

# What We Really Deserve

*Understanding the economy of God's grace is essential to experiencing joy, contentment and fruitfulness in this life.*

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Matthew 20:1-15, Luke 17:7-10

## Intro

This morning we dive into a parable that really isn't one of those that you would naturally think of in the top 5. When we hear the word "parable", we often think of ***the prodigal son, the lost sheep or lost coin, the Good Samaritan, or the house built on the rock and on the sand.*** Most people don't think of the parable of the undeserving laborers.

***We find this parable in Matthew 20. This is what we call a "Kingdom parable", where Jesus uses a practical analogy to depict the DNA and operation of God's kingdom; the kingdom which we now live in and are called to emulate. And we should be daily falling in love with this King, His kingdom, and its ways because when Jesus returns and establishes His physical kingdom here on earth for 1000 years, I believe these principles will govern it.***

The interesting thing about this particular parable is that it really kicks against the value system of humanity. All of Jesus' teachings seem contrary to the system of the world, but this parable identifies something specifically that is a point of great conviction and challenge for me personally, as I believe it will be for you as well.

***The word that I'll use to identify that attitude that Jesus deals with in this parable is the word "Entitlement."***

- I'm not talking about government welfare programs. I'm talking about the attitude within people that says, ***"I deserve the things I need or want."***
  - o I deserve them because I exist. I deserve them because I worked hard, I deserve them because \_\_\_\_\_.
  - o It becomes increasingly dangerous when we transfer these ideas toward our relationship with God.

## Illustration

INTRO: Those of you who are parents or who have ever been kids, please complete the following sentences:

- Mom, that's not his, it's \_\_\_\_\_ (mine)
- Dad, that's just not \_\_\_\_\_ (fair)
- You're not the boss of \_\_\_\_\_ (me)

You almost get the sense that we grow up in this world looking out for number 1, and making sure we get what we believe and feel we deserve from life and from others.

- Life ought to be fair, and of course, fair means whatever is best for me!
- Don't we have such a proclivity towards self-absorption!?

This ensures that we all become entitled people.

**And YES, in case you were wondering if this is a problem, it is.**

- ***It's a problem for industry, society, and even the church.***
- ***An attitude of entitlement causes the death of essential things like sacrificial giving, hard work, generosity, gratitude, and compassion.***
- ***WHY? At the center of entitlement is a love of self.***
- ***"I am worthy, I deserve it, I am great..."***

You might say, "Well, I'm not entitled." Maybe not, but here is a good test to see if entitlement really resides in you or not:

## Quote

***Identifying Entitlement – "Entitlement in our lives is revealed by the way we react when we don't get what we think we deserved."***

## Application

APPLICATION: You see, we tend to naturally calibrate everything in life around ourselves.

- How does this affect me? What's in it for me? Is this going to fulfill me?
- ***And the purpose of the gospel is to re-calibrate us toward God and away from self.*** This is why an attitude of entitlement is such a problem; it is contrary to the gospel of grace.
- The Bible describes the gospel-centered life as,
  - o As being crucified with Christ.
  - o Being dead to the world
  - o As being alive together with Him
  - o As considering others higher than yourself
  - o As becoming the servant of all
  - o As daily dying so that the life of Christ might be revealed

And yet, the middle letter in the word entitle, is "I."

## A millennial problem?

Often times, the Millennial generation gets the rap of being the entitled generation.

- To some degree, this has a level of accuracy.
- This generation in America lives in a society that, more than ever before in history, caters to individuality. We live in an Amazon, Netflix, and Twitter world where you can choose what movies suite you, what products suit you, and what friends suite you and customize your isolated digital life to your beckon desires. Everything is designed and branded to make one as comfortable and convenient as possible to the end of personal satisfaction.
- But I have met young people who are incredibly hard working, humble, and unentitled and folks on the other end of the generational spectrum that are just the opposite, so it's not necessarily or solely a generational problem.

## An American Problem?

Part of the problem of having more is that you begin to think that you automatically deserve more... and let's face it; in America, we have a lot!

- Americans are largely accustomed to having what they want when they want it.
  - o EXAMPLE: Waiting in the parking spot and people getting angry at me because they deserve that spot more than me.

- We are by nature a consumer culture, wanting everything, getting everything, only to repeat the cycle due to our frequent lack of contentment with what we have.

If an American goes to another country expecting to get the same customer service, the same personal attention, or the same catering to their comfort that they experience in America, ***they will be shockingly surprised that they really aren't the center of the universe.***

I'm certainly just as guilty! It comes very naturally to me:

- **EXAMPLE 1:** looking at a refrigerator full of food and thinking... "Man, there's nothing to eat in here" because there wasn't my preference.

Now please doesn't misunderstand me... I believe that America is the greatest place on the earth. How grateful I am to live in a nation that has the most potential resources to be the greatest blessing and gospel delivering nation on the face of the planet.

- **But all of God's blessings can easily turn to burdens once they are made into idols. If we want to continue to be an effective church in this culture, we must recognize both the privileges and the potential pitfalls of all that God has entrusted to us.**

But before you think I'm harping on some of the downsides of our culture, I really believe entitlement is a human problem, for all people naturally love themselves first!

## A Human problem?

**EXAMPLE:** Expecting my wife to answer her phone for me while at the grocery store and getting frustrated. She was legitimately indisposed, but the fact is it doesn't matter if she could have answered or not... what gave me the right to expect that I should have been the center of her universe at that moment in time?

**LET'S FACE IT:** The Bible makes it clear... When it comes to God and man, there is really only one thing that humans actually deserve from God, and that is Judgment and penalty for their sin and rebellion against Him. In one word, **HELL**. Which means anything different or other that comes from God to us that is better than Hell is a result of His grace!

This isn't to say that God hasn't granted us certain inalienable rights (certainly he has), but even then, He didn't grant them to us because we deserved them, but because of His gracious love toward us.

## Custom

As we read the parable, this will become evident to you... In fact, I'll say that as we read this parable, you might find your own sense of justice and fairness being pricked. You might find yourself arguing with yourself, trying to justify the events that take place.

SO – we will quickly move through the parable and dissect that context, then we will give several application points to take home.

## Bible Verse

**[Mat 20:1-16 NKJV] 1 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner (God) 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.**

## Context

In this story, we have a landowner and 5 different groups of workers. This is the first group. These laborers were probably people of a lower class whose livelihood depended upon wealthy landowners to hire them on a daily basis.

- *They would gather in certain spots where all the landowners would go to find workers.*
- *These were hired early in the morning, say 6:00 (sunrise) to start working in the vineyard.*
- *First come, first serve economy.*
- *They agreed on a price beforehand (important) of one denarius, which was a fair price for a day's wage.*

Now verse 3 introduces us to the second group of workers:

## Bible Verse

**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.**

## Context

The landowner goes out now three more times: (9:00, 12:00, 3:00) These were the workers that didn't make the early cut. We don't know why. Maybe they overslept and didn't make it to the marketplace on time. Maybe they just didn't get chosen because they were new in town, maybe they didn't have a dependable reputation.

So imagine it, you're out to work at 6:00 am, and 3, 6, and 9 hours after you start, more workers come rolling in... maybe not a diligent, hardworking, or dependable as you are.

- You might start thinking, “This landowner is crazy always looking for more workers to bring into His field!”
- I sure hope the landowner appreciates the fact that I've been out here since early in the morning!
- Then the landowner goes out one final time between 5:00 and 6:00 pm. It is now the end of the workday and everyone is about to get off work and get paid.

## Bible Verse

**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.’**

## Context

Now, I think it's safe to say that if these guys have been there all day and no one hired them, they might not be the cream of the crop. Maybe some are disabled or older and not fit for manual labor.

But this doesn't stop the landowner. It's obvious the landowner isn't doing this because he needs more work done at this point. The work day is an hour from being over.

No, it seems that the landowner is more concerned about making sure these workers go away with some compensation for the day because he is generous.

## Bible Verse

“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.”

### ***Seeds of Entitlement:***

## 1) I deserve more than what has been promised

### **Application**

When the workers who worked the least got paid a denarius, the workers further down the line began to tell themselves a story. The guys at the end of the line are thinking, “Hey if the guy who worked one hour gets a denarius, that must mean he’s paying 1 denarius/hour! We are going to get 11 or 12! What a day! This is going to be awesome. Then, they get to the payment desk and get 1 denarius

They are angry! “We’ve been wronged”... wait a minute!

- They haven’t been wronged, they simply forgot that the master told them at the beginning of the day that they would get 1 denarius. The master fairly kept His word. He didn’t miscommunicate or set any false hopes or expectations... the workers did that themselves!
- If they had been paid first, they probably would have gone off content, but because they were paid last, they used their waiting time to consider their own superiority to the other workers.
- ***By the end, instead of being happy for the other workers, they were only concerned about themselves. IT’S NOT FAIR! It’s only not fair if you expected something you never had the right to anyway!***

### **Quote**

***“Most disappointment and discontentment stems from misplaced expectations.”***

*Josh / Quote*

### ***Seeds of Entitlement:***

## 2) It’s my right to complain about my circumstances

### **Bible Verse**

11 “And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner...

## Quote

***As long as a man is alive and out of hell, he cannot have any cause to complain.***

*Spurgeon*

## Application

You see, entitlement is not a situational disease, it's an attitudinal disease. A disease of perspective. In other words, entitlement doesn't rear its ugly head because our situation is bad, but because our internal perspective and attitude of the situation are wrong.

Complaining the fruit of an ungrateful heart. Complaining is yet another seed that feeds a self-centered outlook on life. The Bible calls it grumbling... it is the antithesis of thankfulness. And everyone loves a complainer!

Complaining is a statement that I have been wronged, ripped off, the recipient of undeserved unfairness! That's really coming from an overinflated view of yourselves.

2. Stop complaining. Complaining is disempowering. It takes away from you the power in Christ to overcome diversity and pain. Choose rather the empowering act of rejoicing and thanking God in all things... even when life hurts. This is a path that Christ Jesus provides for you!

***Philippians 2:14 – do all things without complaining.***

## Quote

***“We are born crying, live complaining, and die disappointed.”***

*Thomas Fuller /*

## Seeds of Entitlement:

### 3) I deserve more because I did more

## Quote

*We live in a culture where our value is often determined by our contribution.*

- *Do more, get more.*
- *The most talented get the biggest platform.*

## Bible Verse

**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.’”**

## Examples

- I've been living a life of singleness for years faithfully asking the Lord for a mate and that person who just got saved 2 months ago already has an awesome godly fiancé.

- I've been serving in this ministry for 20 years and some new guy comes to the church and gets put in charge of the ministry.
- I've spent my whole career trying to be successful and all I've done is worked hard to make other people successful.

Remember Luke 17 when Jesus talked to His disciples about the duty of a servant?

## Bible Verse

[Luk 17:7-10 NKJV] 7 “And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat’? 8 “But will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink’? 9 “Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. 10 “So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’ “

## Application

Christian, there is something so much more valuable in our life than our comfort or our physical well-being, or our material wealth... ***and that is doing the will of our master!***

- Yes God is our Father and our friend, but He is also our king and master. ***“Why do you call me Lord, but don’t do the things I command?”***
- The good news in that is our master will not demand anything from us that doesn’t reflect His heart as a Father, but when He does issue a command or direction in our life, it is our duty to do it without the expectation that we deserve more than what He has already promised.

## Guards Against Entitlement:

### 1) God always keep His promises

## Context

**APPLICATION:** Just as the landowner was true to His promised payment, God is always fair to what He said He would do, and that always ought to be enough for us.

At the cross, God agreed upon a payment and a certain set of terms:

- ***He forgave you of all your sins.***
- ***He promised you eternal life.***
- ***He promised to never leave or forsake you.***
- ***And so much more... and all His promises are yes and amen.***

But we must be careful not to put promises in God’s mouth that He never gave and expect from God things He never promised.

- ***He never promised us worldly comfort and security.***
- ***He never promised us exemptions from trials and tribulations.***
- ***He never promised us that all our dreams and passions would be fulfilled in this sin-torn world.***
- ***He never promised that your marriage would be easy.***

## Application

This is one of the things I love about Jesus! He is honest about the world. He doesn't give us the impression of a world in which we will not experience tribulation, some pie in the sky existence...

So let's be careful not to reach God unrighteously angry because He didn't give us things that he never told us He would give in the first place. Rather, let us learn, as Paul said, **to give thanks in all things** and rejoice in the fact that we have Jesus! He is our reward. He is our rest in a world that has gone haywire.

## I can do all things...

### ***Guards Against Entitlement:***

## 2) God always gives what is right and fair

## Context

Notice the phrases. To the first group, the master promises a denarius. To the next 4 groups, he simply says, ***"I will give you what is right."***

- The last four groups trusted the master's word and were just grateful for an opportunity. Anything they received was more than they were expecting as they were desperately waiting in the marketplace. You know they went away grateful and blessed by the generosity of the master.

## Custom

Gratefulness overtakes entitlement when you consider God's blessings compared to where you were before God found you and called you.

## Quote

***"When you take away entitlement, you are left with grace."***

## Application

The first workers were just as fortunate as the last workers to even be hired at all and have the opportunity to work for a reward. They could have sat all day, not having been hired, and made nothing, but instead, the master gave them an opportunity out of His own resources and his own purposes.

- But in the process of working all day and becoming entitled, they seemed to forget that the money was the masters and not theirs. Just because they would have been stingy and greedy with that money doesn't mean the master has to!

Brother and sister, don't forget that every blessing and reward that the Lord gives us or someone else is because it is right in His sight to give it... let's never forget that God's resources are His, not ours to give.



## **Guards Against Entitlement:**

### **3) The problem is my perception, not God's Promise**

#### **Bible Verse**

15 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."

#### **Quote**

*"An evil eye was a phrase in use, among the ancient Jews, to denote an envious, covetous man or disposition; a man who repined at his neighbor's prosperity, loved his own money and would do nothing in the way of charity for God's sake."*

*Adam Clarke*

#### **Custom**

When the first workers saw the generosity of the landowner, they only considered how it might benefit them. Their perception of God's goodness was selfish.

- As long as His goodness benefits me, great.
- But what about when God's goodness extends beyond the boundaries of what you consider is fair? What happens when God decides to show grace when you think judgment is deserved?
- Is it a problem with God's goodness? Is God's goodness to be blamed because things didn't work out your way? No, it's my perspective that needs to be transformed and changed.

#### **Application**

So how is your eye?

- How do you see what you've been given? Thankful or ripped off?
- How do you see what has been given others? Joyful or jealous?
- How do you view the way God has treated you? Fair or unfair?
- If the answer is one of the negatives, it's not a problem with God's goodness, but with the way you're choosing to look at it.

#### **Conclusion**

From a 10,000 foot view of this passage, we see something incredibly beautiful and stunning about salvation.

- You can come to know Jesus at 5 years old and live your life for him, and you might come to find Jesus on your death bed, 10 minutes from passing into the next life, having denied and rejected Christ your entire life. That's the beauty, of God's grace. It might be at the beginning of the day or at the last moment. God shows no favoritism.
- I believe that we are at the end of the day now, in our current time. It seems clear that the clock is winding down on the world scene. God's salvation is still near. He is on a mission, seeking and saving the lost, even at this final hour. At this desperate time, will we be workers only consumed with how God's goodness can get us more of what we want, or will we, with great joy, encourage as many as we can to come into this field and experience the master's goodness and graciousness?

- Will we live a life of entitlements and self-orientation, or will we find joy, contentment, and fruitfulness in living out God's lavish, elaborate grace every day?

Understanding the economy of God's grace is essential to experiencing joy, contentment, and fruitfulness in this life.