

19: 27 Then Peter said to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?" 28 And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life. 30 "But many who are first will be last; and the last, first.

20: 1 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. 2 "When he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3 "And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market place; 4 and to those he said, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' And so they went. 5 "Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did the same thing. 6 "And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day long?' 7 "They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.'

8 "When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last group to the first.' 9 "When those hired about the eleventh hour came, each one received a denarius. 10 "When those hired first came, they thought that they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. 11 "When they received it, they grumbled at the landowner, 12 saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the scorching heat of the day.' 13 "But he answered and said to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? 14 'Take what is yours and go, but 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 what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?' 16 "So the last shall be first, and the first last."

We get to gobble up 20 verses this morning! A feat for us.

As we look back at the past few sections of Matthew's gospel, I'm one who always looks for a common thread. I think Matthew works that way. He'll group several stories together to teach one common thread.

Looking back over the previous few weeks at;

- rank in the Kingdom,
- children and their value in the kingdom,
- the rich young ruler,
- the non-value of worlds riches in God's kingdom,
- the amazement of the disciples over God's sovereign choices among men,

I'm seeing a common thread that we will see again this morning in the parable of the landowner, the laborers and the vineyard.

The common thread in all of these stories is this. In this fallen world we are conditioned by our limited resources and the wisdom available to a fallen world to see things based only in that environment.

Our reasoning powers are limited by and based in, a fallen world. That's why the disciples keep getting it wrong.

The Bible speaks clearly to that phenomenon.

*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the way of death. Pr. 16:25*

*Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths. Pr. 3:5,6*

*For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. 1Cor3:19*

The disciples were not operating on these simple truths. We have the same problem as them. We've got a nice big warm frying pan and it

seems perfectly acceptable to us. The disciples were operating on world logic.

You parents with little kids, stand down. We've got a ruler coming that wants to see Jesus. Decisions based on rank and value and authority in a fallen world.

The section begins in Matthew 18 with them arguing over rank and position. Who's going to be greatest in the kingdom. There's 12 of us. Who's going to scratch their way to the top. Peter's got the biggest mouth, but is he really in the number one slot. Just because he has the most bluster.

That is their mindset, based on a Jewish worldview in a fallen world.

And Jesus keeps turning it upside down. If what He says about marriage is true, blessed is the single man. If what He says about rank is true, blessed are the babes in diapers. If what He says about salvation is true, blessed are the nobodies. Your rank and wealth and righteousness as based in a fallen world view, are useless to you.

Everything's upside down! Everything we think is going to be right, based in fallen human logic, is wrong.

This should not come as a surprise. Either to us or the disciples. We have the same resource. Although we're guiltier than they are because we've got Bibles gathering dust on our shelves in multiples and it was uncommon for fishermen in Galilee to gaze at the written word.

Listen to words written down 720 years before the disciples had this discussion with Jesus. Isaiah 55

*8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts,  
Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD.*

*9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
So are My ways higher than your ways  
And My thoughts than your thoughts.*

I was listening to a panel discussion this week on biblical inerrancy, and they were talking about a 6 day creation. 7,000 years ago. A very young earth. Do we believe that?

Where does inerrancy begin? In Genesis 3 with Adam? And there's a split, even amongst diehard inerrantists. Because the science seems to be very compelling that the earth is billions of years old. And it's no fun for you when your peers look down their nose at you and say, you don't really believe what the old book says do you.

Science is getting better and better it seems as time progresses and the scientific evidence is beyond compelling. You'd have to be a fool to believe the science is all wrong and the earth is 7000 years old and it was created in 6 days. That's what fools believe. The argument is too strong. You'll be ranked a fool.

Really? Is that so. As I listened, an argument occurred to me. We can use science to measure how far the moon is from the earth, correct. Yes. And no one argues. And Mars. Of course. And beetlejuice. Yes, we can measure it. And galaxies and galaxies beyond our own solar system. Yes! yes. I won't argue with the science. We think we know all those things and the math adds up, yet. . .

God says He's going to roll up that entire expanse like a scroll. It will flee away. It's an illusion. Billions of immeasurable galaxies that go on and on, but it's an illusion. We think we can measure it. We even drove a space ship out to the moon. Sent a landing craft to Mars.

It's tangible. It's real. It's measureable. It's space and mass. But it isn't. God's going to rip it open like an old garment, the Bible says. Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down.

That's exactly what He is going to do. Tear those billions of immeasurable light years and galaxies asunder like ripping an old worn out sheet into strips.

So don't be so quick to jettison the revealed Word of God because

science seems to prove something different than what it says.

As long as you good people tolerate me in the pulpit, you'll be hearing that every word of God is inspired, innerrant, and true. Beginning at Genesis 1:1

*8“For My thoughts are not your thoughts,  
Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD.*

*9“For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
So are My ways higher than your ways  
And My thoughts than your thoughts.*

God made us more intelligent than the rest of creation. He gave us creativity and reasoning ability. It was damaged at the fall. Our ability to reason and come up with solutions is flawed. The noetic affects of the fall.

This book is the gold standard. God graciously revealed the things in this book and all of our reasoning and figuring things out must be compared to the absolute truths in this book.

All that to say, the disciples are just like us. They're constantly amazed that Jesus keeps turning everything upside down from how the world has it figured out.

Babies have value. Rich people, not so much. And they've had this shocking information that it's impossible for rich people to get into the kingdom of God.

Well, the rich man's problem was his possessions were more important to him than Jesus. He wanted to come into the kingdom with his idols. And Jesus sent him away.

That gives Peter an idea. What about us. We did walk away from our businesses, our livelihood, our wives and little ones temporarily, our stuff. Matthew left his tax booth. What about us?

*27Then Peter said to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?"*

You told that guy there would be treasure there if he left behind his idols here. What's that look like Jesus. Can you give us an idea? Tell us what it's going to be like.

Keep in mind now, these guys aren't looking into some nebulous eternity here with this question. They were expecting Jesus to set up His earthly reign and Kingdom, within months. Payoff time. Months away. Tell us what it's going to be like.

Peter will be like Joe Biden. And the rest of the guys will be high level cabinet members. Heads of state. Tell us what that's going to look like. Because we did leave our stuff behind.

Well, that's arguable. The boats were still available to them. Peter gets discouraged and simply goes back to his fishing business. It wasn't really gone, but Jesus doesn't argue that point. When He said *follow me*, they followed Him.

So, indulge us Jesus. What's it going to be like. What's at the payday? Because obviously, we did do what this man didn't do.

*28And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."*

This is a very interesting verse. There's a lot to consider here. And the first place to begin is the word regeneration.

Bernie Sanders likes to stir up enthusiasm in younger people by talking about revolution. Let's have a revolution. Break down what's in place and rebuild it. Our way. That isn't what this word is talking about.

palingenesia is used 2 times in the N. T. and it means a new birth. Born again. And it's talking about a time frame where the world doesn't

experience restoration, it is more. The world is reborn.

It's the time that Paul is talking about in Romans chapter 8;

*19For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. 20For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. 23And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.*

The world was subjected to slavery and corruption. When? At the fall. When Satan became the ruler of this world. The world groans. It's waiting for what? The revealing of the Sons of God.

And when is that. At the second coming of Jesus. Satan will be deposed. Locked away in prison for 1,000 years in which Jesus will reign on the throne of David in Jerusalem. And we will reign with Him.

The world will experience a regeneration. It will shed the slavery and corruption imposed on it and a time like Eden will happen. Lions will lie down with lambs. A child will play in the snakes pit. palingenesia

*“Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

The next word to consider here is judging. What does judging the twelve tribes of Israel mean? Krinos. And when you look it up it's a word that means selection by judgement. Like a person who threshes wheat and separates the parts. Wheat here. Chaff there.

The twelve tribes of Israel. Now who is that?

Listening to MacArthur here and he gets far more cynical about all of the confused commentators than I do, but it's fun to listen to him. He says, maybe it means 8 people in Phoenix? The twelve tribes of Israel. Or, maybe it means the 12 tribes of Israel.

You say, but I thought they were scattered and lost after Assyria swept through the northern 10 tribes. Scattered to the 4 winds.

Still not a problem for our God. Listen to Amos 9:8,9

*...8"Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are on the sinful kingdom, And I will destroy it from the face of the earth; Nevertheless, I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob," Declares the LORD. 9"For behold, I am commanding, And I will shake the house of Israel among all nations As grain is shaken in a sieve, But not a kernel will fall to the ground.*

Maybe lost to us, but not to our God. He will gather his chosen people and somehow, these 12 disciples, minus Judas and plus Matthias, will sit on 12 thrones and rule over these. Like Joseph ruled over his brothers.

*29" And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life.*

In Mark 10:29 in a parallel to this, *29Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, 30but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life....*

A dual repayment. You've lost a brother or a sister, because of Jesus? Look around. Brothers and sisters, galore.

Have you ever experienced that? You can be on the other side of the country or the world, and when you meet someone who has also given themselves to Jesus, there is an instant bond. A supernatural affection.



Where does that come from? Well, right here. It's part of what Jesus promises those who come out of this world in order to belong to Him.

*30“But many who are first will be last; and the last, first.*

This is a riddle. What does it mean. Well, the parable in Ch. 20 : 1-16 will explain it. Let me just preface the story, since we're 2000 years removed. Actually, if you lived over in the San Juaquin valley you could have lived this last year.

The work day is from 6 AM to 6 PM. These are day laborers, and the laws in Israel were set up so that a landowner like the one in this story is required to pay his laborers at the end of each day.

Many of them are so poor that if that money was withheld, their children would go hungry that day. Very simple math. The 3rd hour is 9:00 AM. The 6th hour is noon, and the 9th hour is 3:00 PM. The 11th hour is 5:00.

Ever wonder where our term 11th hour that is still in use today came from. Right here. This parable. Thanks to Mr. Tyndale.

A denarius which is the agreed upon price was the wage for skilled laborers like carpenters and ship builders. Not field hands. Like today, they might have to work for half or a third that amount, so this land owner is unusually generous.

Where Pam and I are from in Southern California, this activity is unchanged after 2,000 years. Out in the corners of the Home Depot parking lot at 6:00 AM you can pull up in a pickup truck and if you hold up 3 fingers, 3 guys will jump in.

One more note. Think about God's sovereignty in salvation. We talked at length about that last week. Here the land owner is completely sovereign. He is the one who chooses who goes into the field to work. He is the one who goes out and seeks ever more laborers.

He is the one who sets the pay. After the first group, the payment isn't

even discussed. He just says, I'll do what is right. The workers enter into the agreement completely by faith in his character and nothing else.

And at the end, He is the one who explains everything belongs to him and he is sovereign to distribute the amount totally at His discretion. The thief on the cross gets the same after an hour of belief as Peter gets after he's crucified upside down after a life of labor and sacrifice.

*20: 1 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. 2 "When he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3 "And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market place; 4 and to those he said, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' And so they went. 5 "Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did the same thing. 6 "And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day long?' 7 "They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.'*

So this man has a group from 6AM, 9AM, 12PM, 3PM, and even a few from 5PM.

Notice also he negotiates the price with the first group and from then on the laborers aren't in a position to bargain. He just says I'll do what's right. I'm sure they were hoping for fractions of what the original crew was promised. 3/4 of a denarius. 1/2 a denarius. 1/4 of a denarius. A few pennies for some barley for the last group. You can't hope for much with an hours labor. Like piecework.

*8 "When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last group to the first.' 9 "When those hired about the eleventh hour came, each one received a denarius. 10 "When those hired first came, they thought that they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. 11 "When they received it, they grumbled at the landowner, 12 saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the scorching*

*heat of the day.’ 13“But he answered and said to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? 14 ‘Take what is yours and go, but 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 what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?’ 16“So the last shall be first, and the first last.”*

*the last shall be first, and the first last.”* So what does the riddle mean. It means that everyone that finishes the race gets the same prize.

We do that with little kids. On July 4<sup>th</sup>. Every little kid that gets to the end of the kids parade gets a silver dollar. Fast kids, slow kids, smart kids, dopey kids, kids whose parents spent \$40 decorating their bike and kids who just rode their bike with no decorations. They all win the prize.

Well, we're good capitalists who are trying to train our kids that hard work and effort and determination and perseverance are what makes winners. We don't like this story. What do you mean? The lazy kids get the same as the motivated kids? That's no good. That's not right.

*Even Paul says; 3Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. 5Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules. 6The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.*

So what's going on here? Who's right? Jesus, or Paul? Sounds like a good question for an atheist to throw at us, doesn't it.

Well, we find out that Paul is trying to get us to the end of the race. The kids that get bored and drop out in the middle don't get the silver dollar. You've got to somehow make it to the end, down by the post office. That's where the guy with the dollars is at.

Paul says, toughen up so you can finish! And Jesus is saying, the prize isn't similar to how we think of reward here on earth. Heaven is not

what we imagine.

I think about heaven and I look at the fruit I've contributed to the cause of Christ, and then I read these biographies of remarkable Christians, and I think, I'm going to be in the ghetto in heaven. I'm going to be living in a refrigerator box for shelter. If the reward there is equivalent to the fruit gained here some how.

You'll have Billy Graham Estate, and John MacArthur downs and John Calvin acres, and people like me, whose works all got burned up, we'll be sleeping in doorways to get up off the street out of the rain.

And that was the exact discussion the disciples were having. Who's going to be greatest? James and John send their mother to try to get Peter bumped out of first spot.

We can't help it. That's just how we think. And Jesus says, no, *the last shall be first, and the first last.*"

I think this parable and riddle are connected to the story about forgiveness. Remember the situation there.

One guy owed 19 trillion dollars. The other guy owed \$9500.

Our sins that God forgave were the equivalent to the 19 trillion. The sins of our brethren against us were equivalent to half a used pickup truck.

That's the part we don't get. We can imagine the \$9500. But we can't really get our head around how much 19 trillion dollars is. And that's why the heavenly reward all comes out equal. It's 19 trillion dollars. It's beyond what our minds can grasp. Compared to anything we gave up here, it doesn't really compute.

*Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 1Cor. 2:9*

We can't get our head around it. It's too big and too wonderful for our wildest imagination. So who's first and who's last becomes a moot point.

Billy Graham got 19 trillion, 600 thousand, 375 dollars. And I only got 19 trillion, and 40 dollars. It's a dopey comparison, but the difference is moot.

Here's the bottom line. We all get Jesus. We get to be His bride. We get to spend eternity with Him in His house. That's such unfathomable riches, nothing else matters. Greatest in the kingdom? Least in the kingdom? It's all moot, because we all get . . . Him!

You say, well then, why would I slug it out in the jungles of Haiti with a pith helmet riding a mule and going hungry half the time? Where's the motivation for that?

When Jim who did the bare minimum, most of the time, and played with his cameras and old cars, and ate too much and slept too much gets the same prize. How does that work.

Let me tell you how that works. Jesus has been saying it over and over in these same chapters. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it.

I read those biography's and I look back at 40 wasted years weeping. I can't get them back. You can take that to the bank.

When we were kids our sunday school room had one of those little plaques that said, Only one life, 'twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last.

I wish I could do it over. If there's video replays in theater's in heaven of different saints lives, no one will sit and look at mine. We'll all be in the theatre looking at the missionary to Haiti. That theatre will be packed. The one with my life, after the dross gets burned up, you wouldn't get half way to the bottom of the popcorn before the movie's over.

*19:30 "But many who are first will be last; and the last, first.*

*16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. 25" For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.*

So what's the difference. Why is the Jim movie so boring and the Haiti missionary movie so engaging? Because the Haiti guy paid his life forward purchasing mountains of glory for the Saviour. We could watch that movie forever.

The free-est man on earth is the one who makes himself a slave to a perfect master. Paul Washer