

Lesson 155 The Two Sons/Laborers in the Vineyard

I. Scripture Text

Matthew 21:28-32 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.

29 He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.

30 And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.

31 Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

Matthew 20:1-16 For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.

2 And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

4 And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

5 Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

6 And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?

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.

8 So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

9 And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

11 And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house,

12 Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?

14 Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto

this last, even as unto thee.

15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

16 So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

II. Bible Story

CG2-1 The two sons

Have you ever refused to do something your mother or father asked you to do? Jesus told a parable about a father asking his two sons to go work in his vineyard. When the father asked the first son to work in his vineyard, the son refused. "I will not," the son said and walked away from his father. Maybe he had planned to spend the day with friends or take a trip and did not want to change his plans. Or maybe he was just lazy. For whatever reason, the son said, "No," when his father asked him to go work in the vineyard.

But after a while, the son's conscience began to bother him. How could he refuse to help his father, when his father had done so much for him? The son turned around and went back to work in his father's vineyard. Though he had said he would not work in the vineyard, he ended up doing what his father asked him to.

The father also told his other son to go work in the vineyard. "I go sir" said the second son. But the second son didn't go work in the vineyard. He may have started to and got sidetracked and never made it. His intentions were good, but he never followed through with actually doing what his father asked. Maybe that second son is like someone you know. When your parents ask you to do a chore, you put off doing it, or maybe you even forget about it and never do what they ask. Though you said you would do it, yet you don't do it.

Jesus then asked the question, "Whether of them twain did the will of his father?"

The first son said he wouldn't work, but he did; the other son said he would work, but he didn't. So it was the first son who finally did the will of his father and went to work in the

vineyard.

Just so, there are those who say they will do God's will, but they don't. The Pharisees were like that; they acted as if they did God's will, but it was only talk. And though the publicans and outright sinners openly disobeyed God, when Jesus came, they believed on Jesus and trusted Him as their Savior and Lord.

Sometimes people think that working for God only means being a preacher, a missionary, or a Sunday school teacher. Actually, any work we do can be for God, even simple tasks like doing the dishes or taking out the garbage. We are to do everything that we do as if we were doing it for God. When you do a job for your parents, why not do it as if you were doing it for God? That makes it much easier to do, and you will do a better job of it.

Some children, when given a task to do, ask their parents, "How much do I get for doing this?" They expect to be paid. Not only do children expect this, but Peter, speaking for all of Jesus' disciples, asked the same question. Peter wanted to know what reward they would receive for forsaking everything and following Jesus.

Jesus answered that they would not only be rewarded in this life but would receive eternal life.

CG2-2 Laborers in the vineyard

Jesus told His disciples another parable about a man who went to the marketplace to hire laborers to work in his vineyard. The laborers agreed to work all day for a penny, which, at that time, was a normal day's wage for a laborer. Their penny was worth much more than our penny today.

The laborers began to gather the grapes early in the morning. As the owner of the vineyard moved among the laborers, he saw that they would never be able to finish harvesting all the grapes by the end of the day, and he knew the grapes would be overripe if they were left until the next day. The grapes must be gathered that day or he would suffer great loss.

So at nine o'clock in the morning the owner of the vineyard went out again to hire

more laborers. He found some men standing around in the marketplace hoping to be hired.

He said to them, "Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way." They were glad to do so.

With the extra laborers, the owner of the vineyard realized at noon that they would still not be finished gathering all the grapes by the end of the day. Thus at noon he went out to hire more laborers. He did this again at three o'clock. His grapes had to be picked that day or they would spoil.

Nervously, he watched the progress of his laborers. As the end of the day approached, he decided he needed yet more laborers in order to complete that day's harvest. So at the last hour he hired men to work one hour and told them he would pay them what was fair.

At last all the grapes were harvested, and the laborers lined up to receive their wages from the owner. Now, in those days, a day's wages was a penny—a penny went very far in those days. The laborers who had worked only one hour received a penny. Those who worked three hours expected that they would probably receive more, but they, too, received a penny. Those who had started at noon and at nine o'clock and six o'clock in the morning were sure that they would receive more than those who had worked only one hour, but to their surprise they all received one penny. The owner of the vineyard paid them the penny he had promised them.

They began to complain, "These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day."

"Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" The owner decided that those who worked for a short time deserved as much pay as those who had worked all day. Maybe they had worked as hard that one hour as those who had worked all day.

The heavenly meaning

By this parable Jesus teaches how the rewards of serving God will be determined. None of us deserve to go to heaven. We all get the same salvation even though one person may serve the Lord more than another. There will be rewards in heaven, but since no one deserves heaven, no one will get more heaven than another person. But even if God did not promise rewards, what could be greater than to hear Him say to us in eternity, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant"? Let's ask God to help us serve Him every day.

miss going to heaven.

III. Activity 1

Age 3 through Grade 7

Materials needed:

- ☐ 20 small objects
- ☐ small candies as a reward (7 for each student in the class)

Place the objects on a table with all the students gathered around it in a circle. Use about 6 objects for small children and about 15 for older children. Have the students cover their eyes and remove one of the objects, then have them open their eyes and see who can be the first to figure out which object is missing. When someone can guess which object is missing, give them all a reward of one piece of candy. Do this six more times. You might make the next turns each more challenging by adding more objects to the pile before you remove one, or remove several objects.

After you have finished the seven turns, ask if anyone noticed that when someone discovered the missing object(s) that everyone got to have the prize. Explain to them that just as the men in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard got the same reward and all the students got the same prize in the game, we all get the same heaven when we go to be with God. When God takes us to heaven we all get the same heaven. No one gets any more or any less of heaven. Also, just as they all worked together to find the missing objects, we all need to work together to find those who are going to