



Series: 5 Thru 5 (Part 4)  
Speaker: Rhordan Wicks

**INTRODUCTION**

In our meritocratic society, the ingrained formula for ‘success’ always includes some form of hard work with your own two hands. Study hard enough and you will get good grades. Work hard enough and you will earn enough to buy your own home.

However, there is always that ‘annoying person’ who studies an hour before the test for an ‘A’ grade, stays slim despite never exercising, and who curries enough favour with your boss to get that early promotion. Inside we think: ‘It’s so unfair! What about me?’

Well, King David reminds us that we cannot ‘deserve’ what God alone decides to give:

*“Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty. Everything in the heavens and on earth is yours, O Lord, and this is your kingdom. We adore you as the one who is over all things. Wealth and honour come from you alone, for you rule over everything. Power and might are in your hand, and at your discretion people are made great and given strength.”*

(1 Chronicles 29:11-12 NLT, emphasis added)

This week, we explore God's unfair grace in the parable of the Vineyard Workers (Matthew 20:1-16).

## **DISCUSSION**

1. How do you feel about people who cut the queue? Why?
  - a. Look back to the parable of the Prodigal Son. Are there any parallels you can draw between the older son and the early workers in this parable?
2. Read Matthew 19:24-27.
  - a. What does Jesus say God has made possible? Was Peter satisfied with this?
  - b. Read Matthew 19:28-30. What does Jesus promise those who have sacrificed for his name's sake?
  - c. See also Luke 9:46-48. What did the disciples get wrong? What does Jesus say in response? If Jesus was here today, would we be asking him similar questions?
3. Read Matthew 20:1-16. Take some time to identify the characters and what they represent. Who do you most identify with?
  - a. Do you think it was absolutely necessary for the landowner to go to the marketplace multiple times throughout the day to look for new workers? If your answer is no, why do you think he did this?
  - b. What do you think a fair wage would be for each category of worker? Do you think it is unfair for the workers at the sixth, ninth and eleventh hours to receive the same wage as the earliest workers?
  - c. In the context of Matthew 19:25, and identifying the landowner as God, what is truly being offered to the workers?
4. Our outrage at how all the workers received the same wage in spite of their unequal effort is probably how the disciples listening to Jesus felt as well. Our innate sense of justice is not wrong. (See also Proverbs 10:4 & 13:4.)

- a. What does this say about how outrageous God's gift of salvation is?
- b. How are you tempted to look at your spiritual accomplishments as proof of your acceptability to God? What is Paul's perspective on this issue in Philippians 3:3-8?
- c. Is it fair that simply by virtue of living in Singapore, we have potable tap water and hawker centres? Is it fair that simply by virtue of being born a century later, we have never witnessed war in this land?
- d. What have you done with your 'unfair' blessings? What can you do with your 'unfair' blessings for others? See Matthew 9:11-13.

### **WHAT WILL YOU DO**

Reminding ourselves that absolutely everything in the heavens and on the earth belongs to God helps us understand that we do not deserve any of the health or wealth or talent that we have (nor do our neighbours for that matter). God went beyond meeting our daily needs, and gave us the precious gift of His salvation. We have done nothing to earn this, and we are completely at His mercy.

Knowing that we are not 'entitled' to anything, means we are not in a position to bargain with God at all. There is no *quid pro quo* that we can offer God to buy his grace.

Trust God rather than transact with God.

In your next prayer, would you tell God that you trust Him to have control of your situation? That you will choose to enjoy having Him around? Look at your parents and be reminded of the Father's love, breathe in the damp air after the rain and ponder how the Holy Spirit is all around us, or eat Hokkien Mee and think of the feast that awaits you in Heaven.

### **MEMORY VERSE**

*"Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty. Everything in the heavens and on earth is yours. O Lord, and this is your kingdom. We adore you as the one who is over all things. Wealth and honour come from you alone, for you rule over everything. Power and might are in your hand, and at your discretion*

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