

JESUS UNFILTERED

SERMON STUDY GUIDE | PART 3: What's in It for Me? | 1.21.18 | FOLLOW ON FB @PASTORERICHUFFMAN TWITTER @ERICTHESTORY

It seems like we're always talking about why it's important to believe in Jesus, but when was the last time you stopped to think about *what Jesus believed?* Over the next month, we're going to take a closer look at Jesus' belief system by analyzing eight of his most famous parables. Last week, we asked the question, "Who does God love?" and we studied the three parables that Jesus told in Luke 15. This week, we're shifting gears to ask the question on the minds of so many who are considering "coming to Jesus": *what's in it for me?*

To review (and I promise this is the last time I'll ask this question): What are parables?

Today's focus parable actually begins with the verse *before* the story starts. In Matthew 19:30, Jesus concludes another set of teachings by saying, "But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first." Then he launches into this parable about different sets of workers who are called to work in God's "vineyard" at different times of the day.

Matthew 20:1-16: The Parable of the Vineyard Workers

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

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

"He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. 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?'

"'Because no one has hired us,' they answered.

"He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.'

"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.'

"The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. '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.'

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

"So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

Who does the landowner represent in the story? Who does the first group of workers represent?

At about what time does the landowner hire the first group of workers? How much did he agree to pay them for a full day's work? Was this a fair wage or not?

What time did the landowner go back out to recruit the second group of workers? What did he agree to pay them for $\frac{3}{4}$ of a day's work?

What times did he go back out to recruit the third and fourth groups of workers?

And what about the fifth and final group? What time were they hired? What did the landowner ask them when he saw them, and what was their response?

How much did the landowner pay Group 5 - the guys who only worked an hour? What did this cause the other workers to assume? Do you think theirs was a fair assumption to make? Why or why not?

What do you think Jesus was trying to say to the highly religious people in his audience?

What was he saying to the sinners and outsiders in his audience?

How do you think churches and individual Christians sometimes miss the point of Jesus' teachings like this one? How would the church experience look and feel different (both for religious insiders and non-religious outsiders) if we took this parable more seriously?

What's the real *reward* for being faithful?