

The Unfair Gospel

THE PARABLES OF JESUS – Part 6

October 4, 2026

¹ *“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ² He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.*

³ *“About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. ⁴ He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ ⁵ So they went.*

“He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. ⁶ 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?’

⁷ *“‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered.*

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

⁸ *“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.’*

⁹ *“The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. ¹⁰ So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. ¹¹ When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ¹² ‘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.’*

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

¹⁶ *“So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”*

Matthew 20:1-16

The Gospel is incredibly unfair, and thank God for that.

Small Group Discussion Questions for the Week of October 4, 2026.

Opening

Think of a time when you did something wrong, but you were “let off” and not punished for it. Share your experience with the group.

Digging Deeper into the Scriptures

Read Matthew 20:1-16

1. In verse 4 it says that the vineyard owner would pay the workers “whatever is right.” Do you think all of the workers were paid “whatever is right?” Why or why not.
2. In verse 13 the landowner says that he was not being unfair. Do you agree or disagree?
3. The Kingdom of Heaven refers to God’s rule and reign, his ways, the way things are supposed to be, etc., both on Earth and in heaven. Jesus claims that an aspect of the Kingdom of Heaven is like this parable. What do you think he means?

Applying the Scriptures

1. According to Jesus, someone who lives a wayward and debaucherous life (even a life full of doing despicable things), but comes to God late in life, receives the exact same gift from God as someone who faithfully follows God their entire life. Does this sit well with you? Why or why not?
2. Do you struggle with thinking that some people don’t deserve forgiveness? Why or why not?
3. The Gospel is incredibly unfair. Explain why this statement is true.