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Pastor Dan Esh

Calvary Chapel Central Phoenix

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MATTHEW

HIS GRACE TO GIVE

MATTHEW 20:1-16

- I. More Like Jesus
 - a. Throughout the New Testament we see this theme of being conformed to the image of Jesus – process that is called sanctification
 - i. Romans 8:29 – we were chosen to be conformed to the image of His Son, 1 Cor 15:49 we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man, 2 Cor 3:18 beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image
 - 1. Beyond that we are instructed in Philippians (2:5) to “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus”
 - b. What does it mean to become more like Jesus?
 - i. Speak softly, move slowly, long hair and beard, avoid conflict – take on a glorified hippy persona
 - ii. Is it simply behavior modification – more disciplined, say your prayers, eat your vegetables, clean up your language – instead of a bad person, you are becoming a good person
 - iii. Or is it about becoming the better you? – More likeable, more successful, more outgoing, more confident? Life becomes easier, smoother
 - 1. These all have one thing in common – it is still all about us
 - c. Look at the bookends to this section (Matthew 19:30 and 20:16)
 - i. This is the change we are talking about – it’s the fundamental change of perspective that is common in the Kingdom of God
 - ii. Where we go from wanting the attention and the blessing to wanting God glorified and others blessed
 - d. Sanctification isn’t God making bad people good, it is God bringing the dead to life
 - i. Sanctification is the transformative work of the Spirit in our lives to make us more like Jesus for the Glory of God and the good of others
 - ii. Those desires do not come naturally – the desire for all eyes to be on Him and to see others flourish – that is not our natural bent
 - 1. We want the attention; we want to be blessed – we want to be greatest in the Kingdom
 - 2. Just like Peter asked in Matthew 19:27 – what is in this for us?
 - iii. This parable is a direct response to that question – it is a clear illustration of the difference between the mind of Christ and mind of man
 - 1. This is the shift in perspective that the Lord wants to work out in us – to see things the way He sees things
 - 2. Make no mistake it is only through the power of His Spirit, under His leading, that we can be changed on this level

Mat 19: 30 But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

Mat 20:1 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. **2** Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. **3** And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, **4** and said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.’ So they went. **5** Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. **6** And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day?’ **7** They said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.’ **8** “So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, ‘Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.’ **9** And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. **10** But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. **11** And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, **12** saying, ‘These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.’ **13** But he answered one of them and said, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? **14** Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. **15** Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?’ **16** So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.”

II. The Workers and Their Wages

- a. Workers that agreed (contractual language – where we get our word symphony) to a denarius a day – their pay was settled
 - i. Then, all day long, the landowner goes out and hires more workers – at 9am, noon, 3pm, and 5pm
 - ii. Whatever is right, I will give you – there is no contract
 - iii. Can we pause and appreciate the character of God? – seeking and saving all day long – going out and finding those who are idle – this is 2 Cor 3 beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image
- b. Pay their wages, beginning with the last
 - i. He could have paid the first and sent them on their way, but he wanted them to see this
 - ii. "each of them received a denarius" – **But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more;**
 - iii. Sounds fair – make this whole thing more acceptable – you showed them kindness, now show us more kindness
- c. **and they likewise received each a denarius**
 - i. How does that make you feel? That’s not fair. It’s an injustice. It’s not right.
- d. That is exactly their response
 - i. Complained (grumbled) – their issue? **‘These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.’**
 - ii. Sound familiar? The Parable of the Prodigal Son – **Luke 15:25** “Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. **26** So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. **27** And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.’ **28** “But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with

him. 29 So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. 30 But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.'

III. The Evil Eye

a. The problem with their logic

i. *Friend, I am doing you no wrong.*

1. The landowner didn't steal from them, he didn't reduce their wage, he didn't exploit them for free labor, he hadn't wronged them in any way – they agreed to a set wage, and that set wage is exactly what they got – no injustice was done here
2. The wage wasn't an issue until they saw what other people were getting – and it was that very thing that exposed their hearts

ii. Their issue – *you have made them equal to us!*

1. They didn't just want a wage, they wanted to be superior – in their minds they had earned that right
2. Sin doesn't need to touch what's in your hand to ruin your joy, it only needs to redirect your eyes to what's in someone else's hands – we see this in toddlers

- a. The don't want that toy until another kids picks it up – the curse of comparison – envy

b. *is your eye evil because I am good?*

i. A well-known Hebrew idiom – envious, jealous, covetous – it was the opposite of the good eye – a generous eye – an eye that was others oriented

1. Origin in Deuteronomy 15:9. Israel is warned not to let a wicked thought cross their mind as the year of debt-release approaches, refusing to lend to a needy brother because the loan will soon be canceled, "and your eye be evil against your needy brother and you give him nothing."
2. The Sermon on the Mount – *Mat 6:22 "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! 24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*
3. *James 3:16* tells us - *"For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there."*

c. Envy isn't just something we do, it is a state of being – it is a condition of the heart – it is a characteristic exclusive to this fallen world – it is the enemy of gratitude

- i. Isn't this exactly what Matthew has been highlighting up until this point
- ii. The disciples arguing about who is the greatest
 1. Jesus sets a child in front of them and says unless they are converted and become like this child, they won't even enter the kingdom
- iii. In the very next chapter, when people bring children to Jesus to be blessed, the disciples rebuke them
- iv. The rich young ruler shows up claiming to have kept the law perfectly, "what else do I have to do so that I may have eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16-22)

- v. And then Peter's question "what's in this for us?"
 - 1. Who is at the center of all this? – self – human pride
- vi. This is what was at the heart of the fall of mankind in the garden – Adam and Eve didn't simply give into the temptation of the fruit, they gave into the promise that "they will become like God"
- vii. This is what was at the heart of the construction of the Tower of Babel - "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower... and let us make a name for ourselves"
- viii. This is what is at the heart of one of the most depraved books of the Bible – throughout Judges we see the phrase - "everyone did what was right in his own eyes"
- ix. Individual pride at Eden becomes corporate ambition at Babel, and by Judges it is simply the way an entire culture thinks – pride does not stay contained, it scales
- d. This is exactly the natural bent that Jesus is surgically removing from all of us
 - i. What is in this for me? How does this affect me? What do people think about me? Who appreciates me?
 - ii. Place this kind of thinking on the backdrop of ***Phil 2:5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.***
 - 1. Think about Jesus' response to the rich young ruler, keep the commandments, which ones he asks... do not...murder, adultery, steal, bear false witness, honor father and mother, and love your neighbor – sell what you have and give to the poor – all of these are others focused
 - 2. The horizontal relationship commandment Jesus doesn't mention is You shall not covet your neighbor's goods
 - a. Coveting is the sin that isn't about what you do to your neighbor, but about the posture of your heart toward what God has given someone else
 - iii. When we truly begin to understand the grace of God, we are truly free to remove ourselves from the equation
 - 1. We have what we need, we are secure in Christ – He takes care of us as we care for others
 - 2. No more comparisons, no more frustration for wanting what others have – just freedom to rejoice when we see others blessed

IV. The Free Grace of God

- a. The nature of salvation
 - i. ***I wish (want, desire) to give to this last man the same as to you - Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things?***
 - ii. As D.A. Carson observes, God's great gifts, simply because they are God's, are distributed not because they are earned, but because He is gracious.
- b. What was the nature of the contract the later workers entered into, what were the terms of the contract?
 - i. The landowner said trust me, no contract, no promised wage – just "whatever is right, you will receive"
 - ii. They showed up, not because there was a contract, but because they trusted the landowner

1. Isn't that faith? Isn't that the heart of the gospel?
- c. That's the wonderful thing about this parable
 - i. Which character did you initially identify with? More than likely the one who agreed upon the wage in advance
 - ii. Did you earn your salvation? Did you work for it? We are not the early workers, we showed up late, trusted in the character of the Christ, and received grace that wasn't earned
- d. Grace is God's to give
 - i. The Pharisees believed their righteousness was wage based, they had earned it – that is why they were offended when Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners
 1. Exactly the same heart of the all-day workers' - *it's not fair that people who did less get the same thing we worked for*
 - ii. Wages are earned, grace is given – *God does not owe anyone equal outcomes because grace was is not a contractual obligation, God is not in debt to us, it's a gift, and He has the right to be as generous as He wants with what belongs to Him*
 1. Recipients of that grace rejoice when others receive it, in whatever form that grace takes and at whatever point of their lives they receive it – that is becoming more like Jesus
- e. And if you think you are undeserving of that grace, welcome to the family
 - i. It is God's grace to give, and He gives it freely. All day every day, He offers an invitation, He approaches those who are in the world, in the marketplace, and asks “what are you doing here?”
 1. “Come with Me, and I will give you what is right”
 2. “I want to forgive you, I want to bless you, not because you have earned but because you are loved”