

ESF Lord's day message  
12/13/2015

### **Blessed Life in God's Grace**

Matthew 20:1-16

<sup>1</sup> *“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 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?’*

<sup>16</sup> *“So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”*

A construction crew was building a new road through a rural area, knocking down trees as it progressed. A superintendent noticed that one tree had a nest of birds who couldn't yet fly and he marked the tree so that it would not be cut down. Several weeks later the superintendent came back to the tree. He got into a bucket truck and was lifted up so that he could peer into the nest. The fledglings were gone. They had obviously learned to fly. The superintendent ordered the tree cut down. As the tree crashed to the ground, the nest fell clear and some of the material that the birds had gathered to make the nest was scattered about. Part of it was a scrap torn from a Sunday school pamphlet. On the scrap of paper were these words: **He cares for you.**

Jesus says, *“Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?”* (Matthew 6:26).

In this parable God is our heavenly Father who cares for us. He always cares for us by His grace. If we live our lives by God's grace, we will live worry free lives.

### **God as a landowner**

God is like a landowner: *“the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner...”* Among the rich landowners in this world there may be very stingy, selfish or arrogant people who ignore or oppress the weak and the poor. But there is no landowner who is rich enough to give jobs to all laborers in this world.

However God who is a heavenly landowner is humble, generous and merciful. In ancient days usually landowners did not go out to hire laborers. They sent their servants to hire them. But here in this story, the landowner went out to find the laborers and hire them himself.

God comes to us directly through the form of a man. He comes to us through His son Jesus Christ. Through Jesus He comes to us while we do not know Him and we are rebellious against Him. Through Jesus God comes to us and calls us to His blessed kingdom. Romans 5:8, *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Also God is the richest landowner. God created the universe and He owns everything in it. So He has enough resources and opportunities to hire all who need jobs.

On Dec. 19, 2006 there was a heart touching event in a reality TV program "The Apprentice." It was an event of Tara Conner. After she won the crown of Miss USA, she was found guilty of drug use, underage drinking and sexual misconduct. And her Miss USA title would be stripped off. However Donald Trump announced that he would not fire the embattled Miss USA. He mercifully gave her a second chance by this word, "She's agreed to go into rehab. She knows that if she makes even the slightest mistake from here on, she will be immediately replaced. I believe she can do a tremendous service to young people."

Fighting back tears, and with her voice shaking, Conner thanked Trump for the pardon saying, "In no way did I think it would be possible for a second chance to be given to me." She then went on to shower Trump in compliments; "I've had a very big blessing bestowed on me. It truly takes someone with a wonderful heart, a heart of gold and a blessed soul."

How could Donald Trump pardon Miss USA and give back her crown? Because he owns the contest!

God is the final owner of everything in this world. He is the owner of the life of Donald Trump.

In Psalm 50:9-12, God proves His ownership of everything in this world.

*I have no need of a bull from your stall*

*or of goats from your pens,*

<sup>10</sup>*for every animal of the forest is mine,*

*and the cattle on a thousand hills.*

<sup>11</sup>*I know every bird in the mountains,*

*and the insects in the fields are mine.*

<sup>12</sup>*If I were hungry I would not tell you,*

*for the world is mine, and all that is in it.*

Even if no employer can give us a job or an opportunity, Jesus can and wants to give us jobs. So when Jesus calls you to come to God's blessed kingdom, accept and follow the call.

### **Undying hope**

In a labor market, usually the best and strongest are the first to be picked. The last group of the workers might be small and not physically strong, or may not have much experience or skills.

Whatever the reasons might be, they were standing without being hired until the last hour. They were totally defeated in competition of the labor market. They were hopeless. But the vineyard owner gave them an opportunity to work at the last hour.

These workers may represent us. In this world, we experience losing or defeat in competitions. The competitive world has no mercy. It is determined by outward physical shape, power, and capability. It is hard for weaker and less capable people to find good opportunities.

But there is good news when you receive God's grace. Even though you may not be good enough for a rewarding job, God wants you! By His grace, God still gives you good opportunities.

Even if you have failed in all kinds of competition in this world, even if you have been a loser in a cutthroat, merciless labor market in this world, you still can find a wonderful opportunity in God's grace.

God's grace may come when you think everything is over. In God's grace, you still can have a chance to work. In God's grace, opportunity can come to you at any time.

When Abraham was 75 years old without a child, his life was hopeless. After he believed God's promise that God would give him a child, he waited for 24 years for that child. But he still did not have a child. Everything was over. But then God gave him a child a year later when he was 100 years of age.

At the age of 40 Moses became a fugitive in a remote land and got a job as a shepherd. He might have thought that in a few years, his situation would change. But nothing happened for 40 years, and he was now 80 years old. He thought everything was over. But to God it was not over yet. God called Moses at that time and gave him a great opportunity. God used Moses to set the Israelites free from slavery in Egypt and to lead them to the land of promise. This is God's grace.

Even if you have never had a good opportunity up to this very day, do not give up on hope. Believe that there is still hope for you in God's grace.

### **A marvelous gift**

In this parable, the owner made payment to the workers in a way no workers expected. The owner paid an equal amount of money to all the workers regardless of their working hours. And some workers complained to the owner, thinking that the owner had paid them unfairly. But the owner replied to them that their complaint had no ground, because they were paid as he had promised to pay them and they were complaining because of his generosity to the others.

Sometimes you may feel that God is unfair when you compare yourself with others who have more and better opportunities than you do. But if you really knew how mercifully and generously God blesses you, you would be thankful. By His grace, God always blesses you more than you deserve to be blessed. By His grace, God gives us far more and greater blessings than we deserve to receive.

God immediately forgives all our sins as soon as we repent from our sins and believe in Jesus. God treats us as His children just as He treats all others who have been believers for a long time. The thief on the cross had lived a sinful life. While he was dying on the cross, he didn't have a chance to do good to redeem his sinful life. But when he confessed his faith in Christ at the moment, Christ confirmed his redemption, salvation and eternal life: *"I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise"* (Luke 23:43). It is His marvelous gift which is more than justice or fair.

We should never think that we deserve to receive some blessings based on our merits. We shouldn't think that God should bless us more because we have done something more or better than what others have done.

There is nothing you can do to make God love you more.  
There is nothing you can do to make God love you less.  
Like a gift, the only thing we can do with grace is to receive it.

God dispenses gifts and not wages. If we want to be compensated for our life's work, then Romans 6:23 spells out how we will be paid: *"For the wages of sin is death..."* Our wages is death. But, if we want to receive what God wants to freely give us, then the last part of this verse offers us something far better than just compensation: *"but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Ps. 103:10 also says, *"He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay*

*us according to our iniquities.”*

Our confidence and joy in this life is based - not on what we have or do not have; or on what we have done, or haven't done - rather our confidence is on WHO we have! We have a Savior who saved us and a Father who loves us. On the last day, when we stand before Him, there won't be any distinctions between good people and bad people, the saints and sinners.

No one is worthier than another to receive salvation because we're all unworthy.

*Rom 12:3 “For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.”*

Let's be forever grateful for what God has already done for us by His grace, and is still doing-forgiveness of all our sins, abundant provisions for our physical and spiritual needs, and blessed opportunities to work for Him.