

The Workers in the Vineyard

Matthew 20:1-16

by Don Falkos

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Jesus told a story:

A landowner went to the marketplace early one morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay the normal daily wage and sent them out to work.

At nine o'clock in the morning, at noon, and again at three o'clock he was in the marketplace and hired more workers, telling them, "At the end of the day I'll pay you whatever is right." At five o'clock that afternoon he saw some people in the marketplace and asked, "Why have you been standing around all day doing nothing?"

They answered, "Because no one hired us."

"Then go," said the landowner, "and work in my vineyard for this final hour of the day."

An hour later he told his foreman, "Call the workers in to be paid, beginning with the workers hired last." When those hired at five o'clock were paid, they each received a full day's wage. Those hired first, at the start of the day, assumed they would receive more. But they didn't. They were paid a normal day's wage. They complained, "Those guys only worked one hour; we worked all day long in the scorching heat; and you've paid us all the same."

The landowner answered, "Friend, I haven't been unfair to you. You agree to work for a day's wage; you've been paid a day's wage. Take your money and go. If I pay the other workers the same amount, what is that to you? Is it against the law for me to do what I want with my own money? Don't be jealous because I've decided to be generous."

Then Jesus said to his followers, "This is what the Kingdom of Heaven is like; the last will be first, and the first will be last."