many of you know that Jesus Christ is the embodiment of God's grace. So this parable is not about how to run a successful business because no one is going to do what the gracious master did.

Don't try that. Don't do it. Don't do it. And here is what I want you to see above all that. Above all, the master's compensation was not based on what done.

That is the point of the parable. That is the essence of the parable. That's what Jesus is trying really to get us to see that the master paid the workers not based on the work that they did.

That's why he went through all these different stages because he wanted to draw home the point that grace cannot be earned.

[42 : 36] what God has given to us. You cannot pay for it.

It's invaluable. That's why it had to be grace. It couldn't be anything but grace. the master's compensation was not based on work done.

If it was then those who worked fewer hours would have gotten what they no doubt expected and most certainly what they deserved.

The master was generous. the point is that the earnings is gotten by God's grace alone and for God's glory alone.

Grace motivated by love. Now what is interesting about this account when you think about Jesus' encounter with the rich man and this parable and you say you know Jesus had the rapt attention of his audience.

[44 : 10] He had them all focused on him and his message could have been work hard do more earn more.

He could have said that. Jesus could have said you want to be outstanding in the kingdom work harder do more and earn more but this was a message about receiving something one cannot earn through one's effort.

Far too precious, too rich. It must be given, it cannot be earned. Brothers and sisters, in verses 10 through the end, see the unquestioned sovereignty of God.

In verse 10 we find these words, now when those hired first came they thought they would receive more but each of them also received a denarius and on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house saying, these last walked only one hour and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.

But he replied to one of them, friend, I'm doing you no wrong. There's no injustice, no injustice with God.

[45 : 41] I see time is running but there is no injustice, that is the point. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go.

Then he says, I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. That's his choice.

Sovereign does what he wishes. And he asks rhetorically this question. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?

Or do you begrudge my generosity? And all Jesus is saying in this parable is precisely what we heard earlier.

that he negotiated with the workers who came at 6 a.m. to pay them a certain amount.

[46 : 50] And essentially what they were saying is that look here, if you pay them this, you got to pay us that. But Jesus was saying what I am clearly displaying here is grace, is generosity.

from this parable we see that grace is the only key that unlocks salvation.

It's all we need. It's the domain of one. No one can control the master. Grace overlooks all our faults, all our faults, our past faults, our present faults, and our future faults.

You also see that grace is no respecter of persons. No respecter of persons. Grace, there is more than enough.

More than enough grace. No one can thwart the will of God. Grace, as Max Lucado said, is the voice that calls us to change, gives us the power to pull it off.

[48 : 11] All believers drink from the fountain of God's grace. Brothers and sisters, as we conclude, grace.

Grace. Grace should evoke in us a gratitude for Christ to cause us to have much gratitude for Christ because grace is in him through him.

Should evoke in us comfort knowing that God's election of us is efficacious. no one can thwart it.

It's going to withstand everything. It cannot be ended. Should evoke in us a sense of humility knowing that we had nothing at all to do with it.

Should cause us not to compare ourselves to others. everyone invited into the vineyard receives the same salvation.

[49 : 34] Brothers and sisters, it's never too late. It's never too late. And you can never go too low.

You're here today and you say, once I was standing idly in the marketplace of life. empty, broken, and purposeless.

One day God chose me. Hallelujah. He did the choosing. We are under the umbrella grace because of the righteousness of another.

Jesus Christ. But perhaps you're listening and you know you're standing idly in the marketplace.

Maybe you're old and your best days are behind you. Perhaps the weight of sin is pulling on you.

[50 : 43] God's economy. God's economy as we have seen already. It's not too late. The sin is not too great.

The first will be last and the last will be first. Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God's grace, bids you come.

Let us pray. Father, Lord, we thank you for your grace. Oh, grace that is amazing, full and free.

Lord, thank you for grace that you've given so freely on those who are so inadequate. Oh, Lord, we demonstrate our inadequacy in so many ways.

So many ways, Lord. And you knew it. You knew, Lord, what we would be before you sent your son to die for us.

[51 : 55] Yet he died willingly. Lord, oh, what grace. What grace. what grace. Lord, teach us to bow in humility.

Oh, Lord, cause us, Lord, to render to you fruits of righteousness.

Lord, cause our love to be deepened our lives. To be with gratitude to you.

Oh, Lord, how we love you. As we consider this parable, how we love you, Lord, cause our love to be deepened today, chosen, by a sovereign and gracious God.
As we stood idly in the marketplace of life. Wandering, oh, Lord, you stopped us and you chose us.
[53 : 22] You rewarded us with eternal life. Father, we thank you. We praise your name.
In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.