

Topic: Made Like Jesus by Rev Dr Chiang Ming Shun

Text: Matthew 19:23 – 20:16

Introduction

- In Jesus' parable, the landowner agreed to pay the workers who were hired early in the morning a denarius, which was the usual daily wage of a day labourer (Matt 20:2 NIV). What is remarkable is that the landowner continued to hire workers throughout the day, even those that nobody wanted, paying each one of them a denarius regardless of the length of time worked (see v9).
- The landowner represents God, and the workers represent Israel/God's people. What then is Jesus conveying about God and us?

Jesus is warning us about our own attitudes towards others

- We believe that others who come after us should receive less than us. However, we are not to possess a spirit of entitlement that bounds God under a contract agreement to us. In doing so, we end up resenting those who come after us who receive the same measure of grace from God. 'Or are you envious because I am generous?' (Matt 20:15).
- Our God is a generous God and His covenant with us is far greater than a contract – It is an eternal promise of a relationship characterized by 'the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus' (Eph 2:7).
- God does not work the way we expect Him to – Jesus dispels the disciples' belief that the rich were the most favored by God and therefore the most likely to enter His kingdom (v23-24). Instead, 'God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong' (1 Cor 1:27).

Jesus is calling us to reflect God's own generosity

- (*To whom?*) Jesus extends His grace to all – including those who are unwanted and shunned in society. In God's kingdom, many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first (Matt 19:30, see also Matt 21:31).
- (*Until when?*) We are called to persistently extend Jesus's grace to those around us, even until the eleventh hour. 'When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?' (Luke 18:7).

May we not put ourselves first and think of ourselves more highly than we ought, but be gracious and welcoming like Jesus