

The Landowner who Hired Workers

As I pursued the mission of the Kingdom, I found time on my journeys to reflect on the parables and other stories that the Great Teacher told to make us think more deeply about His Truth.

The story of the landowner who hired workers at various times during the day¹ intrigued me, as it did most of those who heard it. People I talked to generally pondered the “fairness” of the situation as it concerned those who came late and were paid the same wages as those who had worked all day.

Christ helped us recognize that, in thinking of the Kingdom, we are not in a work-for-hire situation anyway. The main purpose of the parable is to emphasize that concept by paying those who worked more the same amount as those who worked almost none at all. The landowner paid what he promised, and what was “right.” The latter idea, in reference to God’s view, means that His loving grace is what saves us².

Those who were chosen last had been “waiting all day”, and though I knew it was a parable, I found myself wondering why they were not hired by landowner earlier. But the main thing to remember is that they were presenting themselves as available, and the landowner considered them worthy because of their attitude and readiness to work.

Much is made of the response of those who had worked most of the day – they did not like the fact that the latecomers were paid as well as they were. But after spending many months with Jesus and soaking up His wisdom I realized that the better response would have been “I am so glad that these men were hired, as they needed the wages to support their families.” This would reflect a loving attitude that looked beyond themselves to the welfare of others.³

1. Matthew 20:1-16
2. Ephesians 2:5-6
3. see Galatians 6:2; “bear one another’s burdens”