



Paychecks, Vineyards, and a Different Kind of Economy

Matthew 20:1-15

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## Group Leader Notes

Welcome to the fourth week in our series, *Under Pressure: Faith in an Anxious Age*. So far, we have talked about how ancient wisdom can help us with our addiction to technology, mental health, and anxiety. Last week, we learned how to teach the younger generations about Jesus. Today, we will talk about the anxiety we experience from work and how our faith can impact our work. By work, I mean ALL work – paid, non-paid, intentional energy expended for a desired objective – all that we toil for.

### Questions:

What does the faith I grow in on Sunday mean to my work from Monday to Friday?  
How do I connect Sunday to Monday?

**Bottom Line:** The way of Jesus runs on a different economy, and it's funded by generosity and grace.

**Memory Verse:** Matthew 20:16

<sup>16</sup> "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

### Take Home Message:

We have this hang-up on being first or being better. It's part of our programming. If we work hard, if we leverage our talent and skill to the assignment and complete it, if we obey, follow the rules, and do it the best and the fastest, then we are rewarded. And Jesus is saying that's good, but it's not all that matters. Just because you got their first does not mean you are better.

**Main Scripture Reading:** Matthew 20:1-15

**20** "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. <sup>2</sup> He agreed to pay them a denarius<sup>[a]</sup> for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

<sup>3</sup> "About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. <sup>4</sup> He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' <sup>5</sup> So they went.

"He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. <sup>6</sup> About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?'

<sup>7</sup> “‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered.

“He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

<sup>8</sup> “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’

<sup>9</sup> “The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. <sup>10</sup> So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. <sup>11</sup> When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. <sup>12</sup> ‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’

<sup>13</sup> “But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius?’ <sup>14</sup> Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. <sup>15</sup> Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’

**Other Scripture References:** Luke 15:11-32 (Parable of the Prodigal Son)

### **Teaching Points:**

- Three Truths from the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard:
  1. **The Kingdom of God is always on the lookout for more workers:** the vineyard owner is always hiring workers of all kinds because he wants to bring more goodness to the world and to your life.
  2. **The Kingdom of God prioritizes generosity:** the vineyard owner is generous, and He is not ashamed to admit it.
  3. **The Kingdom of God runs on the economy of grace:** it’s up to us as workers to decide how to work in it.
- If we see everything from a financial perspective, our life is going to be limited by all the material factors. Chances are, we’ll base our identity on what is in our accounts. Jesus warns us about that. Beware of full storehouses and empty souls.
- For those of you interested in finding out more about how to Sunday to Monday explore [Made to Flourish](https://www.madetoflourish.org/) (<https://www.madetoflourish.org/>) or [Kingdom Calling](#) by Amy Sherman

## **Group Discussion**

Begin in prayer before reading and discussing the text.

1. This message applies to all work, paid and unpaid. Ask your group to take a moment to consider all the unpaid work they do (e.g., raising children, caring for parents/grandparents, commitments to church or other organizations). Have one or two volunteers talk about their unpaid work and how much time and effort it requires.

2. Pastor Tim discussed the work ethic we instill in our children from an early age. If you work harder, get there early, and outwork everyone, you get a higher salary than those who work less. Spend a few minutes discussing how this ethos was passed onto you by your parents or how you have passed it on to your own children.
3. Pastor Tim refers to the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard as the *worst* of Jesus' parables. Why is it so hard for us to comprehend why the workers who worked for only a few hours received the same pay as those who worked the entire day?
4. Pastor Tim asked us to view this parable from a generational perspective. Think of the workers who worked the whole day as the older generation (Builder, Boomer, Gen X), and the workers who worked for only a few hours as the younger generation (Millennial, Gen Z). Like the vineyard owner who celebrated and rewarded each worker regardless of what time they showed up, discuss, as a group, how you can show God's generosity and grace to each generation. Consider fundamental philosophical differences in how older and younger generations view work.
5. Pastor Tim also asked us to consider being a chaplain at your workplace. A chaplain is someone who listens, supports, prays offline, follows up, and deeply cares. For most of us, your job does not pay you to do that. But you might find calling and impact in being the unofficial, completely secret office chaplain. Do any of you feel the Holy Spirit moving you in this direction?

### ***Let's Pray***

Blessed are you who have gotten back up, who set the alarm to show up  
 Blessed are you who grind and do the work that others leave behind  
 Blessed are you who have chosen not to fight for every dollar  
 Blessed are you who trust that God will provide  
 Blessed are you who are patient with others, who imagine what life is like for the person on the other side of the counter or the desk or in the work truck and you root for them as you hope that God will also be with you.

In Jesus name, Amen.