

A popular job search website tells you that if you're looking for a raise, it's good to do research as to what people in similar positions make. However, they comment, it's not a good idea to compare salaries with coworkers at the watercooler.

First, it sows discontent. Whoever walked away from a conversation like that saying, "Man, I make way too much money." Jealousy is soon to arise from that. Second, you don't have all the data. You may not know that your coworker has been staying there an hour extra every night and taking on additional projects. Third, in a conversation with your boss about a raise, bosses don't like to know that you've been snooping.

A similar situation arises in our parable of the vineyard laborers in Matthew 20. The master promises everybody a denarius for their labor for the day, but the early risers get mad at the master his generosity toward the latecomers. Our question for today is: why do the long laborers have such a long face?

**3. Are the long laborers upset because the master cheated them? “**For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.**”**

Of course, this isn't just a story about paying your workers. The parables of Jesus are an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. This parable is about the different kind of Christians. What type of Christian are you? Are you a Christian who has been laboring in the vineyard since birth? A long laborer? You went to church every Sunday even visiting the local church when you were on vacation. You went to Sunday school; you were confirmed and could answer every question the pastor threw at you. Maybe you have even served on a leadership board.

What type of Christian are you? Maybe you came to faith later in life when your parents returned to church, or maybe a friend from high school or college got you involved at her local church. Maybe you don't have the same knowledge and experiences as the long laborers, the "lifers" if you want to call them that, but you're close. These types of Christians we could compare to those who were hired at nine a.m. or noon.

What type of Christian are you? Maybe you know those Christians who made a deathbed conversion, or at an early age said the church wasn't for them, but in their twilight years returned. Maybe you're here today and you're still in the marketplace, waiting for the master to call you. These are the Christians who started working in the vineyard at five o'clock.

The long laborers don't lash out at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour workers, they lash out at the master. **“Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house,”** Were they cheated? No. The master reminds them so, **“Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?”**

A denarius was standard pay for a day's labor. They were getting paid a fair wage for their work.

Do you ever feel cheated for being a Christian? Every Christian is promised eternal life, full forgiveness of sins, and freedom from Satan's tyranny whether you became a Christian on day one or on the last day of your life. Although your appreciation for the rewards of Christianity may grow, God's promises remain the same. The denarius may look shinier in your hand having worked up a sweat, but it's still the same denarius.

Do you grumble at God for every criminal, murderer, and serial killer who makes it through the pearly gates? Do you envy the high rollers, the billionaire CEOs, or even your friends who before the pandemic would post beautiful Instagram photos of their nights out on 3<sup>rd</sup> street? They're out living it up, I'm stuck here. Maybe you wish you could live a life of sin and then repent at the last second to get the best of both worlds. Yet the answer is no, the laborers weren't cheated nor are you cheated for living a Christian life. Laboring in the master's vineyard is its own reward. 2. Are the long laborers upset because they worked harder?

That is definitely the case, the long laborers grumbled, **“saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’”** It's the age-old complaint: “It's not fair!”

And secretly, many of us think this same way. “I gave up the chance to play in the major leagues because my practices were on Sunday.” “I could have had a lot more fun in college!” “That tithing money could have gone to a newer car or a nicer house!” You're saying these sacrifices don't matter? You're saying the person who lived as a heathen his whole life has just the same reward as me? We worked harder say the early morning risers, don't we deserve a raise?

This attitude reveals where our hearts are. The *opinio legis* or the opinion of those under the law is that we can actually complete the assignment, that we can earn our salvation. Certain church bodies have a category of extra credit good works, but the falsely presupposes that you can complete the original assignment.

To be a Christian is to know that it is all by grace. We cannot earn our salvation, and we're not as hard of workers as we think. We rely on Jesus Christ who has done the labor for us, who has lived a perfect life and taken on our sins taking them to the cross and rising again on the third day.

The fact that we are sometimes jealous of our neighbors who live a life without God just shows us how much we would not have chosen this lifestyle ourselves. I believe that I cannot believe, but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel to faith. I didn't seek out this job in the vineyard, the Master called me to it. Instead of twiddling my thumbs in the hot marketplace, wasting time and milling about, the Master has given me a purpose in life. The Master has given me meaning, comfort, and an eternal goal. Being a Christian right now is its own reward. Sitting in this pew

is its own reward as we receive comfort and hope from the fellowship of believers and the gifts of God.

1. Are the long laborers upset because they took their eyes off the master? The master concludes, “**Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?**” More literally, the phrase, do you begrudge my generosity could be translated literally as, “Is your eye evil because I am good?” ‘Are you giving me the stink eye because I am doing something good?’ If the long laborers kept their eyes on the master, they would have not noticed the latecomers getting paid the same as them. Instead they looked around and made comparisons and that’s what got them into trouble.

Our encouragement from this parable is to keep your eyes on the good of the Master rather than those around you. If He chooses to be generous, what of it? They’re His gifts to distribute as He sees fit. We didn’t earn our place in the kingdom; it is all a free gift. It is not by our works so that no man may boast. We didn’t truly earn the denarius and neither did they.

So why not plan for a deathbed conversion and live a wild life now? Because being in the Master’s vineyard is its own reward. The marketplace isn’t all that it’s cracked up to be. Sure, Hollywood makes it glitter and shine, but a lifestyle without Jesus has its own worries: what if I die before I get a chance to repent? What if I write a check my liver can’t cash? What if all this money I’ve amassed can’t actually afford the toys I want to buy?

Keep your eyes on the Master. He is a good and generous Master, and in Christ, He provides you with all you need. “Lifer” Christians, don’t be so proud of your spiritual accomplishments because it’s the Holy Spirit working in you. 11<sup>th</sup> Hour Christians, don’t kick yourself over time wasted in your youth pursuing things of which you’re now ashamed. There’s forgiveness for you and you can put your hand to the plow right now.

Keep your eyes on the Master. He keeps on calling into the marketplace because there is work to do. Not work that earns our salvation. Not work that makes us better than other Christians, but work that helps our neighbor. Your neighbor needs your help right now. Your neighbor needs emotional, physical, and mental support in this pandemic. Your neighbor needs to hear about Jesus. These sacrifices matter: for your neighbor.

And the Master gives us the privilege in laboring alongside Him in this mission. It may be tough at times, but it is a rewarding thing. Don’t do it for the denarius, do it because your Master is kind, loving, and gives us abundant grace and forgiveness when we sin and fall short of His glory. **OUR MASTER CALLS US TO LABOR NOT BECAUSE OF OUR ABILITY TO PERFORM BUT BECAUSE OF HIS GREAT LOVE FOR US.**