

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a Master and a Vineyard (And the 11th Hour Laborers) - Jesse Digges

I. Following God's call to Africa

- A. God encountered me and called me to Muslim ministry - A short term trip to Uganda - A vision about Africans reaching Africa - Ugandans receive dreams about Somalia
- B. God is raising up an African missions movement, but more than that, he is calling workers from the entire Global South.

II. The Kingdom of Heaven is like a Master and His Vineyard

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. 2 After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard (Mat. 20:1-2).

- A. How is the kingdom of heaven like this? The parable requires meditation, because it is actually revelation about the Lord. Perhaps he is seeking you out for his vineyard. The Psalm says, "*For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him.*" (2 Chronicles 16:9)
- B. Deep in the foundation of this parable is the compassion and love of God for the lost. Matthew 9:35-38 and 28:18-20 help us grasp what the parable is about. These show both the harvest and the calling for disciples to "go therefore."

36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; 38 therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.(Mat. 9:36-38)

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Matthew 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

1. Examples of the harvest:

- a) A Karamojong widow whose husband was killed by cattle raiders in Northern Uganda.
- b) A shepherd who had never heard about Jesus
- c) There are 1.8 billion people who believe that Muhammad was a Prophet, and around 15 million converts from Islam to Christianity.
- d) A dynamic time to be in Muslim ministry: The testimony of Muhammad
- e) What if thousands of hispanic believers would respond to a call from God to bring the gospel to the Muslim world?

2. Laborers

- a) These are disciples of Christ who are in agreement with his heart of compassion for the harvest.

- (1) Paul - shows what the mission of the church is and that we can come into agreement with the heart of Jesus.

I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, 21 but as it is written, 'Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand. (Romans 15:20-21)

- (2) Hudson Taylor - In 1853 at the age of 21 Hudson Taylor gave his life to reach the unreached of China. He is the founder of China Inland Mission. He got on a ship and sailed for months to reach China. He spent 51 years of his life serving God for the unreached and interior regions of China. His first wife and three children died while serving Christ. Yet, he was relentless in pursuing the salvation of the masses of China. His work led to 800 missionaries going to China and 18,000 direct converts in his lifetime.

If I had a thousand pounds, China should have it—if I had a thousand lives, China should have them. No! Not China, but Christ. Can we do too much for Him? Can we do enough for such a precious Savior? (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hudson_Taylor)

III. The Workers of the Eleventh Hour

And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, 4 and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.' 5 So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. 6 And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' 7 They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.' 8 And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.' 9 And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. 10 Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. 11 And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, 12 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.' 13 But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? 14 Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. 15 Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?' 16 So the last will be first, and the first last." (Mat. 20:3-16)

- A. The parable may represent different seasons of missions in church history, the apostles being first and the eleventh hour laborers those who are hired before Christ's return. If this is the case it shows that there will be an end time enlistment and the Lord wants us to know about it!

And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (Mat. 24:14)

And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. (Mark 13:10)

- B. Mat. 19:27-30 gives the context in which this parable is given.

Then Peter said in reply, "See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?" 28 Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on 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 lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. 30 But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

1. Jesus introduces that parable after explaining the context of the future kingdom and rewards for those who follow him.
2. The end of the age will be a time of great shaking and great harvest.

For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. 7 And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts. (Hag. 2:6-7)

And I will shake all nations; and the precious things of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts. (Hag. 2:7 ASV)

- a) Perhaps this refers to a great movement of souls coming to Christ at the end of the age.

C. Testimonies of Send56 missionaries during Covid 19

D. Our parable in Matthew 20 implies that the Lord will require boots on the ground in the eleventh hour. Romans 10 will remain the primary means by which God brings in the harvest.

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? 3 And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" (Rom. 10:14-15)

IV. What Jesus wants us to know about the 11th hour laborers:

A. The Master is sovereign and generous

1. He is sovereign in that he is free to choose whom he will to enter his work. He chooses the disenfranchised. It shows this in our parable when Jesus says, "*Why do you stand here idle all day?*" He chooses the most unlikely, like Peter and John who were uneducated men (Acts 4:13).

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. (1Cor 1:26-29)

2. He is free to choose anyone from anywhere

- a) After World War II, missions entered a new phase. What was mostly a Western or Global North project began shifting to a multicultural worldwide effort. Pioneer missions work was increasingly being spearheaded by those in the Global South, as Asia, Africa, and South America surpassed North America and Europe in those claiming to be born-again Christians.

- b) Ben Naja describes this shift, and its implication for the missions movement in his book *Releasing The Workers of the Eleventh Hour: The Global South and the Task Remaining*:

At the beginning of the twentieth century, 94% of all Christians lived in the Global North. By the year 2000, 71% of all Christians were living in the Global South. ...this shift has dramatic implications for world missions... The harvesters in the Global North are rapidly

being joined by their fellow workers in the Global South. By the year 2025, four out of every five missionaries will be from the Global South.”

c) Ralph Winter addressed this reality as well:

God is moving throughout his global body to fulfill his promise to the nations in ways that we could not possibly have imagined 25 years ago. Thousands of new missionary recruits are no longer coming just from the West, but also from Asia, Africa, and Latin America—fruits of missionary movements—wholeheartedly embracing the peoples challenge of the Great Commission. More so than ever before missions is a global, cooperative movement. We have to be prepared for new partnerships, new insights, and new approaches by non Western mission structures.

3. The last will be first

a) The parable is sandwiched with this expression, “*the last will be first, and the first will be last*” in Matthew 19:30 and 20:16, and directly in the middle. Matthew 20:8 says that the owner told his foreman to, “*pay their wages, beginning with the last group to the first.*” Perhaps, Jesus is tempering his response to Peter. Even though he is one of the first to respond to the call, there will be others also, and they will also be rewarded. Just as his call to Peter was an act of grace and generosity, so also there would be others, in other generations, who would be invited. This deals with a very innate issue of human pride. Those who work longer and harder in the harvest may be tempted look down upon others.

4. He gives eternal rewards, “*the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages’...‘do you begrudge my generosity?’*”

a) We need to remember the conversation with Peter in chapter 19, “*See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have*” (Mat 19:27-30)?

b) Laborers need to anchor their hope and their treasure in the future kingdom of God that will be established with the return of Jesus to Jerusalem. (Luke 12:29-35)

(1) The nations of the world seek after worldly security. This looks like seeking a life in which you are never hungry nor poor. Life can become an obsession to build bigger barns and store more grain. The problem with this is that it inevitably leads to counterfeit hope and independence.

(2) The Father has a much bigger agenda for us than the American dream, it is his eternal kingdom of righteousness and peace. For Jesus, the natural and logical outflow of this worldview is that we should sell everything and give our lives for the poor.

(3) We will never do this without the revelation of the master and a vineyard and his generosity. There is no greater security than being employed by him!

5. As you read John 4:31-38 look up and see the harvest, that the field are ready. And let’s consider that the kingdom of heaven is like a master and a vineyard, and he is looking for workers.

Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.” (John 4:31–38)