

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 20:1–16

LESSON

Work

VERSE 7

They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

In the parable of the labourers in the vineyard in today's lesson, we find two great assertions: the right of every man to work and the right of every man to a wage for his work. It is stressed that the first worker wanted a contract and agreed to a full day's wage. He regarded work simply as a means to getting money for food and lodging. On the other hand, the latecomers' attitudes were, "Pay me what you like, but give me a job to do". The vineyard owner could cut the pay of the latecomers, but he knew that if he had done so, there would be hungry mouths that night.

The Apostle Paul also had his views on work and idleness [1 Thessalonians 5:12–14; 2 Thessalonians 3:6–12], where he condemned idleness with a strong tone. He referred to his own example and how he did more than was required of him.

Work is a privilege. It is the pattern of life that God has ordained for us—one of the purposes for which we are created. "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it ... dress it and keep it" [Genesis 1:28; 2:15]. Good works is also the purpose of our salvation, the reason why we are created anew in Jesus [Ephesians 2:10].

As a carpenter, Jesus worked hard with His hands. Paul made tents for a living while he carried on the work of God assigned to him. We should do our best in our vocation.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOB 4
MATTHEW 20:1–16

PRAYER

Lord, thank You for teaching us that work is a blessing.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 20:17–34***LESSON****Knowing not what you ask****VERSE 21**

And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.

In the beginning of Chapter 18, the disciples were arguing who would be the greatest in Christ's kingdom. Before the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus announced for the third time His betrayal, arrest, crucifixion and resurrection [Matthew 16:21; 17:22]. He clearly mentioned the Cross, but it did not register with His disciples.

The mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, made the foolish demand of having her sons "sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom" [v. 21]. They were selfishly asking for glory for themselves, and not for the Lord. The request was motivated by pride. Jesus reproved the ignorance and error of their petition: "Ye know not what ye ask." Jesus reminded them that suffering precedes blessings and privileges. He also revealed to them that the special throne was available to those whom the Father had chosen.

When you pray, don't fall into this error by making thoughtless, inconsiderate requests. Don't ask for things without reflecting on how much your supplications involve. Are you ready to carry your cross and follow Christ? Are you willing to give up the world and endure hardship for Christ's sake? If you are not ready, our Lord might answer: "Ye know not what ye ask."

Let us be aware of thoughtless and rash petitions. Be humble, strive to do good, walk in His footsteps and rest all hopes on the ransom paid by our Master's blood.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

JOB 5
MATTHEW 20:17-34

THOUGHT

Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God. – Ecclesiastes 5:2a

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 21:1–22***LESSON****Who is this?****VERSE 11**

*And the multitude said, This is
Jesus the prophet of Nazareth
of Galilee.*

Thirty-three years earlier, the magi came to inquire, “Where is He that is born King of the Jews?” [Matthew 2:2a]. Here the people asked, “Who is this?” This time round, the multitude answered, “This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee” [v. 10–11]. They revered Him as a prophet.

The term “prophet” was first used of Abraham [Genesis 20:7], although Moses was the first to be designated a prophet with the prominence that we usually associate with the term. In Deuteronomy 18:15–22, God promised that a Prophet would rise, whose word would have final authority. This promise has been fulfilled by our Lord Jesus Christ [Luke 24:19].

In ancient times, prophets had a two-fold function. They were foretellers and forth-tellers. As foretellers, they were seers [1 Samuel 9:9] who declared a message concerning the future. They testified of coming events beforehand [1 Peter 1:11]. As forth-tellers, they were to preach according to God’s Word, calling others to repentance. Jesus as a Prophet was both a foreteller and forth-teller. His works, words and ways testified of His authority as the Spokesman and Representative of God. He revealed Himself to be a mighty Prophet.

The Apostle Paul once asked, “Who art Thou, Lord?” Was Jesus merely a good man, a good teacher or a miracle worker? The Bible tells us that He is the Christ, the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. Do you believe that? If you do, now is the time to turn from your sin, trust Jesus for your salvation and follow Him.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOB 6
MATTHEW 21:1–22**

PRAYER

**Lord Jesus, with so many still rejecting You,
take away everything within me that would stop
another from receiving You as Saviour and Lord.**

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 21:23–46***LESSON****Son, go work today in my vineyard****VERSE 28**

But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard.

When the Lord Jesus Christ sojourned on this earth, He worked with His hands and mind all His life. His greatest work was not making the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, the lame to walk or even the dead to rise. Neither was it teaching as One having authority or scathingly denouncing the Pharisees for their hypocrisy. His greatest work was His supreme sacrifice during those three dark hours on Calvary. His greatest work was dying for us.

The vineyard is an analogy frequently used in the Bible. It often represents God's kingdom or the Church. God has graciously saved us and made us His own. He has endowed us with gifts or talents to be used in His service. He has promised to reward us if these gifts were fully and rightly employed [Romans 12:6–8].

In His vineyard, there is work for all and He expects the best from us. We are to work for His glory. Are we among the people who are cultivating the vineyard of the Lord of hosts [Isaiah 5:7]? Are we faithfully serving Him in a way that pleases Him and doing so to the limit of our capacity? When the Lord of the vineyard returns, will He receive of the fruit of His vineyard?

The primary objective in all service for the Lord is the winning of souls for Him. Let us be zealous in reaching out to the lost.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOB 7
MATTHEW 21:23–46

PRAYER

When I consider the work of Jesus on this earth that led to Calvary, I pray that all my labour will glorify You.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 22:1–14***LESSON****Rejecting the invitation
of God****VERSE 14***For many are called, but few
are chosen.*

Jesus told this parable of the wedding banquet at a time when He was facing severe opposition from the Jewish leaders and would soon be betrayed and crucified.

In this parable, a king was preparing a wedding banquet for his son. The Kingdom of Heaven was this wedding banquet. God the Father was this king and the bridegroom was Jesus, the Son. There are different stages in this story: the special guests' refusal to attend [v. 1–3], the violent opposition to the second invitation, which resulted in the killing of the messengers [v. 4–7], the extension of the invitation to any who would come [v. 8–10], and the rejection of the guest who was not clothed in proper attire [v. 11–14].

This parable portrays man's spiritual indifference to the Gospel invitation. Their unbelief in God is the reason for their refusal. Again and again, Jesus invited them to follow Him. The account turned serious when the man without proper wedding clothes was not only thrown out of the banquet but also bound and cast into darkness where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth.

It is not enough to make an outward response to the Gospel invitation; you need to come into God's presence in the way He prescribed. The proper attire for entering God's Kingdom is the robe of righteousness of Christ, it is in His merits, it is in true repentance for sin and faith in Him. Are you properly attired for the kingdom of God?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

JOB 8
MATTHEW 22:1–14

THOUGHT

To reject the offer of grace is to reject God's only provision for eternal life.

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 22:15–46

LESSON

Silencing His enemies

VERSE 37

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

The Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians tried to entrap Jesus with questions. They were furious because Jesus claimed to be God and many were following Him. The Herodians asked if it was lawful to pay tax to Caesar. Being Jewish leaders, the Pharisees despised paying taxes but the Herodians were loyal to the Roman Empire. Christ replied that as Caesar’s image was stamped upon the coin, they were to pay taxes. Similarly, as we are created in the image of God, His image is stamped upon us as His children. We submit ourselves to Him as our ultimate authority.

The Sadducees were a wealthy, aristocratic party who did not believe in the resurrection. They asked Jesus whose wife a woman would be in the resurrection if she had married seven times. Jesus rebuked their ignorance of the Scriptures. In the resurrection, we will be like the angels of God—no longer subject to human wants or passions. We will never get tired or hungry, old or be tempted but will certainly know and love one another.

The Pharisees tried to make things difficult for Jesus by asking Him which is the greatest commandment in the Law. Jesus’ answer was simple, “Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” and “Love thy neighbour as thyself”. All the other laws hang on these two commandments.

Let us ask God to strengthen and deepen our love for Him and to reflect His love in our motives and attitudes, words and actions towards others.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOB 9
MATTHEW 22:15–46

THOUGHT

Duty to God and duty to man—both are summed up in the word “love”.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 23:1–12***LESSON****Warning against
hypocrisy****VERSE 5**

*But all their works they do for
to be seen of men: they make
broad their phylacteries, and
enlarge the borders of their
garments,*

A hypocrite is a pretender, often professing love but actually not loving. A hypocrite utters the pretty words of love, carries out the motions of love, and puts on a charming face of love, but does not possess love in his heart. Hypocrites give the illusion, the pretence and the deceit of authenticity, but they are all deception.

The Pharisees—religious leaders of Jesus’ day—were the symbols of hypocrisy and pretence. In today’s passage, we read that Jesus reached a climax of intense anger towards the Pharisees. His charge was that they preached but they did not practise; they laid burdens on others’ shoulders but did not lift a finger to help; they did all their deeds to be seen by men and were not aware of the omniscient God; they loved the places of honour at feasts and the greetings of respect in the market places.

These religious leaders were led by the opinions of men and their self-interests. Their professed religiosity made them as abominable as unrepentant sinners, if not more. So it is with many Christians today. On the outside, they give a good performance of being a Christian, being eager to be seen involved in all good works, but it is all a front. Inside, their hearts are far from the love of God and for Him.

Jesus wants us to be truthful and humble. He says, “And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” [v. 12].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOB 10
MATTHEW 23:1–12

THOUGHT

Beware! Our capacity for wrongdoing actually increases in direct proportion to our confidence that we can prevent it, or our belief that we are above it.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 23:13–39***LESSON****Rebuking the scribes and Pharisees****VERSE 23**

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOB 11
MATTHEW 23:13–39**

The rebuke by Jesus revealed the Pharisees and scribes' unwillingness to accept Jesus as their Messiah and teacher. The reason is that they never experienced a spiritually illuminated mind of repentance that saw beyond social status and external appearance. With much grief, Jesus denounced the religious leaders' spiritual play-acting. By teaching their man-made traditions instead of God's truth, they had blocked people from the true kingdom experience. He also pronounced condemnation on these hypocritical legalists [v. 13–15].

Jesus disapproved of the misguided religious pledges—seeing them as examples of superficial worship. He called them fools whose focus on these pledges and oaths was nothing but a material symbol. Lost in the pledge was the transformed heart that worshipped the transcendent God [v. 6–23]. Spurgeon once said, “There are none so stupid as those who will not learn, and none so blind as those who will not see.” Are you one of such?

Jesus used a rabbinic proverb of the gnat and the camel, along with the traditional practice of whitewashing tombs, to emphasise the mistaken idea that outward ceremonial practices make for inner purity. Instead of outward practice, Jesus called for inward spiritual renewal that cleanses from the inside out [v. 24–33].

The presence of the Messiah and His peace only comes when a person chooses to acknowledge his utter spiritual helplessness and his need for the saving grace of Jesus Christ. It is then that he can bend his knees and worship in Christ's holy presence. Are you willing to do that?

PRAYER

Lord, transform me and help me to conform to Your refinements of true spirituality, true devotion and Kingdom character.