

# Matthew 20 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

[Matthew 20:1](#)  
[Matthew 20:2](#)  
[Matthew 20:3](#)  
[Matthew 20:4](#)  
[Matthew 20:5](#)  
[Matthew 20:6](#)  
[Matthew 20:7](#)  
[Matthew 20:8](#)  
[Matthew 20:9](#)  
[Matthew 20:10](#)  
[Matthew 20:11](#)  
[Matthew 20:12](#)  
[Matthew 20:13](#)  
[Matthew 20:14](#)  
[Matthew 20:15](#)  
[Matthew 20:16](#)  
[Matthew 20:17](#)  
[Matthew 20:18](#)  
[Matthew 20:19](#)  
[Matthew 20:20](#)  
[Matthew 20:21](#)  
[Matthew 20:22](#)  
[Matthew 20:23](#)  
[Matthew 20:24](#)  
[Matthew 20:25](#)  
[Matthew 20:26](#)  
[Matthew 20:27](#)  
[Matthew 20:28](#)  
[Matthew 20:29](#)  
[Matthew 20:30](#)  
[Matthew 20:31](#)  
[Matthew 20:32](#)  
[Matthew 20:33](#)  
[Matthew 20:34](#)

---

MATTHEW CONTAINS 15 PARABLES 20 MIRACLES

KEY VERSES: 1:1 "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."

2:2 "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."

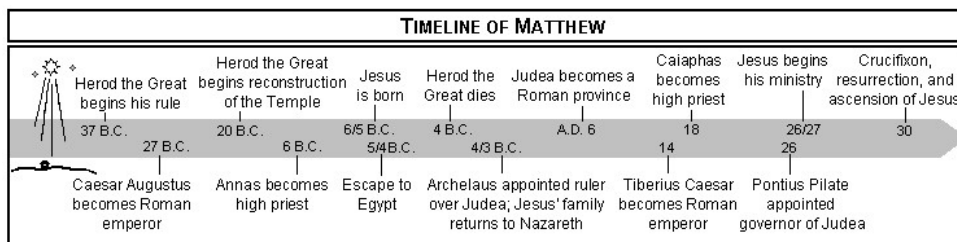


Click chart to enlarge  
Charts from Jensen's Survey of the NT - used by permission  
Another Chart from Swindoll

## THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED BY MATTHEW (shaded area)



Click chart to enlarge



Source: Borrow Ryrie Study Bible

Matthew 20:1 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.

- **the kingdom:** This parable was intended to illustrate the equity of God's dealings, even when "the first are placed last, and the last first." Mt 3:2 13:24,31,33,44,45,47 22:2 25:1,14

- **a landowner:** Mt 9:37,38 21:33-43 Song 8:11,12 Isa 5:1,2 Jn 15:1
- **early:** Mt 23:37 Song 8:11,12 Jer 25:3,4
- **laborers:** Mk 13:34 1Co 15:58 Heb 13:21 2Pe 1:5-10

## WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN LIKE?

**For (gar)** - Because of the chapter break, this strategic term of explanation would be easy to overlook or discount, but remember when you spot it, it usually indicates an explanation of something that has just been stated in the previous text. And what had just been stated? "**many who are first will be last; and the last, first.**" (Mt 19:30+). So now Jesus proceeds to explain and elaborate on that somewhat paradoxical statement and notice how He "bookends" or encloses the explanation with the same phrase in Mt 20:16. **David Turner** points out that "The unfortunate chapter division at Mt 20:1 obscures the fact that the parable of the landowner in Mt 20:1–16 continues the answer to Peter's question, as did the parable of the unforgiving servant in Mt 18:21–35. (See [Matthew - Page 476](#)) In addition this parable is in a sense an answer to Peter's question "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?" (Mt 19:27+) Guzik points out that Jesus "reply came in stages.

- First, a promise of reward (Matthew 19:28).
- Second, a warning that God's manner of distributing reward is not necessarily the manner of men (many who are the first will be last, and the last first, Matthew 19:30).
- Finally, this parable that illustrates the principle that God's manner of rewarding is not like man's practice of giving rewards.

**Who Made the Chapter Breaks in the Bible?** [Stephen Langton](#) (c. 1150–1228) Archbishop of Canterbury is widely credited with creating the modern chapter divisions around the early 1200s. His divisions were first applied to the Latin Vulgate (the Bible used widely in medieval Europe). These divisions were later adopted in Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, and then carried into modern Bible translations. It goes without saying that chapter breaks are not inspired. One further note is the best way to detect "**poor chapter breaks**" as here in Matthew 20 is to develop the discipline of reading the text in context. [Context is king](#) in interpretation!

**The kingdom (basileia) of heaven (ouranos) is like (term of comparison//simile) a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers (ergates) for his vineyard** - Jesus does not specify the work the landowner required - harvesting, pruning, planting. That information was not crucial to understanding the parable. One point is that all these tasks in the vineyard were very demanding work, especially in the dry, hot climate. As is common today men looking for day work will congregate **early in the morning** in anticipation of being hired.

**Ryrie Study Bible (borrow)** - Mt 20:20:1-16 The subject is the reward of willingness to serve, whether one comes early or late. Christ is not teaching economics.

**Kingdom of Heaven** (synonymous with **Kingdom of God**) - 32x/31v - Matt. 3:2; Matt. 4:17; Matt. 5:3; Matt. 5:10; Matt. 5:19; Matt. 5:20; Matt. 7:21; Matt. 8:11; Matt. 10:7; Matt. 11:11; Matt. 11:12; Matt. 13:11; Matt. 13:24; Matt. 13:31; Matt. 13:33; Matt. 13:44; Matt. 13:45; Matt. 13:47; Matt. 13:52; Matt. 16:19; Matt. 18:1; Matt. 18:3; Matt. 18:4; Matt. 18:23; Matt. 19:14; Matt. 19:23; Matt. 20:1; Matt. 22:2; Matt. 23:13; Matt. 25:1; Matt. 25:14 - [What is the difference between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven?](#)

**Ligonier.org** gives some excellent background on vineyards - Grapes were one of the most valuable commodities in ancient Israel because they could be transformed into fine wines. So important were the vineyards that the prophets often describe the salvation of God's people as including the restoration of the vineyards of the Promised Land (for example, Amos 9:14). Vinedressers and vineyard owners know, however, that the profitability of their vineyard depends on harvesting the grapes at just the right time. Wait too long, and the wine produced from the grapes will not be as good and will not command as high a price as it could. Consequently, when the time of harvest comes, vineyard owners often employ many day laborers in addition to their regular staff so that all of the grapes can be picked before it is too late. That is the setting of today's passage, wherein the master of the house must find "laborers for his vineyard" (Matt. 20:1).

**Charles Swindoll** (see [Insights on Matthew - Page 122](#)) -James Morier, in his travelogue of journeys through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, recorded a scene in a marketplace of Hamadan, one of the oldest cities in Iran. Though his observations were made in the nineteenth century, this could have fallen right out of the scene Jesus paints in Matthew 20:

Here we observed every morning before the sun rose, that a numerous body of peasants were collected with spades in their hands, waiting as they informed us, to be hired for the day to work in the surrounding fields. This custom, which I have never seen in any other part of Asia, forcibly struck us as a most happy illustration of our Saviour's parable of the labourers in the vineyard, in the 20th chapter of Matthew; particularly when

passing by the same place late in the day, we still found others standing idle, and remembered His words, Why stand ye here all the day idle? as most applicable to their situation; for in putting the very same question to them, they answered us, Because no man hath hired us. (See James Morier's book [A second journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor page 264](#))

**C H Spurgeon** - The kingdom of heaven, is all of grace, and so is the service connected with it. Let thin be remembered in the exposition of this parable. The call to work, the ability, and the reward, are all on the principle of grace, and not upon that of merit. This was no common man that is an householder, and his going out to hire laborers into his vineyards was not after the usual manner of men, for they will have a full day's work for a full day's wage. This householder considered the laborers rather than himself. He was up before the dew was gone from the grass, and found laborers, and sent them into his vineyard. It was a choice privilege to be allowed to begin holy service so early in the morning. They agreed with the householder, and went to work on his terms. They might well be content, since they were promised a full day's hire, and were sure to get it: a penny a day represented the usual and accepted wage. The householder and the laborers agreed upon the amount; and this is the point which has to be noted further on. Young believers have a blessed prospect: they may well be happy to do good work, in a good place, for good Master, and on good terms.

---

**Matthew Henry Concise - Mt 20:1-16.** The direct object of this parable seems to be, to show that though the Jews were first called into the vineyard, at length the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles, and they should be admitted to equal privileges and advantages with the Jews. The parable may also be applied more generally, and shows, 1. That God is debtor to no man. 2. That many who begin last, and promise little in religion, sometimes, by the blessing of God, arrive at a great deal of knowledge, grace, and usefulness. 3. That the recompense of reward will be given to the saints, but not according to the time of their conversion. It describes the state of the visible church, and explains the declaration that the last shall be first, and the first last, in its various references. Till we are hired into the service of God, we are standing all the day idle: a sinful state, though a state of drudgery to Satan, may be called a state of idleness. The market-place is the world, and from that we are called by the gospel. Come, come from this market-place. Work for God will not admit of trifling. A man may go idle to hell, but he that will go to heaven, must be diligent. The Roman penny was sevenpence halfpenny in our money, wages then enough for the day's support. This does not prove that the reward of our obedience to God is of works, or of debt; when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants; but it signifies that there is a reward set before us, yet let none, upon this presumption, put off repentance till they are old. Some were sent into the vineyard at the eleventh hour; but nobody had hired them before. The Gentiles came in at the eleventh hour; the gospel had not been before preached to them. Those that have had gospel offers made them at the third or sixth hour, and have refused them, will not have to say at the eleventh hour, as these had, No man has hired us. Therefore, not to discourage any, but to awaken all, be it remembered, that now is the accepted time. The riches of Divine grace are loudly murmured at, among proud Pharisees and nominal Christians. There is great proneness in us to think that we have too little, and others too much of the tokens of God's favour; and that we do too much, and others too little in the work of God. But if God gives grace to others, it is kindness to them, and no injustice to us. Carnal worldlings agree with God for their penny in this world; and choose their portion in this life. Obedient believers agree with God for their penny in the other world, and must remember they have so agreed. Didst not thou agree to take up with heaven as thy portion, thy all; wilt thou seek for happiness in the creature? God punishes none more than they deserve, and recompenses every service done for him; he therefore does no wrong to any, by showing extraordinary grace to some. See here the nature of envy. It is an evil eye, which is displeased at the good of others, and desires their hurt. It is a grief to ourselves, displeasing to God, and hurtful to our neighbours: it is a sin that has neither pleasure, profit, nor honour. Let us forego every proud claim, and seek for salvation as a free gift. Let us never envy or grudge, but rejoice and praise God for his mercy to others as well as to ourselves.

---

#### **CHRIST'S CALL TO SERVICE Matthew 20:1–16 Croft Pentz**

Nothing hurts God's work more than complaining people. It's alarming to see many Christian people complaining. The most happy people are contented people. Whatever you do, be faithful, doing it with all your might, and He will reward you for it.

1. THE CALL—vv. 1–7
2. THE COMPENSATION—vv. 8–10
3. THE COMPLAINT—vv. 11–16

God calls all men to work for Him. Some are called to be pastors, missionaries or Bible college teachers. Others are called to be Sunday school teachers, or church leaders. All are called to pray and witness.

- [Is Grace Fair?](#) - excerpt.

We all love to be on the receiving end of a good deal—at least until someone else finds a better one. The perception of inequality and unfairness fosters bitterness, envy, and resentment—attitudes that the flesh thrives on, even among believers. And one of Christ's parables plays to the heart of that inclination. The parable of the vineyard (Matthew 20:1–15) defies most popular concepts of justice and fairness. Christ's story introduces us to a "landowner" who refused to pay his workers proportionately for the labor they had performed on his farm.

- [The Point of the Parable of the Vineyard](#) - excerpt

The proverb is also something of a riddle. What does it mean? It's not saying precisely the same thing as Mark 9:35: "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." Or Mark 10:43–44: "Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all." Those verses elevate humility and self-sacrifice. Those are imperatives: commands instructing us to be humble servants rather than seeking prominence and power. But the proverb that goes with this parable is an indicative, a simple statement of fact: "The last shall be first, and the first last." What does that mean, and how would it work? In a foot race, for example, the only way for the last to be first and the first to be last is for everyone to finish simultaneously. If everyone crosses the finish line at exactly the same instant, the first are last and the last are first. Everyone ends in a dead heat. That, of course, is precisely the point Jesus was making in the parable. Those hired first and those hired last all got exactly the same pay. All of them, from the first to the last, got the full benefit of the landowner's generosity, in equal shares.

**What spiritual lesson is woven into that story?** The lesson is actually quite simple: the story is a precise picture of God's sovereign, saving grace. Since sinners are all unworthy, and the riches of God's grace are inexhaustible, all believers receive an infinite and eternal share of His mercy and kindness, though no one really deserves it.

- [The Purpose of the Parable of the Vineyard](#) - excerpt

Christ's parables were never delivered in a vacuum. They were always provoked by the circumstances, discussions, and debates that surrounded Him. That kind of contextual background information is especially critical concerning the parable of the vineyard (Matthew 20:1–15). While the story itself delivers [a profound lesson about the grace of God](#), we don't feel the full weight of Christ's words until we consider their immediate context.

- [The Principles of the Parable of the Vineyard](#) - excerpt

The parable teaches, first of all, that *salvation is not earned*. Eternal life is a gift that God gives purely by grace according to His sovereign will. But the parable's most obvious lesson is that *God gives the same abundant grace to everyone who follows Christ*. Tax collectors, harlots, beggars, and blind people will share in the same eternal life as those who have served God all their lives; those who have preached the gospel to thousands; and those who were martyred for Christ. Thankfully, He does not give any believer what we truly deserve.

---

**Norman Geisler - - [When Critics Ask](#) MATTHEW 20:1ff—Are rewards the same for all, or do they differ in degree?**

**PROBLEM:** Jesus told a parable of His kingdom in which each servant got the same pay even though each had worked a different number of hours. Yet in other places, the Bible speaks of different degrees of reward for working in God's kingdom (cf. 1 Cor. 3:11–15; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 22:12).

**SOLUTION:** There are different degrees of reward in heaven, depending on our faithfulness to Christ on earth. Jesus said, "I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work" (Rev. 22:12+). Paul said each believer's work will be tried by fire and "if anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward" (1 Cor. 3:14). In 2 Corinthians 5, he says we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ "that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (v. 10, emphasis added). The point of the parable in Matthew 20 is not that all rewards will be the same, but that all rewards are by grace. It is to show that God rewards on the basis of opportunity, not simply on accomplishment. Not all the servants had the opportunity to work for the master the same amount of time, but all, nevertheless, were given the same pay. God looks at our disposition as well as our actions and judges accordingly.

---

**Norman Geisler - [When Cultists Ask](#) - MATTHEW 20:1–16—Are rewards the same for all, or do they differ in degree?**

**MISINTERPRETATION:** Jesus told a parable of his kingdom in which each servant got the same pay even though each had worked a different number of hours. Yet in other places, the Bible speaks of different degrees of reward for working in God's kingdom (cf. 1 Cor. 3:11–15; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 22:12). Mormons sometimes set up a straw man to knock down, alleging that Christians wrongly believe that "all who go to heaven share and share alike" (Richards, 1978, 253). Does Christianity teach that in the afterlife there will be different degrees of reward?

**CORRECTING THE MISINTERPRETATION:** There are different degrees of reward in heaven, depending on our faithfulness to Christ on earth. Jesus said, "I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done" (Rev. 22:12 NASB). Paul said each believer's work will be tried by fire and "if anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward" (1 Cor. 3:14). In 2 Corinthians 5:10, he says we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ "that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (NASB).

The point of the parable in Matthew 20 is not that all rewards will be the same, but that all rewards are by grace. It is to show that God rewards on the basis of opportunity, not simply on accomplishment. Not all the servants had the opportunity to work for the master the same amount of time, but all, nevertheless, were given the same pay. God looks at our disposition as well as our actions and judges accordingly

---

### **James Smith - THE LABOURERS; OR, LESSONS FOR CHRISTIAN WORKERS Matthew 20:1–16**

Those who leave all for Jesus will find their all in Jesus (chap. 19:27). Peter said, "What shall we have therefore? Seeing we have left so much, how much shall we get?" This savours too much of the language of the mere hireling. To labour only for reward is a mean motive for serving Christ. To correct this grovelling spirit, and to enlighten the darkness that fosters it, this parable seems to have been given. Notice—

#### **I. Some Things about the Labourers. The—**

1. PLACE OF LABOUR. "His vineyard" (v. 1). This is the place where much patient labour is urgently needed, or much fruit will be lost. Those who labour among the trailing vines must be careful about their walk. The tender grapes must be gently handled. To gather fruit for Christ the gentleness of Jesus is needed. Note, further, that every labourer in the vineyard must have the Master's call.
2. HIRING OF THE LABOURERS. This was done at five different times. Look at it dispensationally, "early in the morning" (v. 1) may represent from Adam to Noah, the third hour from Noah to Moses, the sixth hour from Moses to David, the ninth hour from David to Christ, the eleventh the present, till He comes again. Or it may suggest the various stages of life from youth to old age. How few are found at the eleventh hour, but even then the full reward of eternal life is given to all who believe and obey.
3. REWARDING OF THE LABOURERS. "Call and give them their hire." Every one called to labour shall be called to their reward, "beginning at the last." The most hopeless at the eleventh hour becomes the most hopeful in the evening. Here grace reigns. Labour on. Idlers in the market-place are less responsible than idlers in the vineyard.
4. DISSATISFACTION OF THE LABOURERS. "The first supposed that they should have received more." These find their counterpart in the "elder brother" mentioned in Luke 15; those hired at the eleventh hour in the prodigal son. We cannot anticipate disappointment in Heaven; but are there not many on earth who grudge the chief of sinners an equal share of the grace of God with themselves?

#### **II. Some Things about the Master. Here observe His—**

1. JUSTICE. "Friend, I do thee no wrong" (v. 13). The selfish servant cannot understand the grace of Christ. Those who labour only for wages cannot enjoy the favour of God. If we knew Him better, we would murmur less at His doings. "I have not the gifts of So-and-so." "Friend, I do thee no wrong."
  2. FAITHFULNESS. "Didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take that is thine" (v. 14). He gave all that He promised. The penny seems to have been their own terms; the others went on His terms, "Whatsoever is right I will give you," and had no desire to grumble. Trust His grace, and you will have good cause to praise and rejoice.
  3. SOVEREIGNTY. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?" (v. 15). What unhallowed feelings arise in our hearts when we see a brother or a sister, with scarcely any experience—just an hour in the vineyard—being more honoured of the Master than we are, who have borne the burden and heat of the scorching drought. So it seemeth good in Thy sight.
  4. JUDGMENT. "Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" (v. 15). The evil eye can see but little good in the grace of Christ. "An evil eye makes a darkened body" (Matt. 6:23). It contrasts badly with the unmerited goodness of the Master. Our thoughts at the best come far short of the exceeding riches of His grace. Lord, give us the single eye to Thy glory.
-



Matthew 20:1-16

The last will be first, and the first will be last. - Matthew 20:16

#### TODAY IN THE WORD

Today's parable is a difficult one. We live in a society where this landowner's behavior would make headlines: "Workers Vow to Fight Unjust Hiring Practices." The first group of workers might get together and picket the vineyard. They might try to negotiate a better package of pay and benefits for themselves. After all, they have "rights"!

Something strikes us as not quite equitable about the wage scale in this vineyard. How can it be "fair" to pay the Johnny-come-latelies as much as those who've toiled all day? What does Jesus mean by telling this strange story?

A question to start with is: What does He not mean? Answering this question is also a key issue in interpretation. This parable is not about economic justice, or even about spiritual rewards.

Instead, its main point is the sovereignty of God. This is as important as His love, which we've seen highlighted these past few days. Just as the vineyard owner has every right to pay every worker a full day's wages if he wishes, so God has every right to run His kingdom as He pleases, to carry out His plan of salvation as He sees fit. God is the ruler of the universe, and there are no constraints on His actions. We have no right to question Him (cf. Isa. 45:5-11).

But God's grace and generosity are still an important part of this parable. No worker is treated unjustly. The owner keeps all the promises he's made. The "inequity" is that most of the workers get more than they deserve! Indeed, the last wave seems to get hired not because the owner needs more workers, but just to give them employment.

The first workers are self-centered and envious. They demand what they perceive as their "just reward," though their understanding of justice is inaccurate. In both the older brother in yesterday's parable and these workers today, Jesus probably symbolized the Jewish religious leaders who opposed Him.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY

As you probably know, we occasionally like to suggest topics for additional Bible study, in hopes that Today in the Word can be a springboard for you. Today, we're proposing "eternal rewards" as an excellent choice for such a study. What rewards does Scripture mention? How are they earned? What are godly motivations regarding rewards

---

**Theocratic Kingdom**—The phrases "Kingdom of Heaven," "Kingdom of God," "Kingdom of Christ," etc., denote the same Kingdom

It has already been shown (Props. 20–23, etc.) how the Jews understood and employed these phrases, and how the first preachers adopted them.

Obs. 1. Now attention is called to the fact that they are used as synonymous in the New Testament. What Matthew pronounces "the Kingdom of heaven," is said by Mark, Luke, and John to be "the Kingdom of God," as e.g. comp. Matthew 5:3, with Luke 6:20, and Matthew 13:11 with Mark 4:11. So also "the Kingdom of God" is designated Christ's Kingdom, as e.g. comp. Matthew 16:28 with Luke 9:27, Mark 9:1, etc.

So also "the Father's Kingdom" and Christ's are represented as identical. Comp. e.g. Matthew 13:41–43 with Ephesians 5:5, and Matthew 26:29 with II Peter 1:11, etc., and Prop. 83. In reference to the usage of those phrases, comp. Props. 22 and 23, and the note by Dr. Craven in Lange's Com. Revelation, p. 93.

Obs. 2. These phrases thus interchangeably employed to denote the one Kingdom (Prop. 35) were understood to mean the Davidic Kingdom restored, as e.g. Acts 1:6, Matthew 20:21, Acts 15:16, Luke 1:32, etc. (comp. Props. 19–23).

This has been so frankly admitted by our opponents (as e.g. Dr. Campbell, Knapp, Neander, etc.) that more need not be added, leaving our argument to bring in the additional proof. On every side do we find this testimony, given, too, without any thought of its bearing on the subject. Thus e.g. Farrar (Life of Christ, vol. 1, p. 22) informs us that "waiting for the Consolation of Israel" is equivalent to Mark 15:43, "waiting for the Kingdom of God," and that among the Jews a prayer for the coming of the Messiah was, "may I see the Consolation of Israel." The Messiah and the Kingdom were united. We merely suggest that in addition to the meanings and derivation usually given to the phrase used by Matthew, "the Kingdom of heaven" (viz.: that the God of heaven gives it to the Christ, that through it the Father's will is manifested, that heavenly principles, etc., are exhibited, etc.), may there not, in the employment of the plural form, "heavenlies," be an allusion to the peculiar form of government (Theocratical) under chosen heavenly rulers (comp. Prop. 154). Dr. Meyer (Com. on Matthew 3:2) says: "It is called the Messianic Kingdom, not because the words 'of the heavens' express God, but because this Kingdom is conceived as descending from heaven and entering the world, Galatians 4:26." This idea may (comp. Revelation 19:11–16 and 21:2, etc.) indeed be included, but it does not exclude the old Jewish notion derived from Daniel, or the one just stated. It may include them all, making it the more expressive.

Obs. 3. In addition to the abundant testimony already adduced, that they were regarded as denoting the same Kingdom, and that

the restored Theocracy, as existing under David, we add a few more. Nast (Com. on Matthew 11:1–6), allowing the Church-Kingdom theory as correct, frankly says: “Though John the Baptist, Zecharias, and those other Israelites who waited for ‘the Consolation of Israel,’ expected the Messiah to establish a spiritual Kingdom, a reign of righteousness, they connected, nevertheless, with it, the idea of a visible, terrestrial Kingdom, that he would literally sit on David’s throne, and extend His reign from the river to the ends of the earth.” Doddridge (Com. Matthew 3:2), cordially adopting the Church-Kingdom idea as intended by the phrase, says: “It is plain that the Jews understood it of a temporal monarchy, which God would erect; the Beat of which, they supposed, would be Jerusalem, which would become, instead of Rome, the capital of the world. And the expected Sovereign of this Kingdom they learned from Daniel to call ‘the Son of Man’” (Were the Jews mistaken? Comp. Props. 19–23 and 31–35). Fairbairn (Herm. Manual, p. 41–43) tells us that the phrase, “points back to those prophecies of the Old Testament, in which promise was made of a King and Kingdom, that should unite heaven and earth in another way than could be done by a merely human administration,” etc., which we cordially receive as true, remarking, however, that the plain Theocratical meaning contained in the grammatical sense (which he carefully avoids), as held by the Jews, by the disciples and apostles, introduces just such a union of heaven and earth (as e.g. God in Jesus condescending to reign as earthly Ruler, etc.) as he advocates. Our entire argument thus far conclusively proves that all these phrases do not denote separate things (as e.g. intimated by Lange, Com. Matthew, p. 73), or are given (so Fleck, quoted by Lange) “in order to distinguish the Christian Kingdom of God more fully from the Jewish Theocracy,” but the restored Theocracy, as covenanted and predicted under the Messiah. They were applied to a definite, well-known Kingdom, viz.: the Theocratic-Davidic.

But able writers, wedded to the spiritual Church-Kingdom theory, can see nothing in the phrase but another and differing Kingdom, viz.: the Church regarded as militant and triumphant. Thus, to illustrate how confidently they appeal to its simplicity in their teaching, we refer to Gregory (Four Gospels, p. 146), who, speaking of “the Kingdom of heaven,” and that Matthew by its use intended to correct false Jewish views (when Acts 1:6, he still held them), confidently asserts: “The phrase clearly expresses the idea that it is a Kingdom distinct from all these kingdoms of this world after which the Jew had fashioned his idea of the Messiah’s dominion. Its origin is in the heavens, where God dwells; its throne, the seat of the King, is there; its highest present and prospective glories are there. This simple phrase taught that the Kingdom of the Messiah was to be a spiritual and heavenly Kingdom, unlike the old Theocracy with its temple and throne in Jerusalem; unlike the magnificent empire patterned after Rome, which the worldly Jew was dreaming of; wholly unlike the temporal empire of the Papacy long after established.” Here is a tissue of assumptions: (1) It ignores the fact that it was a Jewish phrase, adopted without explanation by Matthew, and that it could not possibly convey the idea assumed, being definitely used to designate the restored Davidic Kingdom and its extent, etc., as given by Daniel; (2) it engrafts upon it a modern notion, which the Jews never entertained, being bound by the plain covenant and prophetic language which locates the Kingdom, not in heaven but on the earth; (3) he assumes that the phrase is so clearly full of his doctrine that it ought to have taught the Jew such a view, when the facts are just the reverse, viz.: that its usage fortified them and the disciples (including Matthew) in believing that it unmistakably taught the restoration of the downfallen Theocracy, which was—as we have shown—a Kingdom of God and of heaven; (4) its simplicity of teaching established and confirmed the almost universal Pre-Millenarianism of the early Church and its connected doctrine of the Kingdom—a position just directly opposite to that which Gregory finds in the “simple phrase,” and which Shedd (His. of Doc, p. 291) calls a peculiarity of the Jewish-Christian.”

---

#### **QUESTION - [What is the meaning of the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard?](#)**

**ANSWER** - This lengthy parable is found only in the gospel of Matthew. Jesus tells the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16) in response to Peter’s question in Matthew 19:27: “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?” Peter wanted to know what reward would be given to those who give up everything to follow Jesus. In response, Jesus explains this truth about the kingdom of heaven.

Planting, maintaining and harvesting vineyards in first-century Israel was strenuous work requiring hard physical labor in the heat of summer. Often, additional laborers were required to get all the work done. The owner of this particular vineyard went to the marketplace at the first hour of the morning (6:00 a.m.) to find workers for the day. His offered wage of one denarius, a Roman’s soldier’s pay for a day, was generous indeed. The workers in the first group were more than happy to work for the generous wage.

As the day progressed and more workers were hired, the specific wage was not mentioned, but the landowner promised to pay “whatever is right.” Apparently, the workers were sufficiently confident of the landowner’s character that they trusted him at his word. Altogether, four groups of workers were hired, the last group just one hour before the end of the day. When the time came for the wages to be paid, the first group of workers saw the last group being paid a denarius and were naturally thinking they would be paid more since they had worked the longest. Their anger against the landowner spilled forth when they saw they would all be paid the same, even though they got exactly what they had agreed upon when they were hired. The landowner was forced to defend his actions to the first group, even though he had dealt with them in perfect fairness according to the contract.

The landowner, whose decision to pay all the workers the same was an act of mercy—not injustice—represents God, whose grace and mercy are shed abundantly upon those of His choosing. “For he says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I



will have compassion on whom I have compassion.’ It does not, therefore, depend on man’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy” (Romans 9:15-16). In the matter of salvation, His grace and mercy are given to those whose self-righteous works could never obtain it. We are all sinful and “fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), but His grace is sufficient to redeem all who believe. Whether God calls someone early or late in life to partake of His grace, the glory and praise for our salvation is His and His alone and in no way amounts to unfairness. Just as the landowner has a right to do what he wishes with his own money, so does God have the right to have mercy on whom He will have mercy.

The first group of workers in the vineyard resented receiving the same wage as the last group. Their attitude was similar to that of the Pharisees, who were incensed at Jesus’ teaching that others could inherit a heavenly kingdom they thought was reserved for them alone. They despised Jesus for offering the kingdom to poor, oppressed, weak sinners whom He made equal to them. In verse 15, the landowner asks, “Is your eye evil because I am good?” The “evil eye” was a Hebrew expression referring to jealousy and envy. God’s goodness and mercy produced in the self-righteous Pharisees the evil eye of envy. The rest of the workers received their wages without complaint or envy of others. In the same way, as Christians, we should rejoice when others come to the Savior, as we should rejoice in the service others render to Him. He is faithful to reward us for our service as He has promised, and how He rewards others should be of no consequence to us, nor should it affect our devotion to Him.

The message in verse 16, “the last will be first, and the first last,” is that no matter how long or how hard a believer works during his lifetime, the reward of eternal life will be the same given to all—an eternity of bliss in heaven in the presence of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43), whose life of service was limited to a moment of repentance and confession of faith in Christ, received the same reward of eternal life as the apostle Paul. Of course, Scripture also teaches that there are different [rewards in heaven](#) for different services, but the ultimate reward of eternal life will be achieved by all equally.

---

## **LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD Matthew 20:1–16 - Croft Pentz**

This parable speaks of justice versus faith. At times things happen in our lives that seem unjust. But God allows this for a reason—He is working for our good (Rom. 8:28). Don’t worry about justice; God is always fair.

### **I. The Workers in This Parable—vv. 1–7**

A. The natural truth. Five times the man went to get workers for his farm or vineyard—6:00 A.M., 9:00 A.M., 12:00 noon, 3:00 P.M., and 5:00 P.M. The Living Bible says he promised to pay them each \$20.

B. The spiritual truth. God needs workers in His vineyard.

1. Reason for working
  - a) The call—John 15:16. God, Himself, is calling us to work for Him.
  - b) The command—Mark 16:15. Jesus’ last sermon.
  - c) The commission—Luke 14:23. Don’t give up.
  - d) The compassion—Matt. 9:36; Exod. 32:32.
2. Rejection of working. Why people reject God’s call and refuse to witness:
  - a) Lack of vision—Prov. 29:18; 2 Cor. 4:4.
  - b) Lack of victory—living a defeated life.
  - c) Lack of virtue—not bearing the fruit of God’s Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23).

### **II. The Problem in This Parable—vv. 8–12**

A. The compensation—vv. 8–9. Everyone was paid. Christians will be rewarded by God’s standards (1 Cor. 3:8; 2 Cor. 9:6; Matt. 6:20–21).

B. The complaint—vv. 10–12. Those working the whole day received the same as those working part time. They agreed to these wages (see Matt. 16:27; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 22:17).

### **III. The Wages in This Parable—vv. 13–16**

- A. Promise—v. 13. They agreed to a certain wage—v. 2. What other people are paid is not our concern.
- B. Pay—v. 14. He paid what he had promised. God will be just to: (a) the sinner—Rev. 20:11–15, (b) the Christian—2 Cor. 5:10.
- C. Power—v. 15. The owner could do with his money what he wanted. God’s way is different than ours—Isa. 55:8.
- D. Promise—v. 16. We could translate this verse to mean, “Those who are forgotten on earth will be rewarded in heaven.”

Let God do the judging and rewarding. He knows better than we. He will be fair and just. The Christian has no reason to complain at his treatment. Did Jesus complain? Did Paul—or the other disciples? They suffered much, but they accepted God’s will. Complaining is the first step in backsliding. Complaining about what comes into your life is questioning God’s will for you.

Introduction: Most parables are fairly simple to interpret and straightforward to apply. There are two exceptions to this, and this story is one of them. Here's a strange story, difficult to interpret but soul-searching.

## **I. The Strange Story**

### **A. Day laborer concept**

1. This is somewhat uncommon today
2. This was routine and regular then

### **B. Several groups were hired**

1. The first and last groups are most important
2. We have little detail on the others

### **C. A time of reckoning**

1. The owner took groups in reverse order deliberately
2. He forced the first group to see what the last group got

### **D. Remuneration**

1. The last group got what the first group was promised
2. The first group got what it was promised

### **E. Remonstrance**

1. The first group was incensed by its treatment
2. They got their reward, but they effectually lost it

## **II. The Interpretation of the Story**

### **A. Proper interpretation—go back and pick up the context**

1. The story of rich young ruler
2. This precipitated Peter's question
3. This parable is designed to answer errors in Peter's question

### **B. The errors of Peter**

1. "This man went away; we didn't. Aren't we the good guys?"—this is a matter of pride
2. "This man went away; we didn't. What's in it for us?"—this demonstrates serving the Lord with a mercenary spirit
3. "This man went away. He doesn't deserve anything."—this demonstrates a tendency to look at others, etc.

### **C. The correction of the errors**

1. The ones who were there all day lose much through a bad spirit
2. The ones who served all day got what was agreed upon
3. The ones who served actually "lost their reward" in their concern with what others got (actually envy here)

## **III. The Soul-Searching of the Story—Beware of:**

### **A. Pride**

1. It isn't how lucky He is that we serve—it is how incredible that He would allow us to serve
2. Pride always makes us think we are better than we are

### **B. A mercenary spirit**

1. Danger: don't serve with a "what's in it for me?" spirit
2. They got what was agreed upon
3. We get what was agreed upon—eternal life, indwelling Spirit, supply of need, tribulation, persecution, etc.

### **C. Invidious comparisons**

1. What anyone else gets is really none of your business
2. What anyone else does is also none of your business
3. We need to look to ourselves and our relationship with the Lord

**Conclusion:** Peter watched the exchange with the rich young ruler, reflected on that exchange, and drew some wrong conclusions. Christ corrected Peter and gave us information.

## **The basic teaching of the parable?**

1. Watch your attitude in serving the Lord.
2. Don't pride yourself on being better than others. The very presence of pride sullies our character.
3. Don't get caught in a mercenary spirit.
4. Don't worry about what God does with or for others. Looking at others will usually make us proud or dissatisfied.

- **he had:** Mt 20:13 Ex 19:5,6 De 5:27-30
- **for a denarius** Mt 18:28 22:19 Lu 10:35 Rev 6:6
- **he sent:** 1Sa 2:18,26 3:1,21 16:11,12 1Ki 3:6-11 18:12 2Ch 34:3 Ec 12:1 Lu 1:15 2Ti 3:15



Marcus Aurelius on Denarius

## DAY'S WAGES FOR VINEYARD WORK

**When he had agreed** ([sumphoneo](#)) **with the laborers** ([ergates](#)) **for a denarius** ([denarion](#)) **for the day, he sent them into his vineyard** - While there was no formal contract signed, the landowner agreed to pay each laborer a denarius which was generally considered to be a fair and standard wage for a full day's work (12 hour work day was common) in ancient Israel, especially given that these laborers were generally unskilled. The fact that the Roman soldiers also earned one denarius per day made it a respectable wage. And in Jesus' day a denarius had real buying power—enough to feed a small family for a day. **He sent them into his vineyard** probably at the beginning of the Jewish workday, which was 6 AM, also known as the **first hour** (this helps understand his hiring of the other 3 groups).

**Swindoll** - at this point in the parable, nothing would sound strange to the ears of the disciples. The principles of "you get what you pay for" and "you earn what you work for" would have applied. However, the story begins to take a turn toward the unfamiliar in 20:3–7. While a real-life landowner would have known how many workers his vineyard required and the amount of labor that needed to be done, the man in the story returns to the marketplace about every three hours during the day to find more workers. (See [Insights on Matthew - Page 122](#))

**Henry Morris** makes an interesting observation that "this first group of workers wanted a definite contract with the householder before they would work. The later groups were willing to work simply by faith in the employer's word that "whatsoever is right I will give you" (Matthew 20:4), and he rewarded their faith abundantly. Even those hired at the eleventh hour received the same wages, for they would have been willing to work all day (Matthew 20:7) if they had known. Thus, rewards for Christian service are based more on motive and opportunity than on quantity (1 Corinthians 3:13-15)."

---

**Agreed** ([4856](#)) [sumphoneo](#) from **sun** = together + **phoneo** = make a sound) literally means to sound together. **Vine** = "to be in accord, primarily of musical instruments." To be in harmony or unison. To fit in with or agree with (Acts 15:15, Lk 5:36). To fit together - secular use the joints of the stones fit together. To match in sound. To have common interests - be in agreement with. To come to an agreement (Mt 18:19, 20:2, Acts 5:9). **Vine sumphoneo** "is used in the NT of the "agreement" (a) of persons concerning a matter, Matt. 18:19; Matt. 20:2, 13; Acts 5:9; (b) of the writers of Scripture, Acts 15:15; (c) of things that are said to be congruous in their nature, Luke 5:36. Note: Cp. *symp̄hōnēsis*, "concord," 2 Cor. 6:15, and *symp̄hōnia*, "music," Luke 15:25."

**Denarius** ([1220](#)) [denarion](#) from Latin origin) denoted a Roman silver coin equivalent to a laborer's average daily wage, the silver weighing about 3.9 grams. Here the specific name of the coin was retained in the translation, because not all coins in circulation in Palestine at the time carried the image of Caesar. See [ROMAN COINAGE](#) It was the practice of all new emperors to issue new coins with their own likeness stamped on the face. There is a sense in which the coin was considered to be the personal property of the king. It bore testimony to the rule of the king whose likeness it carried. The first thing that a conqueror would do would be to issue new coins with a new face.

**DENARIUS [ISBE]** - de-na'-ri-us (denarion): A Roman silver coin, 25 of which went to the aureus, the standard gold coin of the empire in the time of Augustus, which was equal in value to about one guinea or \$5.25; more exactly  $?1.0,6 = \$5.00$ , the  $? = \$4,866$ . Hence, the value of the denarius would be about 20 cents and this was the ordinary wage of a soldier and a day laborer. The word is uniformly rendered "penny" in the King James Version and "shilling" in the American Standard Revised Version, except in Mt 22:19; Mk 12:15 and Lk 20:24, where the Latin word is used, since in these passages it refers to the coin in which tribute was paid to the Roman government.

**NET Glossary:** a larger silver coin in use in New Testament times; most carried the likeness of the Roman emperor and one denarius constituted the accepted salary for a day's work by a common laborer

**Hughes** - The silver denarius, weighing 3.8 grams, had been in use in the Roman world since 268 B.C. and continued to be used into the reign of L. Septimius Severus (A.D. 193–211). Denarii bore the head of Tabors and the inscription TI. CAESAR DIVI AVG. F. AVGVSTVS (Tabors Caesar, son of the divine Augustus, Augustus). (See [Luke: That You May Know the Truth](#))

**Matthew 20:3 “And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market place;**

- **the third:** Mk 15:25 Ac 2:15
- **standing:** Mt 20:6,7 11:16,17 Pr 19:15 Eze 16:49 Ac 17:17-21 1Ti 5:13 Heb 6:12

### THIRD HOUR LABORERS STANDING

**And he went out about the third hour (9 AM) and saw others standing idle** ([argos](#) - doing nothing) **in the market place** - Three hours later the landowner finds other men standing idle.

**Spurgeon** applies this to us spiritually - “Why is any one of us remaining idle towards God? Has nothing yet had power to engage us to sacred service? Can we dare to say, ‘No man hath hired us?’”

**C H Spurgeon** - Hating indolence, and grieving that he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, he hired more workers **about the third hour**. They would make only three-quarters of a day; but it was for their good to cease from loafing at the street-corner. (**SPURGEON APPLIES THIS**) These are like persons whose childhood is past, but who are not yet old. They are favored to have a good part of their day of life available for hallowed service. To these the good householder said: “Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you.” He pointed to those already in the field, and said, “Go ye also;” and he promised them, not a definite sum, as he did those whom he first hired, but he said: “Whatsoever is right I will give you.” They went their way to their labor, for they did not wish to remain idlers; and as right-minded men, they could not quarrel with the householder’s agreement to give them whatsoever was right. Oh, that those around us, who are in their rising manhood, would at once take up their tools, and begin to serve the great Lord!

---

**C H Spurgeon** - see full sermon [Early and Late, or Horæ Gratæ](#) Matthew 20:1, 3, 5–6

Some of us in time and in eternity will have to utter a special song of thankfulness to the love which took us in our days of folly and simplicity, and conducted us into the family of God. Look at the grace which calls man at the age of twenty, when the passions are hot, when there is strong temptation to plunge into the vices and the so-called pleasures of life. To be delivered from the charms of sin, when the world’s cheek is ruddy, when it wears its best attire, and to be taught to prefer the reproach of Christ to all the riches of Egypt, this is mighty grace for which God shall have our sweetest song. To be called of the Lord at forty, in the prime of life, is a wonderful instance of divine power, for worldliness is hard to overcome, and worldliness is the sin of middle age. With a family about you, with much business, with the world eating into you as does a canker, it is a wonder that God should in his mercy have visited you then, and made you a regenerate soul. You are a miracle of grace, and you will have to feel it and to praise God for it in time and eternity. Sixty again. ‘Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.’ And yet you have learned; you have had a blessed schoolmaster who sweetly taught you, and you have learned to do well. Though your vessel had begun to rot in the waters of the Black Sea of sin, you have got a new owner, and you will run up a new flag, and you will sail round the Cape of Good Hope to the Islands of the Blessed, in the Land of the Hereafter. But what shall I say of you that are called when you are aged? You will have to love much, for you have had much forgiven.

**Matthew 20:4 and to those he said, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.’ And so they went.**

- **Go:** Mt 9:9 21:23-31 Lu 19:7-10 Ro 6:16-22 1Co 6:11 1Ti 1:12,13 Titus 3:8 1Pe 1:13 4:2,3
- and whatsoever: Col 4:1

### THIRD HOUR LABORERS WORKING

and to those he said, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right([dikaios](#) - righteous, what is fully justified) I will give you.’ And so they went - These men did not negotiate with the landowner or come to an agreement on their wages but willingly accepted his offer to pay them **whatever is right** and willingly went into his vineyard. In other words, they trusted his word and his sense of fairness.

**Swindoll on right** - The Greek term [dikaios](#), when appearing in the neuter gender, as it does in 20:4, connotes “obligatory in view of certain requirements of justice.” (BDAG) Since the twelve-hour day was typically broken into four quarters (6:00 a.m.–9:00 a.m.; 9:00 a.m.–noon; noon–3:00 p.m.; 3:00 p.m.–6:00 p.m.), those hired at 9:00 would have rightly expected to receive three-fourths of a denarius for their labor. That would have been fair according to any reasonable economic principles. (See [Insights on Matthew 16--28 - Page 123](#))

**Matthew 20:5 “Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did the same thing.**

- **sixth:** Mt 27:45 Mk 15:33,34 Lu 23:44-46 Jn 1:39 4:6 11:9 Ac 3:1 10:3,9
- **and did:** Ge 12:1-4 Jos 24:2,3 2Ch 33:12-19 Heb 11:24-26

### SIXTH & NINTH HOUR LABORERS STANDING, THEN WORKING

**Again he went out about the sixth (noon) and the ninth hour (3 PM), and did the same thing** - The landowner finds 2 more groups of men who were willing to work in his vineyard for whatever wage he deemed to be right. They went without negotiating and without any specific expectation of what their wage would be. They simply accepted the landowner's statement that he would reward them fairly.

[C H Spurgeon](#) - Had it been altogether and alone a business transaction, the householder would have waited to begin a new day, and would not have given a whole day's wage for a fraction of a day's work. The entire matter was alone of grace; and therefore, when half the day was gone, about the sixth hour, he called in laborers. (**SPIRITUAL APPLICATION**) Men of forty and fifty are bidden to enter the vineyard. (**ED: I WAS 39 WHEN HE CALLED ME AND HAVE BEEN LABORING IN THE VINEYARD FOR 40 YEARS 20 OF IT ON THIS WEBSITE**). Yes, and about the ninth hour men were engaged. At sixty, the Lord calls a number by his grace! (**SPURGEON WAS ABOUT 57 WHEN HE FINISHED HIS LABORS IN GOD'S VINEYARD**). It is wrong to assert that men are not saved after forty; we know to the contrary, and could mention instances. God in the greatness of his love calls into his service men from whom the exuberance of useful vigor has departed; he accepts the waning hours of their day. (**PRAISE HIS HOLY NAME!**) He has work for the weak as well as for the strong. He allows none to labor for him without the reward of grace, even though they have spent their best days in sin. This is no encouragement to procrastination; but it should induce old sinners to seek the Lord at once.

**Matthew 20:6 “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?’**

- **the eleventh:** Ec 9:10 Lu 23:40-43 Jn 9:4
- **Why:** Pr 19:15 Eze 16:49 Ac 17:21 Heb 6:12

### ELEVENTH HOUR LABORERS STANDING IDLE

**And about the eleventh hour (5 PM) he went out and found others standing around; and he \*said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle ([argos](#) - doing nothing) all day long** - Now it is late in the afternoon and the landowner is still seeking workers for his vineyard even though the normal 12 hour workday had just about come to an end. He questions them as to why they have been idle for 11 hours of the 12 hour workday?

---

[C H Spurgeon](#) - The day was nearly over: only a single hour remained; yet about the eleventh hour he went out. The generous householder was willing to take on more workmen, and give them hire, though the sun was going down.

He found a group lingering at the loafers' corner — standing idle. He wished to clear the whole town of sluggards, and so he said to



them, "Why stand ye here all the day idle? " His question to them may be read by making each word in its turn emphatic, and then it yields a fullness of meaning. Why are ye idle? What is the good of it? Why stand ye here idle where all are busy? Why all the day idle? Will not a shorter space suffice? Why ye idle? You have need to work, you are able to do it, and you should set about it at once. Why is any one of us remaining idle towards God? Has nothing yet had power to engage us to sacred service? Can we dare to say, "No man hath hired us "? Nearly seventy years of age, and yet unsaved! Let us bestir ourselves. It is time that we went, without delay, to kill the weeds and prune the vines, and do something for our Lord in his vineyard. (SEE REDEEM THE TIME)

What but rich grace could lead him to take on the eleven o'clock lingerers? Yet he invites them as earnestly as those who came in the morning, and he will as surely give them their reward.

**Matthew 20:7 "They \*said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He \*said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.'**

KJV Matthew 20:7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; (**FOLLOWING WORDS ONLY IN TEXTUS RECEPTUS**) and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

BGT Matthew 20:7 λ γουσιβ α τ · π ο δε ς μ ς μισθ σατο. λ γει α το ς· π γετε κα με ς ε ς τ ν μπελ να.

NET Matthew 20:7 They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You go and work in the vineyard too.'

CSB Matthew 20:7 " 'Because no one hired us,' they said to him. " 'You also go to my vineyard,' he told them.

ESV Matthew 20:7 They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.'

NIV Matthew 20:7 " 'Because no one has hired us,' they answered. "He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.'

NLT Matthew 20:7 "They replied, 'Because no one hired us.'"The landowner told them, 'Then go out and join the others in my vineyard.'

- **Because:** Ac 4:16 17:30,31 Ro 10:14-17 16:25 Eph 2:11,12 3:5,6 Col 1:26
- **Go:** Mt 22:9,10 Ec 9:10 Lu 14:21-23 Jn 9:4
- **and:** Eph 6:8 Heb 6:10

## THE 11TH HOUR MEN GO TO LABOR IN VINEYARD

**They \*said to him, 'Because no one ([oudeis](#) - absolutely no one) hired us.'** - The point is that while they were idle, they were not lazy. Hired is *misthoo* (only in Mt 20:1,7) meaning to hire or engage someone in exchange for [misthos](#) (a wage).

**He \*said to them, 'You go ([present imperative](#)) into the vineyard too** (and join the others) - This time there is no mention of pay. He commands them to go into the vineyard and while not stated (the [Textus Receptus](#) does add "whatsoever is right, *that* shall ye receive"), from the context clearly they obeyed his command and went. In fact given the late hour they probably ran to the vineyard to assure they could be as productive as time would allow.

**THOUGHT** - Beloved, I realize this is a parable and we must be very careful not to make a teaching point of every word or sentence. In this case I cannot help but apply this verse to myself as almost 40 years ago at age 39 I was saved by grace through faith and called into His vineyard at the "11th hour" (See [A Testimony of God's Grace](#)). From the moment the "Landowner" called me, I began to run with a passion to rightly divide His Word and immediately began teaching men and women the Word of Truth. And then God led me to begin [preceptaustin.org](#) some 20 years ago and by His grace I will have completed in depth exposition on every verse of the New Testament by Spring, 2025 (note the Revelation Verse by Verse is from my good friend Dr Anthony Garland). The message is this -- if you are a "late bloomer" run into His Vineyard and work with all the might His Spirit gives you to Seize the Time you have remaining for His glory and honor. Beloved, [do not waste your one life](#) on temporal trinkets and babbles, but invest your short time left in eternal treasures. You will never regret your decision throughout the ages to come!

**Matthew 20:8 “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.’**

- **When evening came:** Mt 13:39,40 25:19,31 Ro 2:6-10 2Co 5:10 Heb 9:28 Rev 20:11,12
- **the owner of the vineyard \*said to his foreman:** Ge 15:2 39:4-6 43:19 Lu 10:7 12:42 16:1,2 1Co 4:1,2 Titus 1:7 1Pe 4:10

#### Related Passages:

Leviticus 19:13+ **(JEWISH LAW SAID LABORERS WERE TO BE PAID AT END OF WORKDAY)** ‘You shall not oppress your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning.

Deuteronomy 24:14-15+ “You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your countrymen or one of your aliens who is in your land in your towns. 15 **“You shall give him his wages on his day before the sun sets**, for he is poor and sets his heart on it; so that he will not cry against you to the LORD and it become sin in you.

### LAST GROUP PAID FIRST

**When evening came, the owner of the vineyard \*said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ([eschatos](#)) group to the first([protos](#))** - Presumably evening would have been 6 PM and according to Jewish law day laborers were to be paid at the end of the work day (Dt 24:14-15+). The landowner gives his foreman the duty of paying the wages beginning with the 11th hour group. He does not tell the foreman what to give the four groups.

---

[C H Spurgeon](#) - Days soon end, and to all the laborers even was come. This was pay-time, and the lord of the vineyard did not forget his agreements with the laborers, nor tell them to wait for their wages. Our Lord will rob no man of his reward. The householder in the parable sees to everything personally.

His is the hiring, and the order for the paying. Promptly he saith unto his steward, “Call the laborers, and give them their hire. ” We shall be called each one to receive our reward when our day is over. Happy are we to have been already first called into the vineyard: thus the second call to receive the hire becomes a welcome one.

The lord of the vineyard, whose transactions in hiring had been of no ordinary kind, was equally peculiar in the manner of payment. He chose to arrange it so that those who first came were last served; which is not often the manner of men. It was not a transaction of a mercenary sort, but a display of free favor; and so the great quality of sovereignty comes in as to the very order of payment — “beginning from the last unto the first. ” The Lord will take care that, in the transactions of his grace, his sovereignty as well as his goodness shall be conspicuous.

---

#### Working by Faith - Henry Morris

“So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first” (Matt. 20:8).

This parable has long caused perplexity, not only among the workers in the parable, but also among readers ever since. Why would the Lord teach that wages paid for a given type of work should be the same for 1 hour's work as for 12? His only explanation was that it was the owner's right to do what he wanted with his own money, and that "the last shall be first, and the first last" (Matt. 20:16).

He also reminded the complaining workmen that he had fulfilled his contract with them. Early in the morning, this group had negotiated their own terms with him, and "he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day" (Matt. 20:2). Those he hired later had said nothing about pay, being glad to work, and willing to trust the lord of the vineyard to treat them fairly. This probably means that the owner had first approached the early morning workers on the same basis, but they were unwilling to work without a contract, negotiating their own terms.

This is the difference. The first group insisted on a firm contract, and the owner therefore insisted on honoring it. The others worked by faith, trusting in the lord of the vineyard, knowing him to be a man of integrity and justice. Furthermore, they would have been willing to work all day long on this same basis, but they had no opportunity. They needed the job, and the owner, knowing their needs and their willing hearts, decided to pay them on the basis of what they would have done, had they had the opportunity.

In any case, the parable surely teaches us that our heavenly rewards are not based on quantity of services rendered, but on quality, with full account taken of opportunities, motivation, and trust in the Lord.

**Matthew 20:9 “When those hired about the eleventh hour came, each one received a denarius.**

- **received:** Mt 20:2,6,7 Lu 23:40-43 Ro 4:3-6 5:20,21 Eph 1:6-8 2:8-10 1Ti 1:14-16

### **LAST GROUP PAID SAME AS THE FIRST GROUP**

**When those hired about the eleventh hour (5 PM) came, each one received a denarius** ([denarion](#)) - The last group had barely broken a sweat and yet they received the same wage as the landowner had agreed to pay the first group that had been sweating all day since about 6 AM, 11 hours longer than the last group of workers. Now if you are in the first group and see the last get a denarius, you are probably thinking your get about 12x as much since you worked that much longer! There would nothing greedy or unnatural in this way of thinking.

**Swindoll** writes that "it would have been entirely reasonable for each group to expect their pay to be prorated according to the number of hours they worked. But the point of Jesus' surprising parable isn't that people get what they deserve or that people should work hard for their wages. It is about God's grace, illustrated in the overwhelming mercy, generosity, and goodness of the landowner. To underscore the great benevolence of this employer, Jesus noted that regardless of when they showed up on the jobsite and how long they worked—even if it was just one hour—each laborer received a denarius." (See [Insights on Matthew 16--28 - Page 125](#))

*He paid on the scale of grace,  
and not at the rate of merit....  
Oh, the riches of the grace of God!*

**C H Spurgeon** - Our Lord's pay is not a hire of deservings, but a gift of bounty. He paid on the scale of grace, and not at the rate of merit. He commenced in superb style, and to those who began to work at the eleventh hour, he gave every man a penny: here was a full day's pay for one hour's work. Herein was displayed the boundless bounty of the lord of the vineyard. **That some, who have served the Lord but a very brief time, have equaled and even excelled those who have been for many years believers, is clear, for many short but blessed lives attest it. Converted late in life, they have been singularly diligent, specially consecrated, and memorably holy, and thus they have obtained the full result of grace at a speedy rate. God will place in heavenly glory those who turn to Christ even at the last.** Did not our Lord say even to the dying thief, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise"? To what better place could any venerable saint have been taken? Oh, the riches of the grace of God!

**Matthew 20:10 “When those hired first came, they thought that they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius.**

KJV Matthew 20:10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

BGT Matthew 20:10 καὶ ὅτε οἱ πρῶτοι ἤμισαν τὴν πλεονάζουσαν μισθονταὶ· καὶ λαβὼν [τὴν] ὀνείον καὶ ἄλλοι.

NET Matthew 20:10 And when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more. But each one also received the standard wage.

CSB Matthew 20:10 So when the first ones came, they assumed they would get more, but they also received a denarius each.

ESV Matthew 20:10 Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius.

NIV Matthew 20:10 So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius.

NLT Matthew 20:10 When those hired first came to get their pay, they assumed they would receive more. But they, too, were paid a day's wage.

## FALSE ASSUMPTION LEADS TO INFLATED EXPECTATION

**When those hired first ([protos](#)) came** - This group had begun work about 6 AM and had agreed to a denarius for their day's wage.

**they thought** (assumed, expected) **that they would receive more** - This statement presupposes that they knew that the 11th hour group had received a denarius. This is what natural human thinking would expect.

**but each of them also received a denarius ([denarion](#))** - Contrary to their expectation, the first group received the same wage as the last group. This is a parable and Jesus is not describing the approach of men to this situation but the gracious, generous approach of God. They received what they were promised and the wage was fair.

---

**[C H Spurgeon](#)** - Possibly the first felt their vanity wounded by being paid after the others.

They used their waiting time in considering their own superiority to the late-comers. Filled with legal principles, they kicked at the sovereignty of grace, and virtually in this matter rebelled against justice also. Those who are not friends to any one attribute of God are not in love with the others.

*Sooner or later, those who rage at sovereignty  
resist justice also.*

Sooner or later, those who rage at sovereignty resist justice also. They had what was promised them: what more would they have a fair wage was given: they received every man a penny. What more could they expect?

*God will not be bound by our supposings;  
and we do but deceive ourselves if we think He will.*

But they supposed — there was the difficulty: they had a theory to support, a supposition to justify; and so they were aggrieved because their supposition did not develop into a fact. God will not be bound by our supposings; and we do but deceive ourselves if we think He will.

**Matthew 20:11 “When they received it, they grumbled at the landowner,**

- **they grumbled:** Lu 5:30 15:2,28-30 19:7 Ac 11:2,3 13:45 22:21,22 1Th 2:16 Jude 1:16

## GRUMBLING OVER THEIR JUST PAY

**When they received it, they grumbled ([gogguzo](#)) at the landowner** - **Grumbled** is in the imperfect tense depicting them as murmuring over and over. Clearly they are grumbling because they feel slighted when they saw what the 11th hour group received the same as they received. Read their grumbling words in Mt 20:12.

**[John MacArthur](#)** explains "The owner wasn't unfair with them; it was just that he was generous with the rest. Some people have a hard time when others prosper. The issue here is not the fairness of the householder, but the jealousy of those who worked the longest. Don't impugn God; impugn them."

*As soon as the penny was in their hand,  
a murmur was in their mouth.*

-- C H Spurgeon

---

**Grumbled** ([1111](#)) **[gogguzo](#)** means to [murmur](#), [mutter](#), make complaining remarks or noises under one's breath. In 1 Co 10:10 it is used with idea of complaint (cf Nu 11:1). **[Gogguzo](#)** is an [onomatopoeic](#) word derived from the sound made when murmuring or muttering in a low and indistinct voice with the idea of complaint. In short this word gives us a vivid picture to help us imagine this scene of religious hypocrites making audible expressions of their dissatisfaction with Jesus and His acceptance of a despised tax collector even to the point of willingness to fellowship over a meal with him! Philosophers also warned against grumbling, noting that one ought to accept whatever the gods and Fate would send. Webster's English Dictionary has this note on [grumble](#) - to complain in a low harsh voice and often in a surly manner <workers grumbling about the low wages. Synonyms include croak, grouch,

grouse, grunt, murmur, mutter, scold; compare complain, bellyache, crab, fuss, gripe, holler, squawk, whine; groan, moan; complain, kick.

**Gogguzo** - 7v - Matt. 20:11; Lk. 5:30; Jn. 6:41; Jn. 6:43; Jn. 6:61; Jn. 7:32; 1 Co. 10:10

**C H Spurgeon** - As soon as the penny was in their hand, a murmur was in their mouth. It was a fair wage, and what they agreed to take; but yet, when they had received, it, they murmured against the goodman of the house. His only supposable fault was that, as a good man, he was too good to the short-timers.

The Lord does often greatly bless men whose working lives are short, and even those who are saved late in life. He does not measure up work as we do, by the rod, or by the hour. He has his own gracious ways of estimating service, and the reckonings of grace are not like those of law.

At the sight of great grace envious hearts grow sour. The murmurers said, not that the generous Lord had lowered them, but that he had advanced others who had wrought but one hour. Their complaint was, "Thou hast made them equal unto us." In this he had used his own money as he pleased, even as God dispenses grace as he wills. He is never unjust to any; but in gifts of bounty he will not be bound by our ideas of equity. Had they been of the right sort, they would have rejoiced that they had been able to give to him a fair day's work, since they had borne the burden and heat of the day.

At any rate, it is a great privilege to be serving the Lord throughout a long life, and those who have enjoyed this high favor are deeply indebted to the grace of God. Blessed be our heavenly Father, some of us have been his servants from our youth, and have endured no little labor for his name's sake; but in this we rejoice greatly, and magnify his love.

**Matthew 20:12 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.'**

- **equal:** Lu 14:10,11 Ro 3:22-24,30 Eph 3:6
- **borne:** Isa 58:2,3 Zec 7:3-5 Mal 1:13 3:14 Lu 15:29,30 18:11,12 Ro 3:27 9:30-32 10:1-3 11:5,6 1Co 4:11 2Co 11:23-28

## THEY JUSTIFY THEIR GRUMBLING

saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden ([baros](#)) and the scorching heat ([kauson](#)) of the day' - NLT - "Those people worked only one hour, and yet you've paid them just as much as you paid us who worked all day in the scorching heat.' The first group justifies their grumbling and even throws in words like **borne the burden and the scorching heart of the day** in an attempt to buttress their complaint.

**Burden** (weight) ([922](#)) [baros](#) English - barometer from **baros** + **metron**) literally refers to a weight (a heavy weight), burden, trouble, load. In Classic Greek **baros** refers to a weight or heaviness and then a burden. In the NT **baros** is used only figuratively meaning something pressing on one physically or emotionally either in a bad or good sense. The burden of a thing (hardship, daily toil - Mt 20:12) or that which a person bears (Gal 6:2 - oppressive suffering), imposition of religious requirement (Acts 15:28+, difficult duty in Rev 2:24+), weight as equivalent to authority (wield authority, insist on one's own importance - 1Th 2:7 and secular Greek writings). **Baros** was used in some Greek secular writings in a metaphorical sense to describe grief or misery. Paul's use in 2Co 4:17 is metaphorical where it pictures a believer's future glory, which is a "weight" every believer should desire and by grace seek after.

**Scorching heat** ([2742](#)) ([kauson](#) from [kaio](#) - to burn, kindle) means burning heat. Burning sun. Of intense heat as from the sun or a scorching east wind that would parch the lips and crack the skin. Only in Matt. 20:12; Lk 12:55+; Jas. 1:11+

**Complete Biblical Library** - This word appears first in classical Greek around 300 B.C., usually referring to the sun's "heat." In at least one other source it is used as a medical term meaning "heartburn" or "heat in the stomach" (cf. Moulton-Milligan). As used in the Septuagint, this rather late word has two meanings. In Genesis 31:40 Jacob reminded his angry father-in-law Laban that the "heat" (*kausōn*) consumed him by day and the cold by night. Otherwise *kausōn* in the Septuagint refers to the "destructive, scorching wind" which sometimes blows off the desert areas. It is usually translated "east wind" and is also known as the dreaded sirocco.

**Kausōn** is used in James 1:11. In Jas 1:10 James reminded his readers that faith in Christ expresses itself in humility. The use of *kausōn* in Jas 1:11 is best translated as "scorching heat" in the graphic language of James



rather than as a reference to the sirocco ("scorching wind"). This best fits into the analogy which James used in verses 9-11. In summer, Palestine experiences scorching heat. The same use of *kausōn* is reflected in Matthew 20:12 and probably also in Luke 12:55, though some do believe the term means the "scorching wind" of the sirocco.

**KAUSON IN SEPTUAGINT** - Isa. 49:10; Jer. 18:17; Jer. 51:1; Ezek. 17:10; Ezek. 19:12; Hos. 12:1; Hos. 13:15; Jon. 4:8

---

### Warding Off Jealousy

Once when Calvin was sending a letter to his close friend Pierre Viret by one of a pair of students, he noticed that the other was a little jealous at not being the messenger. Calvin quickly dashed off another letter to Viret. The letter contained only the request that Viret pretend it was a valuable letter. —"John Calvin," Christian History, no. 12.

**Matthew 20:13 "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?"**

- **Friend:** Mt 22:12 26:50
- **I am doing you no wrong:** Ge 18:25 Job 34:8-12,17,18 35:2 40:8 Ro 9:14,15,20

## LANDOWNER JUSTIFIES HIS WAGES TO FIRST GROUP

**But** - Term of contrast. In contrast to the grumbling of the men we here see the goodness of the landowner.

**He answered and said to one of them, 'Friend** ([hetairos](#) - a gentle rebuke, cf Mt 22:12), **I am doing you no wrong** ([adikeo](#)) - The landowner was correct for a denarius was the amount they agreed on. In short, they could not accuse the landowner of unjust treatment, for they received what they deserved.

**did you not agree** ([sumphoneo](#)) **with me for a denarius** ([denarion](#)) - By asking a question, the landowner reminds the first group of their agreement to work for one denarius, emphasizing that he had done no wrong to them. And recall his standard for the other 4 groups was **whatever is right I will give you**.

**Believer's Study Bible** - Mt 20:13-16 "Denarius" is a lawful day's wage. The goodness of the householder is in his willingness to pay the equivalent of a day's wage to those who labored for only one hour. No offense can be charged to him since he agreed with each group to pay what was right. His sovereignty guaranteed him the right to pay more generously if he so desired. Also, the story may have Jewish-Gentile overtones, with the Gentiles' coming belatedly into the great plan of God. Whatever the case, the lesson in the parable is surely that God is both fair and generous with His servants.

**C H Spurgeon** - He did not fall into a dispute with the whole company; but he answered one of them, which was quite enough. They had been individually hired, and individually he argues with them. It is a calm and reasonable reply: "Friend, I do thee no wrong." If the Lord rewards us graciously for what we do, we are not wronged because another who has done less has a like recompense. The quiet personal question is one to which there is no answer: "Didst not thou agree with me for a penny?" Yet the legal spirit will come in even concerning work which is all of grace. Even among the Father's true sons, the elder brother gets touched with this alien spirit. None of us are quite free from it: it seems bred in the bone of our proud nature, yet nothing is more unlovely or unreasonable.

God's Way of Justice

Our desire for justice for ourselves and for others often complicates the issues, builds up factions and quarrels. Worldly justice and unworldly justice are quite different things. The supernatural approach, when understood, is to turn the other cheek, to give up what one has, willingly, gladly, with no spirit of martyrdom, to rejoice in being the least, to being unrecognized, the slightest.

—Dorothy Day, "Reflections," Christianity Today, Vol. 44, no. 10.

---

**Matthew 20:14 'Take what is yours and go, but I wish to give to this last man the same as to you.**

- **Take what is yours and go:** Mt 6:2,6,16 2Ki 10:16,30,31 Eze 29:18-20 Lu 15:31 16:25 Ro 3:4,19

## THE OWNER GIVES JUSTLY AND JUSTIFIES HIS GIVING

**Take** ([aorist imperative](#) = "Just Do It!") **what is yours and go** ([present imperative](#)) - The owner commands the first group to accept what they agreed upon. The owner was guilty of no cheating or wrongdoing.

So take what's yours, and freely so,  
And trust My ways, though you don't know.  
For grace is not a wage you earn—  
It's love divine at every turn."

**but I wish to give to this last man the same as to you** - Here the owner justifies his wage to the last man as his sovereign right to dispense as he wills. Clearly the last received more than his hour of work justified. The point is that the landowner's wage of a denarius was a reflection of his generosity and his grace (unmerited favor). This points to God's grace for He gives not according to time or effort, but out of mercy and generosity. "I wish to give..." shows that God has the right and authority to bless as He sees fit.

**Swindoll** - Yet the owner was not only just, he was also generous. Knowing that those who had only worked an hour ... or three ... or six ... wouldn't have enough money to support their families if he prorated their pay, he decided to treat them with grace and generosity by giving them not what they deserved but what they needed—a full day's wage. (See [Insights on Matthew 16--28 - Page 125](#))

**Ryrie** - This is the point of the parable: God's grace and generosity know no bounds, and man's ideas of merit and earned rewards are irrelevant.

**Ray Fowler:** In the parable the earlier workers boasted in their works. They said, "We bore the burden of the work and the heat of the day!" But that's the problem. Those who trust in their works receive God's justice, but they forfeit God's mercy and grace. If you want justice, you will get justice. I don't recommend it, because we are all on the wrong side of God's law. If you want justice, you will get justice, but if you want mercy and grace, then you need to put your faith in Jesus. We can also apply this to heaven and eternal rewards. On the one hand we all receive differing rewards depending on what we have done for Christ. But on the other hand, we all get the same reward, in that we all inherit eternal life with God forever. Because once you have eternal life, what do all the other rewards really matter?

**C H Spurgeon** - The good man stands to his determination of bounty. He will not be driven from liberality by envious tongues. What he gives is his own, and he maintains his right to do as he pleases with it. **This is a fine illustration of the sovereignty of divine grace.** Each man shall have all he can claim. "Take that thine is; " and having it, let him rest content: "Go thy way ." The Lord will not be ruled by our regulations, but declares, "I will give unto this last, even as unto thee ." It is condescending on his part to say a word in defense of his most fit and fair position: "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will saith my own? " If mercy be the Lord's own, he may give it as he pleases; and if the reward of service be wholly of grace, the Lord may render it according to his own pleasure. Be ye sure that he will do so. In words of thunder he says, both under the law and under the gospel, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

**Matthew 20:15 '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?'**

KJV Matthew 20:15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

BGT Matthew 20:15 [ ] ο κ ξεστ ν μοι θ λω ποι σαι ν το ς μο ς; φθαλμ ς σου πονηρ ς σιν τι γ γαθ ς ε μι;

NET Matthew 20:15 Am I not permitted to do what I want with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?

CSB Matthew 20:15 Don't I have the right to do what I want with my business? Are you jealous because I'm generous? '

ESV Matthew 20:15 Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?'

NIV Matthew 20:15 Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?"

NLT Matthew 20:15 Is it against the law for me to do what I want with my money? Should you be jealous because I am kind to others?"

- **Is it not lawful:** Mt 11:25 Ex 33:19 De 7:6-8 1Ch 28:4,5 Jer 27:5-7 Jn 17:2 Ro 9:15-24 11:5,6 1Co 4:7 Eph 1:11 2:1,5 Jas 1:18
- **is your eye envious:** Mt 6:23 De 15:9 28:54 Pr 23:6 28:22 Mk 7:22 Jas 5:9
- **because I am generous:** Jon 4:1-4 Ac 13:45

#### Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 15:9 "Beware that there is no base thought in your heart, saying, 'The seventh year, the year of remission, is near,' and **your eye is hostile** toward your poor brother, and you give him nothing; then he may cry to the LORD against you, and it will be a sin in you.

Jonah 4:1-4 But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry. 2 He prayed to the LORD and said, "Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity. 3 "Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life." 4 The LORD said, "Do you have good reason to be angry?"

Acts 13:45 But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming.

### SURPRISING GRACE AND GENEROSITY

**Is it not lawful** ([exesti](#) - permitted, allowed, have the right) **for me to do what I wish with what is my own**(money)? - In the form of a question (calling for a "Yes" response) the landowner appeals to his right to do what he wishes with that which belongs to him.

**Swindoll** - Because the money belonged to him to do with as he chose, the landowner had the freedom to give it to anybody at any time under any conditions (20:15). How natural it is for worldly-minded people to become envious when a generous person demonstrates such grace! (See [Insights on Matthew 16--28 - Page 126](#))

**Or is your eye envious** ([poneros](#)) **because I am generous** ([agathos](#)) - **KJV** = "Is thine eye evil?" An evil eye referred to one who was jealous, envious, covetous. **ESV** = "Or do you begrudge my generosity? Literally this describes polar opposites evil versus good -- "Is your eye evil because I am good?" The evil eye resents what someone else has. Jealousy is a part of our fallen nature. With his second question, the landowner calls the man to search his own heart. The early workers' complaint wasn't about injustice but was about comparison and envy. This is a warning against resenting grace when others receive what we believe they "don't deserve."

[John MacArthur](#) - The first laborers weren't upset over their wage because they knew it was a generous one. What they couldn't stand was someone else getting the same thing without working as hard as they had. They should have said, "Isn't it wonderful how generous the owner is to those who have the same need we have but weren't hired as early?"

[ESV Study Bible](#) (borrow) - Literally, "Is your eye evil?" The laborer failed to be thankful for his own wage because he was blinded by his self-interested lack of compassion for his fellow worker.

*God owes us nothing,  
and we owe Him everything.*  
-- Charles Swindoll

**THOUGHT-** Have I ever resented God's blessings in someone else's life? Do I compare my "labor" for God with that of others?

**Swindoll** adds "So what if you've been a faithful believer since childhood and some recent convert gets all the glory? That's God's business, not yours. What does it matter if you seem to be burdened by struggles while less mature believers seem to be coasting through life? God will do what's right." (See [Insights on Matthew 16--28 - Page 127](#))

**Stu Weber:** This parable highlights both the justice and the grace of God. Neither is to be taken for granted. When God chooses to reward or punish according to what is justly due a person, no one has a right to complain. On the one hand, his rewards are “recompense” or “pay back” (Matt. 16:27; 2 Cor. 5:10; Col. 3:24-25). On the other hand, the God of Scripture is a God who delights to lavish blessing on his children (e.g., Eph. 1:3-14). But we must be careful not to presume upon His generosity. His gifts are not something we deserve; they are given freely at his discretion. If anyone receives the “raw end of the deal” (by our reasoning), it would be God, who gives much more than he “owes.” (See [Holman New Testament Commentary - Matthew](#))

Grace doesn't measure hours worked. It doesn't compare resumes or check who came first. Grace simply gives—because the Giver is good. We often want God to be fair, but what we truly need is for Him to be merciful. And praise God—He is and does not give us what we deserve!

**Daniel Doriani:** So then, as Jesus says, he is fair to everyone, whether one works all day or one hour. To be precise, there are three lessons, one for each character in the story: The early workers must know that God treats no one unfairly. If they stumble, they stumble over God's grace and generosity, not his injustice. God is generous to those who deserve nothing. It is his sovereign pleasure to give good gifts to his children. All believers receive the same gift, eternal life with the Lord.

*The key is our motivation and priorities—earthly or heavenly...*

*Do we live for the glory of God or for self?*

*Do we strive for the things of this world or the things of God?*

**Grant Osborne:** Rewards While we do not serve the Lord for the reward we will get, Jesus wants us to know that God will indeed reward us for our life of piety. We do not want to fall into Peter's error of asking, “What's in it for us?” That is a veneer of piety turned into self-interest. Yet at the same time Jesus wants us to know that God will vindicate us for our sacrifices and suffering. In fact, “reward” ([misthos](#)) occurs seven times in Mt 6:1–18 (Mt 6:1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 16, 18) and is a central theme of the entire Sermon on the Mount (e.g., the eschatological promise in each of the beatitudes of Mt 5:1–12). The key is our motivation and priorities—earthly or heavenly (cf. Mt 6:19–21). Do we live for the glory of God or for self? Do we strive for the things of this world or the things of God? That will determine our true destiny. (See [Matthew - Page 724](#))

**C H Spurgeon** - That was a home question for each of the grumblers to answer, — Is thine eye evil, because I am good? ” Does it make you jealous to see others enjoy my bounty? Because I am good to these who deserved so little, does this deprive you of the good which I have granted to you? Let us never envy late converts their joy or their usefulness; but applaud the sovereignty which blesses them so largely. We share the mercy with them; let us give them an equal portion of our Joy.

---

**Envious** (wicked, bad) ([4190](#)) [poneros](#) from **poneo** = work or toil, Robertson says the idea is that labor is an annoyance, bad, evil; Noun [poneria](#) derived from **poneros**) means evil including evil, malignant character, pernicious (see Webster 1828 definition below), that which is morally or socially worthless, wicked, base, bad, degenerate. **Poneros** denotes determined, aggressive, and fervent evil that actively opposes what is good. **Poneros** is not just bad in character (like [kakos](#) - see below), but bad in effect (injurious)!

**Poneros** describes evil in active opposition to good. It means not only evil in its nature but viciously evil in its influence and actively harmful. **Poneros** used to describe Satan (ho poneros = “Evil one”), the god of this age, who is corrupting man and dragging him to destruction. This denotes someone who is not content in being corrupt themselves. They seek to corrupt others and draw them into the same destruction!

There are two Greek words for **evil** - poneros and [kakos](#), the latter describing that which is inherently evil. **Poneros** on the other hand refers to the one who (or the thing that) is not only evil but is not content unless it carries out active evil, evil is actively harmful, hurtful and corrupting. It is therefore not surprising that **poneros** is one of the synonyms for “Satan” himself. The Greek *ho poneros* means “the (specific) evil” (translated “the evil one”) and is used of the Devil ([diabolos](#)) in Mt 13:19, 38, Eph 6:16, 2Th 3:3, 1Jn 2:13-14, 3:12, 5:18-19. Indeed, the Devil is called the **evil one**, not only because he is intrinsically evil, but also because he is an evil doer, out to deceive and harm his victims. Some would add he is described in Mt 6:13 where Jesus instructs us to pray “deliver us from evil (literally “*tou ponerou*” ~ “the evil”).”

**Generous** (good) ([18](#)) [agathos](#) means intrinsically good, inherently good in quality but with the idea of good which is also profitable, useful, benefiting others, benevolent (marked by or disposed to doing good). **Agathos** is one whose goodness and works of goodness are transferred to others. Good and doing good is the idea. Agathos describes that which is beneficial in addition to being good. **Agathos** is that which is good in its character, beneficial in its effects and/or useful in its action. **Agathos** is used in the New Testament primarily of spiritual and moral excellence. Paul uses agathos to describe the gospel as the “glad tidings of **good** things” (Ro 10:15-[+](#)). The writer of Hebrews uses it in the same way, of “the **good** things to come” of which “Christ appeared as a high priest” (Heb 9:11-[+](#)) and of which the law was “only a shadow” (Heb 10:1-[+](#)). The precise meaning of **agathos** can be difficult to appreciate and distinguish from **kalos** ([2570](#)) an adjective that is also translated good. An attempt is made in the following

discussion to bring out the difference, but in some verses where both are used, this distinction can be difficult to appreciate.

**ILLUSTRATION** - The sin of a small heart. At least two people in the Bible illustrate a miserly heart. In the Old Testament Jonah is commissioned to go to Nineveh and preach. After resisting God's call, he finally goes and the people repent—but Jonah is upset!

In the New Testament Jesus told a story about a man who had two sons. The younger took his inheritance, traveled to a far country, and squandered it. He found repentance in a pig pen and came home. His father greeted him and threw a party. But the elder brother could not rejoice in the grace of the Father.

Maybe the test of whether or not you have really received grace is “can you be gracious?”

**Stephen Olford** - This parable preeminently sets forth the spirit of humility and the sense of unworthiness that should characterize the servant of God. The servant should always remember that even after he has done all, he is unprofitable, for he has only then done his rightful duty.

Moreover, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:25+). Who is the servant to question His justice?

It is very obvious that the grumbling servants of this parable were more concerned about their pay than about their faithfulness to the landowner who had called them into service, for no other reason than the fact that he was full of grace and kindness. Who am I? Why should I be called—let alone chosen—to serve God, when thousands are not? This must be our spirit.

Lord, I am humbled that You would call me to serve You.

**ED:** This devotional thought recalls Paul's words in 2 Cor 3:5-6+ - Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, 6 who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

**Matthew 20:16 “So the last shall be first, and the first last.”**

- **the last:** Mt 8:11-12 Mt 19:30 21:31 Mk 10:31 Lu 7:47 Lk 13:28-30 15:7 17:17,18 Jn 12:19-22 Ro 5:20 9:30
- **and:** Mt 7:13 22:14 Lu 14:24 Ro 8:30 1Th 2:13 2Th 2:13,14 Jas 1:23-25

#### **Related Passages:**

Matthew 19:30+ “But many who are first will be last; and the last, first.

### **GOD'S PARADOX LAST FIRST! FIRST LAST!**

**So** - Refers to the preceding narrative. God's grace doesn't operate on a merit system. He rewards all who come to Him—not because they've earned it, but because He is good.

**The last** ([eschatos](#)) **shall be first** ([protos](#)), **and the first** ([protos](#)) **last** ([eschatos](#))- As Spurgeon says "precedence in the kingdom of heaven is according to the order of grace."

**John MacArthur** - What is the point of the parable? We understand that the owner paid all the laborers equally, whether they started early or late. So the last shall be first and the first shall be last means everyone receives the same thing. The last laborers hired were the first in line to receive their wages, and the first were last in line to get the same wage. The point is equality. **The Interpretation** - The householder represents God. The vineyard is the Kingdom-- the sphere of God's rule. The laborers are those who come into the service of the King. The day of work is their lifetime. The evening is eternity. The denarius is eternal life. You could say the steward represents Jesus Christ, to whom has been committed all judgment. So what does it all mean? No matter how long you worked in God's Kingdom and no matter how hard or easy your circumstances were, when you get to the end of your life, you will receive the same eternal life as everyone else in God's Kingdom. Isn't that a great truth?

**Ryrie** - Not that they trade places but that there will be an equality of rewards for equal faithfulness to differing opportunities given to each of us.

**ESV Study Bible** (borrow) - A disciple of Jesus should not measure his or her worth by comparing it with the accomplishments and sacrifices of others, but should focus on serving from a heart of gratitude in response to God's grace. Jesus is not denying degrees of reward in heaven (see 1 Cor. 3:14-15+) but is affirming that God's generosity is more abundant than anyone would expect: all the



laborers except the very first got more than they deserved. It is probably correct also to see here a warning that Jesus' early followers (such as the Twelve) should not despise those who would come later.

**Richard Gardner:** The purpose of these sayings is not to establish a new order of precedence, but rather to tell us to stop calculating. As noted earlier, the riches of the kingdom are God's to distribute—and God is full of surprises!

**C. H. Spurgeon** - Here our Lord repeats his famous saying, which we noted in Mt 19:30, and lets us know that precedence in the kingdom of heaven is according to the order of grace. The King will rule in his own courts; and who shall question his will? As he is King, it is his right to rule. Loyal subjects are ever ready to support their sovereign. Our King reigns by right divine, and cannot do wrong. It was said of David, "Whatsoever the king did pleased all the people." Let this be true of David's Son and his people. Jesus tells us that, while many men are called to service, few reach the standard of choice men.

Some of the last shall be first, for abounding grace is seen in their brief hour of work; but some of the first shall be last, for they are not always diligent throughout their longer day, and so fall back in the race, or their legal notions put them far behind those who were called later in life, but who are better instructed in the principles of divine grace.

**J Ligon Duncan** - This parable also reminds us that God's reward are not according to human and earthly measure. The human and earthly measure would expect those who worked longer in the day in the parable of the landowner to get more than those that had only worked an hour. But human measurements don't apply in the kingdom of heaven. God is sovereign, all His gifts are gifts of grace, and therefore we need to bow before that and acknowledge that. And so it's important for us as we serve in the kingdom not to serve with the spirit of wanting to get more honor and more recognition and more authority given to us than to our brethren.

---

**John MacArthur** excerpt from his sermon - full sermon [Equality in the Kingdom](#) (Mt 19:30 – 20:16) ([See also his study guide on the parable](#))

Now when it comes then to the blessings of salvation, God give to all equally, equally. All of us who come to the Lord Jesus Christ receive the same salvation. No matter what the circumstances of our coming, no matter how diligent or faithful our service, it is God's pleasure to give us the same glorious salvation.

### 1) The Proverb (19:30; 20:16) Everybody's the same.

### 2) The Parable

You see, they weren't in a negotiating position; they had no choice. If they didn't work, they didn't eat, they'd have to take whatever they could get. Consequently, they were often taken advantage of. But apparently they trusted this man. And so without negotiating any price, they went their way. . . The issue here is not whether the householder is fair, the issue is the jealousy of the people who worked the longest, right? Don't impugn God, impugn them. They got what was right and fair. But they were filled with envy, and they griped. And they give this little speech, "You made them equal unto us. And we borne the burden and heat of the day." And they get real, you know, kind of expressive here. The word they used for "heat" is the word for "burner." It's the word that's often used of the scorching east wind that parches the lips and cracks the skin when that hot east wind blows. I mean they were really dramatizing their plight. . . Jealousy is a part of our fallenness, isn't it? You see, it wasn't that they didn't get a fair wage. They got a very fair wage, a generous wage. It's that they couldn't stand somebody else getting the same thing without working as hard as they did. Instead of saying to themselves, "Isn't it wonderful that he's so generous to those who have the same need we have, but weren't hired early. Isn't it wonderful that even though they had to wait all day to be hired, their need wasn't any less; and he gave them according to their need, not according to their effort, not according to their work." Instead of saying that – that's what the magnanimous heart says: "I rejoice that you received as much as I did, because that's what you needed, even though you didn't work as hard as I worked." That's the magnanimous heart. Well, that's the parable. And he says, "I have the right to give whatever I want. Are you going to be jealous if I give it?"

### 3) The Point of the Parable

The man is God, the householder. The vineyard is the kingdom, the sphere of God's rule. It is the kingdom of grace, the kingdom of salvation. The laborers are those who come into salvation; they come into the kingdom; they come into the service of the king, the service of God. The day, the day of work is lifetime. The evening is eternity. The denarius is eternal life. And maybe you could even say the steward Jesus Christ, to whom has been committed all judgment. So what's it saying? It's saying this: No matter how long you worked in the kingdom, no matter how hard or how easy your circumstances were, no matter how difficult the task, when you get to the end, you're all going to receive the same eternal life. Isn't that a great truth? That's really what He's teaching. . .

So you see, it was this selfish, indulgent, envious, confused perception of the disciples that I think our Lord was dealing with. And all He's saying in this wonderful parable is, "Look, salvation and eternal life isn't something that you earn, it's a gift that I give according

to My sovereign will.” And it is not a question of when you came in, and it is not a question of how long you worked, or how hot the day was, or how hard you worked. There’s nothing in that parable about how hard anybody worked, nothing; because eternal is not something you – what? – you earn. “And I’m going to give everyone the same reward.”

You say, “Well, now wait a minute, John. Doesn’t the Epistles tell us something about rewards for service and crowns for service?” Yeah, that’s a different issue. You get to that a little later in the Scripture. That’s not the issue here. There will be differing rewards the Lord is pleased to give His children. That’s not the issue here. The issue here is the equality of eternal life.

#### 4) The Principles

1. God initiates salvation sovereignly.
2. God establishes the terms.
3. God continues to call men into His kingdom.
4. God is redeeming those who are willing.
5. God is compassionate to those who have no resources.
6. All who come into the vineyard worked.
7. God has the sovereign authority ability to keep His promise.
8. While He always gives what He promised, He also always gives more than we deserve.
9. Humility is the only right attitude.
10. All that we receive from God is a matter of His grace.

---

**Warren Wiersbe** - This parable has nothing to do with salvation. The penny (a day's wages in that time) does not represent salvation, for nobody works for his salvation. Nor is the parable talking about rewards, for we are not all going to receive the same reward. "And every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor" (1 Cor. 3:8).

The parable is emphasizing *a right attitude in service*. It is important to note that there were actually two kinds of workers hired that day: those who wanted a contract and agreed to work for a penny a day, and those who had no contract and agreed to take whatever the owner thought was right. The first laborers that he hired insisted on a contract.

This explains why the householder paid the workers as he did: He wanted those who were hired first (who insisted on a contract) to see how much he paid the workers who were hired later. It was one way the owner could show those workers how really generous he was.

Put yourself in the place of those workers who were hired first but paid last. They each expected to get a penny, because that was what they agreed to accept. But imagine their surprise when they saw the laborers who were hired *last* each receiving a penny! This meant their own wages should have been twelve pennies each!

But the 3 o'clock workers also received a penny—for only three hours of work. The men last in line quickly recalculated their wages: four pennies for the day's work. When the men hired at noon also were paid a penny, this cut the salary of the contract workers considerably, for now they would earn only two pennies.

But the owner gave them one penny each. Of course, they complained! But they had no argument, because *they had agreed to work for a penny*. They received what they asked for. Had they trusted the goodness of the owner, they would have received far more. But they insisted on a contract.

*We should not serve Him because we want to receive an expected reward,  
and we should not insist on knowing what we will get.*

**The lesson for Christ's disciples is obvious.** We should not serve Him because we want to receive an expected reward, and we should not insist on knowing what we will get. God is infinitely generous and gracious and will always give us better than we deserve.

Now we can understand the perils that were hidden in Peter's question in Matthew 19:27. For one thing, we must not "suppose" (Matt. 20:10) that we will get something more if we really do not deserve it. It is possible to do the Father's work and yet not do His will from the heart (Eph. 6:6). If we serve Him only for the benefits (temporal and eternal), then we will miss the best blessings He has for us. We must trust Him unreservedly and believe that He will always give what is best.

**There is the danger of pride. "What shall we have?" asked Peter.** This parable warned him, "How do you know you will have

anything?" Beware of overconfidence when it comes to the rewards God will give, for those first in their own eyes (and in the eyes of others) may end up last! Likewise, do not get discouraged; for those who consider themselves "unprofitable servants" may end up first.

**Beware of the danger of watching other workers and measuring yourself by them.** "Judge nothing before the time," Paul warns in 1 Corinthians 4:5. We see the worker and the work, but God sees the heart.

**Finally, we must beware of criticizing God and feeling that we have been left out.** Had the early morning workers trusted the owner and not asked for an agreement, the owner would have given them much more. He was generous, but they would not trust him. They did not rejoice that others received more; instead, they were jealous and complained. The goodness of the owner did not lead them to repentance (Rom. 2:4). It revealed the true character of their hearts: They were selfish! Whenever we find a complaining servant, we know he has not fully yielded to the master's will. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

---

### God's Fairness

The parable of the vineyard workers (Matthew 20) offends our sense of fairness. Why should everyone get equal pay for unequal work?

Back in Ontario when the apples ripened, Mom would sit all seven of us down, Dad included, with pans and paring knives until the mountain of fruit was reduced to neat rows of filled canning jars. She never bothered keeping track of how many we did, though the younger ones undoubtedly proved more of a nuisance than a help: cut fingers, squabbles over who got which pan, apple core fights. But when the job was done, the reward for everyone was the same: the largest chocolate dipped cone money could buy.

A stickler might argue it wasn't quite fair since the older ones actually peeled apples. But I can't remember anyone complaining about it. A family understands it operates under a different set of norms than a courtroom. In fact, when the store ran out of ice cream and my younger brother had to make do with a Popsicle, we felt sorry for him despite his lack of productivity (he'd eaten all the apples he'd peeled that day—both of them). God wants all his children to enjoy the complete fullness of eternal life. No true child of God wants it any other way.

—Robert De Moor in *The Banner. Leadership*, Vol. 5, no. 3.

See: Genesis 37:4; 1 Samuel 18:8; Matthew 20:1-16

---

### Statistic: Jesus' Teachings on Money

Jesus talked much about money. Sixteen of the thirty-eight parables were concerned with how to handle money and possessions. In the Gospels, an amazing one out of ten verses (288 in all) deal directly with the subject of money. The Bible offers 500 verses on prayer, less than 500 verses on faith, but more than 2,000 verses on money and possessions.

---

A man has made at least a start on discovering the meaning of human life when he plants shade trees under which he knows full well he will never sit. —D. Elton Trueblood;

---

### QUESTION - [What did Jesus mean when He said the first will be last and the last will be first?WATCH VIDEO](#)

**ANSWER** - Jesus made the statement "many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first" (Matthew 19:30) in the context of His encounter with the [rich young ruler](#) (Matthew 19:16–30). After the young man turned away from Jesus, unable to give up his great wealth (verse 22), Jesus' disciples asked the Lord what reward they would have in heaven, since they had given up everything to follow Him (verses 27–30). Jesus promised them "a hundred times as much," plus eternal life (verse 29). Then He said, "But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first" (verse 30).

Jesus reiterated this truth in Matthew 20:16 at the end of the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, a story designed to illustrate the last being first and the first being last. What exactly did Jesus mean when He said, "Many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first"? First, we should eliminate what He did *not* mean. Jesus was not teaching that the way to get to heaven is to live a life of poverty in this world. Scripture is clear that salvation is by grace through faith, not of works (Ephesians 2:8–9)—and independent of one's financial status. Also, Jesus was not teaching an automatic reversal of roles in heaven. There is no heavenly law wherein the poor and oppressed must rule over the rich and powerful. The rich aren't *always* last in heaven, and the poor aren't *always* first. Nor will believers who enjoy wealth and prestige on earth be required to somehow be abased in heaven. Earthly rank will not automatically translate into an inverse heavenly rank.

When Jesus told the disciples they would be greatly rewarded in heaven for what they had given up on earth, He was contrasting their sacrifice with the rich young ruler's lack thereof—the young man had been unwilling to give up much of anything for Christ's sake (Matthew 19:16–22). God, who sees the heart, will reward accordingly. The disciples are an example of those who may be

first, and they happened to be poor (but their poverty was not what makes them first in heaven). The rich young ruler is an example of those who may be last, and he happened to be rich (but his wealth was not what makes him last).

The Lord's statement that the last would be first and the first last might also have held special meaning for Peter, who had just spoken of having "left all" (Matthew 19:27). Perhaps Jesus detected in Peter's statement a bit of boasting—Peter was on the verge of becoming spiritually complacent—as the rich young ruler was, but for a different reason. Jesus' response in verse 30 may have been an indirect warning to Peter to always find his sufficiency in Christ, not in his own sacrifice. After all, without love, even the greatest sacrifice is worthless (1 Corinthians 13:3).

In the chapter following Jesus' statement that the first will be last and the last will be first, Jesus tells a parable (Matthew 20). The story concerns some laborers who complain that others, who did not work as long as they, were paid an equal amount. In other words, they saw their own labor as worthy of compensation but considered their companions' labor to be inferior and less worthy of reward. Jesus ends the parable with the statement, "The last will be first, and the first last" (Matthew 20:16). The most direct interpretation, based on the content of the parable, is that all believers, no matter how long or how hard they work during this lifetime, will receive the same basic reward: eternal life. The thief on the cross (Luke 23:39–43), whose life of service was limited to a moment of repentance and confession of faith in Christ, received the same reward of eternal life as did Timothy, who served God for years. Of course, Scripture also teaches that there are different rewards in heaven for different services, but the ultimate reward of eternal life will be given to all equally, on the basis of God's grace in Christ Jesus.

There are several ways in which "the first will be last and the last first" holds true. There are some who were first to follow Christ *in time* yet are not the first in the kingdom. Judas Iscariot was one of the first disciples and was honored to be the treasurer of the group, yet his greed led to his undoing; Paul was the last of the apostles (1 Corinthians 15:8–9) yet the one who worked the hardest (2 Corinthians 11:23). There are some who were first *in privilege* yet are not first in the kingdom. Based on the terms of the New Covenant, the Gentiles had equal access to the kingdom of heaven, although they had not served God under the Old Covenant. The Jews, who had labored long under the Old Covenant, were jealous of the grace extended to the Gentile "newcomers" (see Romans 11:11). There are some who are first *in prestige and rank* yet might never enter the kingdom. Jesus told the Pharisees that the sinners they despised were being saved ahead of them: "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you" (Matthew 21:31–32).

What Jesus is teaching in Matthew 19:30 is this: there will be many surprises in heaven. Heaven's value system is far different from earth's value system. Those who are esteemed and respected in this world (like the rich young ruler) may be frowned upon by God. The opposite is also true: those who are despised and rejected in this world (like the disciples) may, in fact, be rewarded by God. Don't get caught up in the world's way of ranking things; it's too prone to error. Those who are first in the opinion of others (or first in their own opinion!) may be surprised to learn, on Judgment Day, they are last in God's opinion.

---

## Not Counting

Read: Matthew 20:1-16

The last will be first, and the first last. — Matthew 20:16

The play *Amadeus* tells of a composer in the 18th century seeking to understand the mind of God. The devout Antonio Salieri has the earnest desire, but not the aptitude, to create immortal music. It infuriates him that God has instead lavished the greatest of musical genius ever known on the impish Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

The play poses the same question as the book of Job, only inverted. The author of Job wonders why God would punish the most righteous man on the face of the earth; the author of *Amadeus* ponders why God would reward someone so undeserving.

Jesus' parable of the workers and their grossly unfair paychecks confronts this scandal head-on. Some people who have been idly standing around are hired by a landowner at "the eleventh hour" (Matt. 20:6-7). The other workers, who have been serving him all day long, are shocked when each receives identical pay. What employer in his right mind would pay the same amount for one hour's work as for 12!

Jesus' story makes no economic sense, and that was His intent. He was giving us a parable about grace, which cannot be calculated like a day's wages. God dispenses gifts, not wages. — Philip Yancey (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Lord, I forget sometimes that my efforts cannot earn Your love or grace or forgiveness. You have lavished grace on me as a gift and not a wage. Thank You.

In the realm of grace, the word "deserve" does not apply

**Matthew 20:17 As Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and on the way He said to them,**

KJV Matthew 20:17 And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them,

BGT Matthew 20:17 Καὶ νῆα βᾶντων ἡσοῦς ἐς ἑρῶς λυμα παρ λαβεν τοὺς δέκα [μαθητὰς] κατ' ὅσον καὶ ντὸ ἐπέναι τοῦς·

NET Matthew 20:17 As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve aside privately and said to them on the way,

CSB Matthew 20:17 While going up to Jerusalem, Jesus took the 12 disciples aside privately and said to them on the way:

ESV Matthew 20:17 And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them,

NIV Matthew 20:17 Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside and said to them,

NLT Matthew 20:17 As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside privately and told them what was going to happen to him.

- **Jesus:** Mk 10:32-34 Lu 18:31-34 Jn 12:12
- **took:** Mt 13:11 16:13 Ge 18:17 Jn 15:15 Ac 10:41

#### Related Passages:

Mark 10:32-34+ They were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful. And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him, 33 saying, “**Behold** ([idou](#)), we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. 34 “They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again.”

Luke 18:31-34+ Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, **Behold** ([idou](#)), we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. 32 “For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, 33 and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again.” 34 But the disciples understood none of these things, and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.

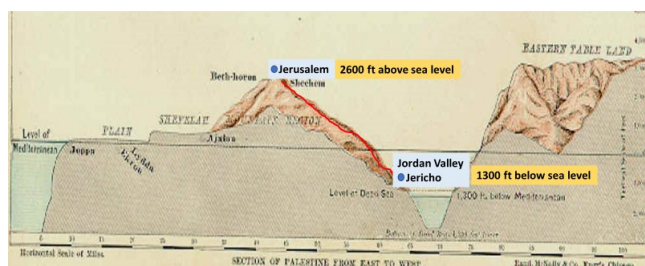


DIAGRAM DEMONSTRATING WHY ONE ALWAYS GOES “UP” TO JERUSALEM

### A PRIVATE CONVERSATION BEFORE GOING UP TO JERUSALEM

**As Jesus was about to go up** ([anabaino](#) in [present tense](#)) **to Jerusalem** - There is an interesting play on words (IMO), as go up is always used when ascending to Jerusalem, but of course Jesus was also going to "go up" on the Cross and 40 days later would "go up" to Heaven. From the map above you can discern they would have a steep, arduous climb of probably over 3000 ft and 14 miles,

not an easy "last lap" to the finish line for Jesus.

**MacArthur** - Jesus had finished His Galilean ministry and had crossed into Perea, on the other side of the Jordan River (19:1). As Jewish travelers from Galilee often did in order to avoid going through Samaria, Jesus traveled down the east side of the Jordan and crossed over to Jericho (20:29). From there He would go up to Jerusalem. (See [Matthew Commentary - Page 220](#))

**He took the twelve disciples ([mathetes](#)) aside ([paralambano](#)) by themselves (privately), and on the way He said to them** ("and told them what was going to happen to him" - NLT) This declaration was only for the ears of the inner circle of 12 disciples. Although Jesus had alluded to the Cross and His coming death, the disciples are still clueless. How providential that this third and most complete description of His crucifixion comes just after explaining that the last will be first and the first will be last. As His ministry will soon end, He focuses His attention on discipling the 12, 11 of whom would soon take His place to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom.

**Spurgeon** - Marching up, towards the guilty capital, with resolute and vigorous step, Jesus outwalked the trembling disciples, who foresaw some dire tragedy would transpire. They went with him, and that was something; and showed that, if timid, they were sincere. His words were true and significant: "**Behold ([idou](#))**, we go up to Jerusalem. " He thought it wise to tell them yet again of the dark future which was now drawing very near, so he took the twelve disciples apart in the way. That is the best communion when Jesus himself takes us apart. He knows the fittest seasons for fullest revelations. Possibly, in this, his human soul was seeking fellowship; but how little of it he found among his feeble followers! Lord, when thou dost take me apart, prepare me for full communion, lest I miss a golden opportunity!

**Grant Osborne** points out that "This is the first time the disciples are called "the Twelve" (cf. Mt 26:14, 20, 47) (ED: MATTHEW DESIGNATES THEM AS "12" IN Mt 10:2 and Mt 19:28), and apparently they are traveling with a larger group, because Jesus "takes [them] aside privately" to give them his third passion prediction (a brief fourth prediction occurs in Mt 26:2).

**Believer's Study Bible** - Mt 20:17-19 On numerous occasions, after Peter's Caesarea Philippi confession (Matt. 16:16), Jesus predicts with great specificity the events leading to His death, burial and resurrection (cf. also Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-33). The great accuracy with which Jesus foretells these future happenings is another clear evidence of His deity.

**Matthew Henry Concise** - Mt 20:17-19. Christ is more particular here in foretelling his sufferings than before. And here, as before, he adds the mention of his resurrection and his glory, to that of his death and sufferings, to encourage his disciples, and comfort them. A believing view of our once crucified and now glorified Redeemer, is good to humble a proud, self-justifying disposition. When we consider the need of the humiliation and sufferings of the Son of God, in order to the salvation of perishing sinners, surely we must be aware of the freeness and richness of Divine grace in our salvation.

---

#### QUESTION - [How many times did Jesus predict His death?](#)

**ANSWER** - Jesus' death was the final sacrifice that paid the debt of sin for all (Hebrews 9:28). His death was the ultimate purpose of His ministry. In fact, Jesus predicted His death at least three times in the [Synoptic Gospels](#) (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), and the book of John offers even more predictions.

The first time Jesus predicted His death is detailed in Matthew 16:21–23, Mark 8:31–32, and Luke 9:21–22. Jesus had just [fed the multitudes](#), and He said that the "Son of Man must suffer many things" (Mark 8:31); be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes; be killed; and be raised again. Peter then rashly began to rebuke Jesus, and Christ responded, "Get behind me, Satan!" (Matthew 16:33; Mark 8:33). Jesus knew that His death must happen. It was necessary in God's plan to save the world.

Jesus predicted His death a second time in Matthew 17:22–23, Mark 9:30–32, and Luke 9:43–45. This occurred shortly after the Transfiguration, when Peter, James, and John saw Christ in His heavenly glory. Perhaps this was the reason the disciples were so confused by Jesus telling them He was going to die. At this point, they believed His kingdom was just around the corner. Despite their lack of understanding, they were "afraid to ask" for clarification (Mark 9:32; Luke 9:45).

Matthew 20:17–19, Mark 10:32–34, and Luke 18:31–34 describe the third time Jesus predicted His death. He spoke to His disciples as they were heading up toward Jerusalem for Passover, and He told them how He would be mocked, scourged, crucified, and then rise again. On this occasion also, the disciples did not understand Jesus' saying because the meaning was hidden from them. They would soon learn what Jesus meant in the events of Good Friday and following.

The Gospel of John gives a few more predictions of Jesus's death, but they are slightly more subtle. For instance, when Mary anointed Jesus with the [costly perfume](#), and Judas asked if she should have sold it for the poor, Christ said, "Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me" (John 12:7–8). While not an explicit prediction like the previous three, this statement of Jesus clearly pointed to His coming death and burial. Again, in John 13:33, Jesus hinted that His time was short as He told the disciples, "Where I am going you cannot come." Finally, in John



14:25, Jesus talked about giving the Holy Spirit in His absence, which hinted at His death as well as the future of the church.

Jesus intentionally came to earth to die for our sins. Jesus gave His disciples predictions about His death and the events that followed “so that when it does take place you may believe” (John 14:29).

**Matthew 20:18 “Behold (idou), we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death,**

- **and the Son of Man will be delivered:** Mt 16:21 Mt 17:22,23 26:2 Ps 2:1-3 22:1-31 69:1-36 Isa 53:1-12 Da 9:24-27 Ac 2:23 4:27,28
- **they:** Mt 26:66 27:1 Mk 14:64,65 Lu 22:71

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 16:21+ (**JESUS' FIRST FORMAL PREDICTION OF HIS DEATH**) From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.

Matthew 17:22-23+ (**JESUS' SECOND FORMAL PREDICTION OF HIS DEATH**) And while they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; 23 and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day.” And they were deeply grieved.

Mark 10:32-34+ They were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed ( [thambeo](#) = bewilderment), and those who followed were fearful. And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him, 33 saying, “**Behold (idou)**, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. 34 “They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again.”

Luke 18:31-34+ Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, **Behold (idou)**, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. 32 “For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, 33 and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again.” 34 But the disciples understood none of these things, and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.

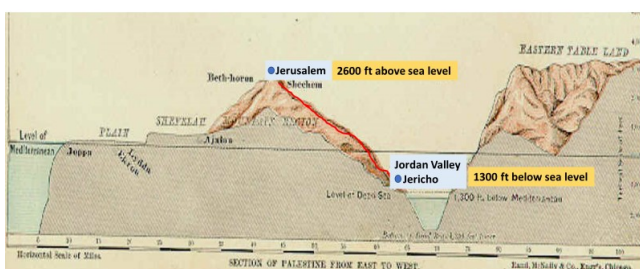


DIAGRAM DEMONSTRATING WHY ONE ALWAYS GOES “UP” TO JERUSALEM

### JESUS CLEAR PROPHECY OF COMING CRUCIFIXION

**Behold (idou) we are going up to Jerusalem** - First, note the “**behold**” ([idou](#)) indicates Jesus really wants their full attention regarding what follows. And again He emphasizes that they are **going up** in altitude to Jerusalem.

Spurgeon asks “This he said in the hearing of the disciple who would act the traitor: did no compunction visit his base heart?”

And the **Son of Man** will be delivered ([paradidomi](#) - betrayed) to the chief priests ([archiereus](#)) and scribes ([grammateus](#)), and they will condemn (sentence- [katakrino](#)) Him to death ([thanatos](#)) - **Son of Man** (cf Daniel 7:13) is used 88x/84v mostly by Jesus Himself, with **Son** emphasizing His divinity and **Man** His humanity. In this third prophecy of His death He adds details not given in the first two predictions. Yes, He would be delivered over into the hands and power of evil men but Peter uses the same verb

([paradidomi](#)) which in effect counters these evil men, Peter writing "while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but **kept entrusting** ([paradidomi](#) - [present tense](#) = His continual practice) Himself to Him who judges righteously." (1 Peter 2:23+)

**THOUGHT** - Jesus kept handing Himself over to God at each episode of His unjust suffering. This pattern climaxed when Jesus was on the cross. What an example for believers to emulate when we are unjustly suffered. Christ gave Himself over to God, even in death, because He knew that the Father would evaluate fairly all His unjust suffering. If we are to imitate Him (which we are called to do), when we are persecuted unjustly at our jobs, in our families, or in our social contacts, we need to follow His example and accept the persecution without retaliating. It is crucial that we resist [by God's grace and power of His Spirit] the urge to strike back or seek revenge in the midst of unjust persecution [Ro 12:17-21 - see [Ro 12:17](#); [18-21](#)]. We need to entrust our souls continuously, by faith, to the care of the Holy One Who will pronounce a righteous verdict, Who will avenge unjust treatment now or later and Who as Paul confidently said will bring us "safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen." (2Ti 4:18+) to eternal glory.

**John MacArthur:** And He was turned over the chief priests – the chief priests among the priests, and there were thousands of them. The chief priests were the upper echelon ones. There were the Levites; they were at the bottom of the priestly totem pole. And then there were the normal course of priests. And there was the guy who was the head of the daily course, the guy who's ahead of the weekly course. And then there was the sort of the captain of the temple, and then there was the high priest. And the guys at the top of the ladder were known as the chief priests. And so these chief priests were the hereditary aristocracy. They were in the priestly line; they got their rank by heredity. They were also accompanied by the scribes, who got their rank not by heredity, but by knowledge. They attained to knowledge by studying the law. They were the lawyers, and nobody could interpret anything without them. Very much like today, if you want to interpret any kind of law, you get into any kind of legal situation, you have to have a lawyer. Well it was that way then. In trying to interpret the Mosaic economy, they had to have "lawyers," quote/unquote, who really were the scribes who could come along side and explain the meaning of the law, and interpret the law, and so forth. ([The Sufferings of Christ](#))

**Behold** ([2400](#)) **idou** is the second person singular aorist middle imperative of eidon which means to see, perceive, look at. In the NT **idou** is used as a demonstrative particle that draws attention to what follows. **Idou** in the [middle voice](#) means "you yourself look, see, perceive!" The [aorist imperative](#) is a command emphasizing "Do it now! Don't delay!" The idea is "Lo and behold!", serving to call attention to something external or exterior to oneself. **Idou** is used by the Biblical writers to (1) prompt or arouse the reader's attention (introducing something new or unusual), (2) to mark a strong emphasis ("Indeed!" Lk 13:16) and (3) to call the reader to pay close attention (very similar to #1) so that one will listen, remember or consider.

**Spurgeon** adds that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation." I would add, **behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!"

BEHOLD (HEBREW & GREEK) - OCCURS 1326X IN NASB95 - Gen. 1:29,31; 3:22; 4:14; 6:12-13,17; 8:13; 9:9; 11:6; 12:11,19; 15:3-4,17; 16:2,6,11,14; 17:4,20; 18:9,27,31; 19:2,8,19-20,34; 20:3,15-16; 22:1,7,13,20; 24:13,15,30,43,45,51,63; 25:24,32; 26:8-9; 27:1-2,6,11,36-37,39,42; 28:12-13,15; 29:2,6,25; 30:3,34; 31:2,10,51; 32:18,20; 33:1; 34:21; 37:7,9,15,19,25,29; 38:13,23-24,27,29; 39:8; 40:6,9,16; 41:1-3,5-7,17-19,22-23,29; 42:2,13,22,27,35; 43:21; 44:8,16; 45:12; 47:1,23; 48:1-2,4,21; 50:18; Exod. 1:9; 2:6,13; 3:2,9,13; 4:1,6-7,14,23; 5:5,16; 6:12,30; 7:16-17; 8:2,21,29; 9:3,7,18; 10:4; 14:10,17; 16:4,10,14; 17:6; 23:20; 24:8,14; 31:6; 32:9,34; 33:21; 34:10-11,30; 39:43; Lev. 10:16,18-19; 13:5-6,8,10,13,17,20-21,25-26,30-32,34,36,39,43,53,55-56; 14:3,37,39,44,48; 25:20; Num. 3:12; 12:8,10; 16:42,47; 17:8,12; 18:6,8,21; 20:16; 22:5,11,32; 23:9,11,17,20,24; 24:10,14,17; 25:6,12; 31:16; 32:1,14,23; Deut. 1:8,10,21; 2:24,31; 3:11,27; 4:5; 5:24; 9:13,16; 10:14; 11:26; 13:14; 17:4; 19:18; 26:10; 31:14,16,27; 32:49; Jos. 2:2,18; 3:11; 5:13; 7:21-22; 8:4,20; 9:12-13,25; 14:10; 22:11,28; 23:4,14; 24:27; Jdg. 1:2; 3:24-25; 4:22; 6:15,28,37; 7:13,17; 8:15; 9:31,33,36,43; 11:34; 13:3,7,10; 14:5,8,16; 16:10; 17:2; 18:9,12; 19:9,16,22,24,27; 20:7,40; 21:8-9,19,21; Ruth 1:15; 2:4; 3:2,8; 4:1; 1 Sam. 2:31; 3:11; 5:3-4; 8:5; 9:6-8,12,14,17,24; 10:8,10-11,22; 11:5; 12:1-3,13; 13:10; 14:7-8,11,16-17,20,26,33; 15:12,22; 16:11,15,18; 17:23; 18:17,22; 19:16,19,22; 20:2,5,12,21-23; 21:9; 23:1,3; 24:1,4,9-10,20; 25:14,19-20,36,41; 26:7,21-22,24; 28:7,9,21; 30:3,16,26; 2 Sam. 1:2,6,18; 3:12,22,24; 4:8,10; 5:1; 9:4,6; 12:11,18; 13:24,34-36; 14:7,21,32; 15:15,26,32,36; 16:1,3-5,8,11; 17:9; 18:10-11,24,26,31; 19:1,8,20,37,41; 20:21; 24:22; 1 Ki. 1:14,18,23,25,42,51; 2:8,29,39; 3:12,15,21; 5:5; 8:27; 10:7; 11:22,31; 12:28; 13:1-3,25; 14:2,5,10,19; 15:19; 16:3; 17:9-10,12; 18:7-8,11,14,44; 19:5-6,9,11,13; 20:13,31,36,39; 21:18,21; 22:13,23,25; 2 Ki. 1:9,14; 2:11,16,19; 3:20; 4:9,13,25,32; 5:6,11,15,20,22; 6:1,13,15,17,20,25,30,33; 7:2,5,10,13,19; 8:5; 9:5; 10:4,9; 11:14; 13:21; 15:11,15,26,31; 17:26; 18:21; 19:7,9,11,35; 20:5,17; 21:12; 22:16,20; 1 Chr. 9:1; 11:1,25; 22:9,14; 28:21; 29:29; 2 Chr. 2:4,8,10; 6:18; 9:6; 13:12,14; 16:3,11; 18:12,22,24; 19:11; 20:2,10-11,16,24,34; 21:14; 23:3,13; 24:27; 25:26; 26:20; 28:9,26; 29:19; 32:32; 33:18-19; 34:24,28; 35:25,27; 36:8; Ezr. 9:15; Neh. 9:36; Est. 6:5; 7:9; 8:7; Job 1:12,19; 2:6; 4:3,18; 5:17; 8:19-20; 9:12; 12:14-15; 13:18; 15:15; 16:19; 19:7,27; 20:9; 21:27; 22:12; 23:8-9; 24:5; 25:5; 27:12; 28:28; 31:35; 32:11-12,19; 33:2,6-7,10,12; 34:29; 35:5; 36:5,22,24-26,30; 39:29; 40:4,11,15,23; 41:9; Ps. 7:14; 11:4,7; 17:2,15; 27:4; 33:18; 37:37; 39:5; 46:8; 51:5-6; 54:4; 59:4,7; 66:7; 73:12,15; 78:20; 80:14; 84:9; 87:4; 91:8; 102:19; 113:6; 119:18,40; 121:4; 123:2; 128:4; 133:1; 134:1; 139:8; Prov. 1:23; 7:10; 11:31; 23:33; 24:12; Eccl. 1:14; 2:1,11-12; 4:1; 5:18; 7:27; 11:7; Cant. 1:15-16; 2:8-9; 3:7,11; 4:1; Isa. 3:1; 5:7,26,30; 7:14; 8:7,18,22; 10:33; 12:2; 13:9,17; 17:1,14; 19:1; 20:6; 21:9; 22:13,17; 23:13; 24:1; 26:10,21; 28:2,16; 29:8,14; 30:27; 32:1; 33:7,17; 34:5; 35:4; 37:7,11,36; 38:5,8,11,17; 39:6; 40:9-10,15,26; 41:11,15,23-24,27,29; 42:1,9; 43:19; 44:11; 47:14; 48:7,10; 49:12,16,18,21-22; 50:1-2,9,11; 51:22; 52:6,13; 54:11,15; 55:4-5; 56:3; 58:3-4; 59:1,9; 60:2; 62:11; 63:15; 64:5,9; 65:1,6,13-14,17-18; 66:12,15; Jer. 1:6,9,18; 2:35; 3:5,22; 4:13,16; 5:14; 6:10,19,21-22; 7:8,11,20,32; 8:15,17,19; 9:7,15,25; 10:18,22; 11:1,12,2; 12:14; 13:7,13,20; 14:13,18-19; 16:9,12,14,16,21; 17:15; 18:3,6,11; 19:3,6,15; 20:4; 21:4,8,13; 22:2,5,7,15,19,30-32,39; 24:1; 25:9,32; 26:14; 27:16; 28:16; 29:17,21,32; 30:18,23; 31:8,27,31,38; 32:3-4,7,17,24,27-28,37; 33:6,14; 34:2-3,12; 35:17; 37:7; 38:5,22; 39:16; 40:4,10; 42:2,4; 43:10; 44:2,11,26-27,30; 45:4-5; 46:25,27; 47:2; 48:12,40; 49:2,5,12,19,22,35; 50:12,18,31,41,44; 51:1,25,36,47,52; Lam. 1:9,12,18,20; 2:20; 3:50,63; 5:1; Ezek. 1:4,15; 2:9; 3:8,23,25; 4:8,14,16; 5:8; 6:3; 7:5-6,10; 8:4-5,7-10,14,16; 9:2,11; 10:1,9; 11:1; 12:27; 13:8,20; 14:22; 15:4-5; 16:8,27,37,43-44,49; 17:7,10,12; 18:4; 20:47; 21:3,7; 22:6,13,19; 23:22,28; 24:16,21; 25:4,7-9,16; 26:3,7; 28:3,7,17-18,22; 29:3,8,10,19; 30:22; 31:3; 34:10-11,17,20; 33:3; 36:6,9; 37:2,5,7,11-12,19,21; 38:3; 39:1,8; 40:3-5,24; 43:2,5,12; 44:4-5; 46:19,21; 47:1-2,7; Dan. 2:31; 4:10,13; 7:2-5,7-8,13; 8:3,5,15,19; 9:18; 10:5,10,16; 11:2; 12:5; Hos. 2:6,14; Joel 2:19; 3:1,7; Amos 2:13; 3:9; 6:11,14; 7:1,4,7-8; 8:1,11; 9:8,13; Obad. 1:2; Mic. 1:3; 2:3; 7:9-10; Nah. 1:15; 2:13; 3:5,13; Hab. 1:3,5,13; 2:4,13,19; Zeph. 3:19; Zech. 1:8,11,18; 2:1,3,9; 3:4,8-9; 4:2; 5:1,7,9; 6:1,8,12; 8:7; 9:4,9; 12:2; 14:1; Mal. 1:13; 2:3; 3:1; 4:1,5; Matt. 1:20,23; 2:1,13,19; 4:11; 6:26; 7:4; 8:2,24,29,32,34; 9:2-3,10,18,20,32; 10:16; 11:8,10,19; 12:2,10,18,41-42,46-47,49; 13:3; 15:22; 17:3,5; 18:10; 19:16,27; 20:18,30; 21:5; 22:4; 23:34,38; 24:25-26; 25:6-20,22; 26:45-46,51,65; 27:51; 28:2,7,9,11; Mk. 1:2; 2:24; 3:32,34; 4:3; 5:22; 10:33; 11:21; 13:23; 14:41; 15:4,35; 16:6; Lk. 1:20,31,36,38,48; 2:10,25,34,48; 5:12,18; 6:23; 7:12,25,27,34,37; 8:41; 9:30,38; 10:3,19,25; 11:31-32,41; 13:7,11,30,32,35; 14:2,29; 17:21; 18:31; 19:2,8,20; 21:6,29; 22:10,21,31,38,47; 23:14,29,50;

**Spurgeon** - The heart of Jesus was full of his sacrifice. Mark how he dwells on the details from the beginning to the end of his sufferings, death, and resurrection. He uses very much the same terms as when they abode in Galilee. We noticed that statement while reading in chapter 17:22, and this is very like a repetition of it. It was a subject too grave to be set forth with variety of expressions. He calls their attention to the fact that they were going up to Jerusalem, the place of sacrifice: the journey of his utmost grief was now beginning: the end was hastening on. What a pang shot through his heart as he said, "The Son of man shall be betrayed"! This he said in the hearing of the disciple who would act as the traitor: did no compunction visit his base heart? The twelve knew that Jesus had no more cruel foes than "the chief priests and scribes", the men of the Sanhedrin: these, by a mock trial, would "condemn him to death", but as they could not carry out the sentence themselves, they would "deliver him to the Gentiles." How accurately the Lord traces the line of action! He omits none of the shameful details. He says that they would deliver him to the Romans, "to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him." Here were three sharp swords: one scarcely knows which had the keenest edge. Our hearts ought to melt as we think of this threefold sorrow: scorn, cruelty, death.

Our blessed Master, however, added a word which overpowered the bitterness of the death - draught. Here was the bright lining of the black cloud: "The third day he shall rise again." This poured a flood of light on what else had been a sevenfold midnight.

Did our Lord thus dwell on his passion, and should not we? Yes, it should be our life-long theme. They say, in this hour of defection: "Think of his life rather than of his death; but we are not to be duped by them. "We preach Christ crucified." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

**Delivered** (betrayed, handed over) (3860) **paradidomi** from **para** = alongside, beside, to the side of, over to + **didomi** = to give) conveys the basic meaning of to give over from one's hand to someone or something, especially to give over to the power of another. **Paradidomi** conveys the idea of handing over to or of conveying something to someone, particularly a right or an authority (Matthew 11:27+; Luke 4:6+). **Paradidomi** can mean to entrust for care or preservation as when one gives over, commends or commits. (Acts 14:26+) **Paradidomi** is used in legal parlance to describe handing someone into the custody of the police, authorities, etc. To deliver up one to custody, to be judged, condemned, punished, scourged, tormented, put to death. (Matthew 10:17+; Mark 15:1+) And closely related **Paradidomi** can describe the "illegal", treacherous or unjustified handing of someone over to someone as in a **betrayal**. Thus it describes the delivering over of an individual to an enemy who will presumably take undue advantage of the victim (Mt 20:18, Mt 26:16, Mt 26:21).

**PARADIDOMI IN THE GOSPELS** - Matt. 4:12; Matt. 5:25; Matt. 10:4; Matt. 10:17; Matt. 10:19; Matt. 10:21; Matt. 11:27; Matt. 17:22; Matt. 18:34; Matt. 20:18; Matt. 20:19; Matt. 24:9; Matt. 24:10; Matt. 25:14; Matt. 25:20; Matt. 25:22; Matt. 26:2; Matt. 26:15; Matt. 26:16; Matt. 26:21; Matt. 26:23; Matt. 26:24; Matt. 26:25; Matt. 26:45; Matt. 26:46; Matt. 26:48; Matt. 27:2; Matt. 27:3; Matt. 27:4; Matt. 27:18; Matt. 27:26; Mk. 1:14; Mk. 3:19; Mk. 4:29; Mk. 7:13; Mk. 9:31; Mk. 10:33; Mk. 13:9; Mk. 13:11; Mk. 13:12; Mk. 14:10; Mk. 14:11; Mk. 14:18; Mk. 14:21; Mk. 14:41; Mk. 14:42; Mk. 14:44; Mk. 15:1; Mk. 15:10; Mk. 15:15; Lk. 1:2; Lk. 4:6; Lk. 9:44; Lk. 10:22; Lk. 12:58; Lk. 18:32; Lk. 20:20; Lk. 21:12; Lk. 21:16; Lk. 22:4; Lk. 22:6; Lk. 22:21; Lk. 22:22; Lk. 22:48; Lk. 23:25; Lk. 24:7; Lk. 24:20; Jn. 6:64; Jn. 6:71; Jn. 12:4; Jn. 13:2; Jn. 13:11; Jn. 13:21; Jn. 18:2; Jn. 18:5; Jn. 18:30; Jn. 18:35; Jn. 18:36; Jn. 19:11; Jn. 19:16; Jn. 19:30; Jn. 21:20;

**Condemn** (2632) **katakrino** from **kata** = down, against + **krino** = to assess, then to separate or distinguish, then to give an opinion upon, judge, then to decide or determine and finally to judge (to judge one down [**kata** = down]), pronounce judgment or to condemn) means to give judgment against, pass sentence upon, pass judgment against and hence to condemn, this latter action implying there has been a crime. It means to pronounce sentence against or to adjudge guilty and always denotes an adverse sentence (to sentence to punishment). **Katakrino** in secular Greek was a legal technical term for pronouncing a sentence after reaching a verdict or decision against someone. To declare an evildoer guilty.

**KATAKRINO - 18V** - Matt. 12:41; Matt. 12:42; Matt. 20:18; Matt. 27:3; Mk. 10:33; Mk. 14:64; Mk. 16:16; Lk. 11:31; Lk. 11:32; Jn. 8:10; Jn. 8:11; Rom. 2:1; Rom. 8:3; Rom. 8:34; Rom. 14:23; 1 Co. 11:32; Heb. 11:7; 2 Pet. 2:6

**Matthew 20:19 and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up."**

third day he shall rise again.

BGT Matthew 20:19 καὶ παραδούσουσιν αὐτὸν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἐς τὸ μπάσαι καὶ μαστιγῶσαι καὶ σταυρῶσαι, καὶ τὸ τρίτον ἡμέραν ἔσται.

NET Matthew 20:19 and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged severely and crucified. Yet on the third day, he will be raised."

CSB Matthew 20:19 Then they will hand Him over to the Gentiles to be mocked, flogged, and crucified, and He will be resurrected on the third day."

ESV Matthew 20:19 and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."

NIV Matthew 20:19 and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!"

NLT Matthew 20:19 Then they will hand him over to the Romans to be mocked, flogged with a whip, and crucified. But on the third day he will be raised from the dead."

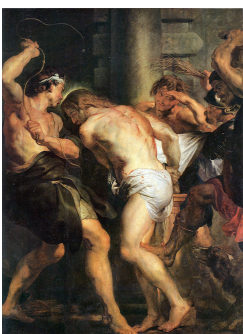
- **will hand Him over** Mt 27:2-10 Mk 15:1,16-20 Lu 23:1-5 Jn 18:28-38 Ac 3:13-16 1Co 15:3-7
- **to mock:** Mt 26:67-68 Mt 27:27-31 Ps 22:7-8 Ps 35:16 Isa 53:3 Mk 14:65 Mk 15:16-20,29-31 Lu 23:11 Jn 19:1-4
- **the third day He will be raised up** Mt 12:40 16:21 Isa 26:19 Ho 6:2 Lu 24:46 1Co 15:4

#### Related Passages:

Mark 10:33-34+ saying, "**Behold** (*idou*), we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. 34 "They will mock Him and **spit on Him**, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again."

Luke 18:32-34+ "For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and **mistreated and spit upon**, 33 and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again." 34 But the disciples understood none of these things, and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.

Matthew 27:26-30+ Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified. 27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him. 28 They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. 29 And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 30 They spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head.



Preview of Coming Suffering

### DELIVERED FROM THE JEWS AND THEN TO THE GENTILES

And will hand Him over (*paradidomi* - deliver) to the Gentiles (*ethnos*) to mock (*empaizo*) and scourge (*mastigoo*) and crucify (*stauroo*) Him - To hand over or deliver meant to give Jesus over to their power and authority, something He willingly did for sinful men! Jesus knew the Jews did not have the authority to put Him to death and therefore had to hand Him over to the Gentiles to carry out the death sentence. He was willing to be the sacrificial lamb for He knew that was the only way to take away the sins of the world (Jn 1:29+). And so Jesus gives details not given to the 12 before of how His enemies would torture Him and then

specifically how they would put Him to death (crucifixion, a shameful and humiliating way to die). One can only imagine the 11 disciples cringing upon hearing these words from the One they had grown to dearly love.

Mark and Luke add details to Jesus' suffering - Mark 10:34+ "spit on Him" (Roman soldiers spitting on Jesus - Mk 14:65+, Mk 15:16–20+, Mt 27:30+) and Lk 18:32+ "mistreated and spit upon", spitting upon someone in the OT was a sign of contempt (cf. Nu. 12:14; Dt. 25:9; Job 17:6; 30:10; Isa. 50:6). (See also Isa. 53:1-12+)

**John MacArthur** - It is significant that, when referring to Christ's sufferings before and during His crucifixion, the New Testament always uses the plural (see 2 Cor. 1:5; Phil. 3:10; Heb. 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:11; 4:13). His pain was not one dimensional, but involved sufferings of many sorts. (See [Matthew Commentary](#))

**And on the third day He will be raised up**([egeiro](#)) - Note that all Jesus' announcements of His death end with the declaration of victory over death that "He will rise again." Jesus had alluded to His resurrection and the timing in Mt 12:40+ and had stated it clearly in Matthew 16:21+ and Matthew 17:22-23+. Unfortunately for the disciples the third (or fourth) time is not the charm and they still failed to fully understand the meaning of the resurrection until after He was resurrected from the dead. In fairness to them, Luke 18:34 tells us "the disciples understood none of these things, and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.

**Donald Hagner** rightly points out that Jesus' "prediction makes a particularly sharp contrast with both the preceding sections, where the disciples seem preoccupied with rewards (Mt 19:27–30), and the following pericope describing the overt ambition of the sons of Zebedee (Mt 20:20–23). Jesus again affirms the cross as his goal and thus serves as the model according to which the disciples must learn to pattern their own lives. But while he is "last," his disciples compete for being "first." (See [Matthew - Page 574](#))

**Henry Morris** remarks that "The Lord Jesus told His disciples at least fourteen times that He would be put to death; yet, when the event came, they were still unprepared. There are fourteen references to Christ's resurrection on "the third day" in the New Testament. In terms of days of the week, it seems clear that He was slain on the sixth day of the week, the same day on which man had been created. He then rested in the tomb on the seventh day, the same day on which God rested after completing His work of creating and making all things. He rose again victoriously, never to die again, on the first day of the new week.

**NET NOTE** - Traditionally, "**scourged**" (the term means to beat severely with a whip, L&N 19.9). BDAG 620 s.v. μαστιγῶν 1.a states, "The 'verberatio' is denoted in the passion predictions and explicitly as action by non-Israelites Mt 20:19; Mk 10:34; Lk 18:33"; the verberatio was the beating given to those condemned to death in the Roman judicial system. Here the term μαστιγῶν (mastigoō) has been translated "flog ... severely" to distinguish it from the term φραγελλῶν ([phragelloo](#)) used in Matt 27:26; Mark 15:15. **Crucifixion** was the cruelest form of punishment practiced by the Romans. Roman citizens could not normally undergo it. It was reserved for the worst crimes, like treason and evasion of due process in a capital case. The Roman historian Cicero called it "a cruel and disgusting penalty" (Against Verres 2.5.63–66 §§163–70); Josephus (J. W. 7.6.4 [7.203]) called it the worst of deaths.

---

**Mock** (1702) [empaizo](#) from **en** = in + **paizo** = to play or to sport with or against someone. Paizo is from pais, the word for child, and thus paizo means to act like a child, to sport or jest. **Empaizo** most often means to deride, mock, scoff, ridicule, make fun of, to treat outrageously, to treat someone contemptuously in an insolent and arrogant way, to treat abusively or to play a game with. One use in Mt 2:16+ has a slightly different sense meaning to deceive, to trick, to taunt, to delude. All 13 uses are in the Gospels and most describe the **mocking** of our Lord Jesus Christ, to make fun of Him by pretending that He is not Who He claimed to be or to imitate Him in a distorted manner. It is therefore little surprise that if evil men mocked Him at His first coming, they would mock the sure promise of His Second Coming (2Pe 3:3 = mockers = [empaiktes](#))! These individuals "trifle" with the things of God dealing with them as if they are of no temporal or eternal import. They show their contempt for Christ at His first coming and at His return, mocking the latter by ridiculing and deriding the certainty of His return, their derision motivated by their insolence, disrespect, incredulity and desire to justify their ungodly behavior (if there is no God they reason they cannot sin without fear). As an aside if you are not looking for Him, you will hardly be motivated to be living for Him!

**Scourge** (3146) [mastigoo](#) from **mástix** = plague, whip, scourge) means literally to flog or scourge. The **scourge** was first a whip used as an instrument of punishment and then figuratively came to mean to punish severely or to drive as if by blows of a whip. It was the normal and legal preliminary to crucifixion. In the case of Jesus (Luke 23:22) it was inflicted before the sentence of crucifixion was pronounced. Pilate hoped to avert the extreme punishment and satisfy the Jews at the same time. The Jewish method of scourging, as described in the Mishnah, was by the use of 3 thongs of leather, the offender receiving 13 stripes on the bare breast and 13 on each shoulder (cf. the "forty stripes save one," as administered to Paul 5 times [2 Corinthians 11:24]).

**MASTIGOO - 7V** - Matt. 10:17; Matt. 20:19; Matt. 23:34; Mk. 10:34; Lk. 18:33; Jn. 19:1; Heb. 12:6

**Crucify** (4717) [stauroo](#) from **stauros** = cross, in turn from **histemi** = to stand) means literally to nail or fasten to a cross and so to crucify -- literal death by nailing to and hanging from a cross (a stake). See the 14 page [NIDNTT article on the Cross and Crucify](#)



[beginning on page 390](#),

**Raised** (1453) (**egeiro**) means to rise (stand up) from a sitting or lying position (Mt 8:26, 9:5), to awaken from sleep (Mt 8:25), figuratively to "awaken" from death (rise up). **Egeiro** was used literally also to raise up or lift up a person either sitting or lying down. Figuratively **egeiro** was used to "raise up" a person from illness, thus restoring them to health. Figuratively as used in Romans 4:24, **egeiro** describes the bringing back of Jesus from the dead and thus raising Him or causing Him to rise. The idea of wake up from death is conveyed by **egeiro** because sleep was used as metaphor of death for believers (there is however no "soul sleep"). To raise up to a position as was David in Acts 13:22 (referring to his "promotion" to king).

**Matthew 20:20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him.**

KJV Matthew 20:20 Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.

BGT Matthew 20:20 Τ ἡ μητρὶς τοῦ Ζεβεδαίου μετὰ τῶν υἱῶν αὐτοῦ προσκύνησά καὶ αἰτοῦσα τι πρὸς αὐτόν.

NET Matthew 20:20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, and kneeling down she asked him for a favor.

CSB Matthew 20:20 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons approached Him with her sons. She knelt down to ask Him for something.

ESV Matthew 20:20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something.

NIV Matthew 20:20 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him.

NLT Matthew 20:20 Then the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus with her sons. She knelt respectfully to ask a favor.

- **came:** Mk 10:35-37
- **the mother:** Mt 4:21 27:56 Mk 15:40, Salome
- **bowing down:** Mt 2:11 8:2 14:33 15:25 28:17

#### Related Passages:

Mark 10:35-37+ James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, \*came up to Jesus, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You." 36 And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" 37 They said to Him, "Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your glory."

### MOTHER OF JAMES AND JOHN MAKES A REQUEST

**Then** ([tote](#)) - This time phrase marks progression in the narrative. How soon after the previous prediction we cannot state with certainty. But clearly her arrival is providential for it will set the stage for the stark contrast between Jesus' dire prediction and her request (son's exaltation).

**Donald Hagner:** After the immediately preceding announcement of the suffering and death that await Jesus, the two disciples' quest for power and status in the present pericope seems all the more shocking and objectionable (note Matthew's τότε, "then" [Mt 20:20]). It provides the occasion for yet further teaching from Jesus concerning the nature of greatness and priority in the kingdom. **The sons of Zebedee** are thus shown to be completely wrong in their concept of greatness. They demonstrate that they have not understood Jesus' teaching in the preceding material about the first being last and the last being first (Mt 19:30; Mt 20:16). True greatness, the greatness of the kingdom, is reached only through service and self-sacrifice. Jesus is himself the supreme model of that kind of greatness.



The mother of the sons of [Zebedee](#) (aka [Boanerges](#) - "Sons of Thunder") came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down (knelt respectfully - [proskuneo](#)) and making a request ([aiteo](#) - ask a favor) of Him - The mother's name is [Salome](#), who was a close member of the group of women who followed Jesus (Mt 27:56+). Clearly she is making the **request** here but note her sons are with her and the parallel passage in Mk 10:35+ indicates that they chime and echo their mother's request. Was her **bowing down** meant to flatter Jesus?

**Scott Harris:** How could this woman be so bold to ask such a thing. One reason, other than sheer audacity, is her relationship to Jesus. By comparing the accounts of the crucifixion we know that her name is Salome, and she is the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. She is Jesus' aunt, and James and John are Jesus' first cousins. This closeness of relationship explains to some degree the boldness she has in coming to Jesus with this request. James, John and their mother desired to gain the prominent positions from Jesus. It was a wrong thing to seek that for several reasons, among them - the inappropriateness of asking for this right after Jesus had told them He was going to Jerusalem to suffer and die; - they had not considered the price that would have to be paid; - it was not Jesus' place to appoint those positions; and most of all, - it was wrong because it demonstrated that they – and the other disciples – were still largely infected with the world's values.

**Charles Swindoll:** Although their mother was the mouthpiece of the request, James and John were the originators and instigators (**ED:** [SEE EXPLANATORY NOTE](#)). The Gospel of Mark makes this clear, leaving the mother out of the account completely and noting that the request came from the two brothers (Mark 10:35- 37). (See [Insights on Matthew 16--28 - Page 132](#))

**R. V. G. Tasker** adds that "It is clear that, in fact, the request emanated from the brothers themselves, for the remaining ten apostles, when they hear about it, do not in Matthew's narrative any more than in Mark's turn in indignation upon the mother but upon her sons." (Borrow [The Gospel According to St Matthew](#))

**Spurgeon** - While the mind of Jesus was occupied with his humiliation and death, his followers were thinking of their own honor and ease. Alas, poor human nature! The mother of Zebedee's children only spoke as others felt. She, with a mother's love, sought eminence, and even pre-eminence, for her sons; but the fact that the other disciples were displeased showed that they were ambitious also. Doubtless, they wanted to fill the positions, that the mother of James and John craved for them. She approached the Savior reverently, worshipping him. Yet there was too much familiarity in her request to be granted an unnamed thing: desiring a certain thing of him.

**Matthew Henry Concise** - Mt 20:20-28. The sons of Zebedee abused what Christ said to comfort the disciples. Some cannot have comforts but they turn them to a wrong purpose. Pride is a sin that most easily besets us; it is sinful ambition to outdo others in pomp and grandeur. To put down the vanity and ambition of their request, Christ leads them to the thoughts of their sufferings. It is a bitter cup that is to be drunk of; a cup of trembling, but not the cup of the wicked. It is but a cup, it is but a draught, bitter perhaps, but soon emptied; it is a cup in the hand of a Father, John 8:11. Baptism is an ordinance by which we are joined to the Lord in covenant and communion; and so is suffering for Christ, Ezekiel 20:37; Isaiah 48:10. Baptism is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace; and so is suffering for Christ, for unto us it is given, Philippians 1:29. But they knew not what Christ's cup was, nor what his baptism. Those are commonly most confident, who are least acquainted with the cross. Nothing makes more mischief among brethren, than desire of greatness. And we never find Christ's disciples quarrelling, but something of this was at the bottom of it. That man who labours most diligently, and suffers most patiently, seeking to do good to his brethren, and to promote the salvation of souls, most resembles Christ, and will be most honoured by him to all eternity. Our Lord speaks of his death in the terms applied to the sacrifices of old. It is a sacrifice for the sins of men, and is that true and substantial sacrifice, which those of the law faintly and imperfectly represented. It was a ransom for many, enough for all, working upon many; and, if for many, then the poor trembling soul may say, Why not for me?

---

**Bowing down** (worship) ([4352](#)) [proskuneo](#) from **pros** = before + **kuneo** = kiss or adore) means to prostrate oneself in homage before another in the full sense of worship, not mere reverence or courtesy. When Jesus Christ was born into this world, He was attended and worshipped by angels. (Lu 2:13f). **Proskuneo** represents the most common Near Eastern act of adoration and reverence and also carries the idea of profound awe and respect. Some believe that the root word **kuneo** may be related to **kuon** which is the Greek word for dog and which then could be picturing a dog licking his master's hand. The word [proskuneo](#) literally means to kiss toward someone, to throw a kiss in token of respect or homage, to prostrate oneself in homage, to do reverence to, to adore and so to worship and show respect. In the ancient Oriental (especially Persia) the mode of salutation between persons of equal rank was to kiss each other on the lips. When the difference of rank was slight, they kissed each other on the cheek. When one was much inferior, he fell upon his knees touched his forehead to the ground or prostrated himself, and as he was bowing down he would be throwing kisses toward the superior. It is this latter mode of salutation that is intended by the Greek writers in the use of the verb [proskuneo](#) .

**PROSKUNEO 54V** - bow down(1), bow down before(1), bowed down(1), bowed down before(2), bowing before(1), bowing down(1), prostrated himself before(1), worship(32), worshiped(17), worshipers(1),

**worshipping(1), worships(1).** Matt. 2:2; Matt. 2:8; Matt. 2:11; Matt. 4:9; Matt. 4:10; Matt. 8:2; Matt. 9:18; Matt. 14:33; Matt. 15:25; Matt. 18:26; Matt. 20:20; Matt. 28:9; Matt. 28:17; Mk. 5:6; Mk. 15:19; Lk. 4:7; Lk. 4:8; Lk. 24:52; Jn. 4:20; Jn. 4:21; Jn. 4:22; Jn. 4:23; Jn. 4:24; Jn. 9:38; Jn. 12:20; Acts 7:43; Acts 8:27; Acts 10:25; Acts 24:11; 1 Co. 14:25; Heb. 1:6; Heb. 11:21; Rev. 3:9; Rev. 4:10; Rev. 5:14; Rev. 7:11; Rev. 9:20; Rev. 11:1; Rev. 11:16; Rev. 13:4; Rev. 13:8; Rev. 13:12; Rev. 13:15; Rev. 14:7; Rev. 14:9; Rev. 14:11; Rev. 15:4; Rev. 16:2; Rev. 19:4; Rev. 19:10; Rev. 19:20; Rev. 20:4; Rev. 22:8; Rev. 22:9

**Request (154)(aiteo)** means to ask for something or make petition. It can mean to ask with a sense of urgency and even to the point of demanding. For example, **Thayer** notes that the use of **aiteo** in 1Cor 1:22 conveys a stronger sense of *demand*. One gets that same sense of **aiteo** in Mt 27:20 (in fact NJB translates it "demand.") **Aiteo** is sometimes combined with other prayer words like **proseuchomai** (Mt 21:22, Col 1:9), so the idea of aiteo is to be asking for something while praying (**proseuchomai**). Of children of God asking their Father (Mt 6:8). In Mt 7:8-11 three of the uses (Mt 7:8-9, 11) of **aiteo** are in the present tense picturing continued asking. Of the sons of Zebedee making request (**present tense**) of Jesus (Mt 20:20) In Mt 5:42 commands His readers to be generous with those **asking** (may allude to begging; giving alms was viewed highly in the ancient world). The derivative noun **aitema** (155) is used in Php 4:6 and 1Jn 5:15 of requests, in the sense of a petition of men to God, both NT uses in the plural. In Lk 23:24 **aitema** is used more in the sense of a demand by the Jews to Pilate. Aiteo is used frequently in the **Sermon on the Mount** - Matt. 5:42; Matt. 6:8; Matt. 7:7; Matt. 7:8; Matt. 7:9; Matt. 7:10; Matt. 7:11

**AITEO - 67V** - Matt. 5:42; Matt. 6:8; Matt. 7:7; Matt. 7:8; Matt. 7:9; Matt. 7:10; Matt. 7:11; Matt. 14:7; Matt. 18:19; Matt. 20:20; Matt. 20:22; Matt. 21:22; Matt. 27:20; Matt. 27:58; Mk. 6:22; Mk. 6:23; Mk. 6:24; Mk. 6:25; Mk. 10:35; Mk. 10:38; Mk. 11:24; Mk. 15:8; Mk. 15:43; Lk. 1:63; Lk. 6:30; Lk. 11:9; Lk. 11:10; Lk. 11:11; Lk. 11:12; Lk. 11:13; Lk. 12:48; Lk. 23:23; Lk. 23:25; Lk. 23:52; Jn. 4:9; Jn. 4:10; Jn. 11:22; Jn. 14:13; Jn. 14:14; Jn. 15:7; Jn. 15:16; Jn. 16:23; Jn. 16:24; Jn. 16:26; Acts 3:2; Acts 3:14; Acts 7:46; Acts 9:2; Acts 12:20; Acts 13:21; Acts 13:28; Acts 16:29; Acts 25:3; Acts 25:15; 1 Co. 1:22; Eph. 3:13; Eph. 3:20; Col. 1:9; Jas. 1:5; Jas. 1:6; Jas. 4:2; Jas. 4:3; 1 Pet. 3:15; 1 Jn. 3:22; 1 Jn. 5:14; 1 Jn. 5:15; 1 Jn. 5:16

**Norman Geisler - When Critics Ask** - MATTHEW 20:20 (cf. Mark 10:35)—Who came to talk with Jesus, the mother of James and John or James and John?

**PROBLEM:** In Matthew, the mother of James and John made a request of Jesus. However, Mark states that it was James and John who came to Jesus to make their request.

**SOLUTION:** It is clear that both the mother and her sons came to Jesus to make the request, since the text declares "the mother ... came to Him with her sons" (v. 20). It is possible that the mother spoke first with the two sons closely following to reiterate the request. This is supported by Matthew's account because when Jesus responds "are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" the Bible says "they said to Him, 'we are able'" (v.22). So, there is no unsolvable conflict here. The two accounts are harmonious.

**Matthew 20:21 And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She \*said to Him, 'Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left.'**

KJV Matthew 20:21 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.

BGT Matthew 20:21 δ ε πεν α τ · τ θ λεις; λ γει α τ · ε π ν α καθ σωσιν ο τοι ο δ ο υ ο μου ε ς κ δεξι ν σου κα ε ς ξ ε ων μων σου ν τ βασιλε σου.

NET Matthew 20:21 He said to her, "What do you want?" She replied, "Permit these two sons of mine to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom."

CSB Matthew 20:21 "What do you want?" He asked her. "Promise," she said to Him, "that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right and the other on Your left, in Your kingdom."

ESV Matthew 20:21 And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom."

NIV Matthew 20:21 "What is it you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom."

NLT Matthew 20:21 "What is your request?" he asked. She replied, "In your Kingdom, please let my two sons

sit in places of honor next to you, one on your right and the other on your left."

- **What do you wish:** Mt 20:32 1Ki 3:5 Es 5:3 Mk 6:22 10:36,51 Lu 18:41 Jn 15:7
- **Command that:** Mt 18:1 19:28 Jer 45:5 Mk 10:37 Lu 22:24 Ro 12:10 Philemon 1:2,3
- **one on Your right** 1Ki 2:19 Ps 45:9 110:1 Mk 16:19 Ro 8:34 Col 3:1
- **one on Your left:** Lu 17:20,21 19:11 Ac 1:6

## MOTHER'S SELF SEEKING FOR SON'S HONOR

**And He said to her, "What do you wish?"** - Jesus knows exactly what's up, but wants her to voice the request. They wanted prestige and preeminence and exaltation over the other apostles! Mark 10:35 adds "James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, \*came up to Jesus, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You." Talk about brash bravado! This recalls Jesus' words describing the scribes and Pharisees who "love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues." (Mt 23:6+). They also have a touch of the "[Diotrephes' syndrome](#)" "who loves to be first among them." (3Jn 1:9+)

[Spurgeon](#) - Our Lord here sets us the example of never promising in the dark. He said unto her, "What wilt thou? " Know what you promise before you promise.

**She \*said to Him, "Command ([aorist imperative](#)) that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit(in the places of honor) one on Your right ([dexios](#)) and one on Your left ([euonumos](#))"** - Jesus had already promised thrones (Mt 19:28+) so now it was simply a question of who gets top priority, the "best seats in the house" so to speak? One has to give her credit for she is in essence acknowledging (1) He is a King (or she thinks will soon be one) ("His kingdom" in Mt 13:41+; Mt 16:28+, cf Lk 22:29+; Lk 23:42+) and the related thought that (2) His kingdom is imminent (cf disciples in Acts 1:6+). In short, she is alluding to the Messianic Kingdom. You can't really blame a mother for asking for "reserved first row" seats for her two precious sons. The right and left seats were the most exalted positions of importance, first and second in the kingdom, on his right and left hands, respectively (in keeping with the custom of ancient monarchs; cf. Jos., Ant. 6.11.9 §235).

[Spurgeon](#) - Great was this woman's faith in the Lord's ultimate victory and occasion to the throne, since she regards his enthronement as so certain, that she prays that her two sons should sit in his courts on his right and left hand. Was she aware of what our Lord had told his disciples? We half think so, for the words are,—Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children. If she knew and understood all that went before, she was willing that her sons should share the lot of Jesus, both as to his cross and his crown; and this sets her petition in a bright light. Still, there was a good deal of a mother's partiality in the request. See how she speaks of "these my two sons " with a touch of pride in her action. How grandly she describes the desired situation — "may sit the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom " ! She had evidently very courtly notions of what the kingdom would ultimately become. In any case, her request had in it much of trust, and much of loyal union to Christ, though somewhat. also of self. We need not censure her; but we may question ourselves as to whether we think as much of our Lord as she did.

**Van Parunak:** Her request reflects two failings on the part of the disciples, failings that we must be careful to avoid. - First, in spite of the Lord's gentle introduction of the gruesome suffering that awaits him, the disciples still don't get it. The only thing they hear is "**Behold ([idou](#))**, we go up to Jerusalem," and their minds are so preoccupied with the coming glory of the kingdom that they miss his detailed prediction of his passion. He has just told them, twice, that those who would be first must be the last (19:30; 20:16), and reminded them of the repeated OT teaching that the saints who will rule the kingdom must first suffer. But they cannot see the suffering, and think only of the glory. It is wonderful and good for us to contemplate the glory that the Lord has in store for us, but we should not be surprised when the road to that glory must lead through suffering and tribulation. - Second, in spite of his example of humility, they continue the error of 18:1, seeking to be the greatest. They have not caught the lesson he has twice presented (18:1-4; 19:13) that they must be like little children. The Lord gives two answers: clarifying what their request involves, and pointing them to the one who has the authority to make such appointments. Then, in Mt 20:25-28, he exhorts all the disciples once more concerning humility, presenting himself as the central example.

**Matthew 20:22 But Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They \*said to Him, "We are able."**

KJV Matthew 20:22 But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and **to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?** They say unto him, We are able. (**NOTE: WORDS IN BOLD ONLY IN THE TEXTUS RECEPTUS, NOT IN THE NESTLE-ALAND USED FOR MODERN TRANSLATIONS - THESE WORDS ARE IN** Mark 10:39+)

BGT Matthew 20:22 ποκριθε ς δ ἡσο ς ε πεν· ο κ ο δατε τ α τε σθε. δ νασθε πιε ν τ ποτ ριον γ μ λλω π νειν; λ γουσιν α τ · δυν μεθα.

NET Matthew 20:22 Jesus answered, "You don't know what you are asking! Are you able to drink the cup I am about to drink?" They said to him, "We are able."

CSB Matthew 20:22 But Jesus answered, "You don't know what you're asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" "We are able," they said to Him.

ESV Matthew 20:22 Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?" They said to him, "We are able."

NIV Matthew 20:22 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered.

NLT Matthew 20:22 But Jesus answered by saying to them, "You don't know what you are asking! Are you able to drink from the bitter cup of suffering I am about to drink?" "Oh yes," they replied, "we are able!"

- **You do not know what you are asking** Mk 10:38 Ro 8:26 Jas 4:3
- **Are you able to drink the cup:** Mt 26:39,42 Ps 75:3 Jer 25:15-38 Mk 14:36 Lu 22:42 Jn 18:11
- **We are able:** Mt 26:35,56 Pr 16:18

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 26:39; 42+ And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this **cup** pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."... 42 He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done."

Mark 10:37-39+ They said to Him, "Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your glory." 38 But Jesus said to them, "**You do not know what you are asking.** Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" 39 They said to Him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized."

Luke 22:42+ saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this **cup** from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."

John 18:11+ So Jesus said to Peter, "Put the sword into the sheath; the **cup** which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?"

### JESUS' BITTER CUP DISCIPLES' BOLD REPLY

**But** - Term of contrast. Jesus now turns from the mother to her sons.

**Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able([dunamai](#)) to drink the cup** (of suffering) **that I am about to drink?"** - The three did not have a clue what they were really asking for with their brash, foolish request. Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane will refer to his death again as "the cup" (Mk 14:36+, Mt. 26:39+, Lk 22:42+) He is speaking of the cup of suffering (which He had just described in Mt 20:18-19), the experiencing of the Father pouring out His full wrath on all the sins (past, present and future), as His Son is made sin for us (2Co 5:21+). The disciples wanted a crown but failed to understand that the cross was the way to obtain the crown!

**John MacArthur** points out that "the affliction (ED: "CROSS") that brings eternal glory is that which is brought about and is willingly endured because of faithfulness to the Lord. It is suffering because of the gospel, being "persecuted for the sake of righteousness" (Matt. 5:10+). The one who has the greatest glory beside Christ in heaven will be the one who has faithfully endured the greatest suffering for Him on earth." (See [Matthew Commentary](#))

There is a touch of irony in the two criminals on each side Matthew 27:38- "At that time two robbers \*were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left."

*To follow Him as a disciple meant that suffering comes before significance,  
brokenness before usefulness, humility before authority,  
the bitter cup of pain before the sweet glories of promotion!*

-- Charles Swindoll

**Spurgeon** - The petition of the mother was that of the sons also; for Jesus answered and said, "Ye know not what ye ask. " As from the mother, the request was probably of better quality than as from the sons; for our Lord speaks to them rather than to her. They had asked, through the mother, but they may have asked in greater ignorance than she; and had they known what their request included, they might never have presented it. At any rate, our Lord treats the petition as theirs rather than their mother's; and as it was about themselves, he questions them as to how far they were prepared for the consequences. To be near to the throne of the King would involve fellowship with him in the suffering and self-sacrifice by which he set up his spiritual kingdom: were they ready for this? Had they strength to endure to the end? "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? " They say unto him, "we are able. " Perhaps this was too hasty an answer; and yet it may under the aspect have been the best they could give. If they were looking alone to their Lord for strength, they were, through his grace, quite able to bear anything. But, when they thought of his throne, had they remembered the cup , and the baptism, without which there would be no enjoying the kingdom?

**They \*said to Him, "We are able (dunamai)"** - Now we have the sons of Zebedee speaking. They proudly voice words of bold bravado which shows they do not have a clue what He had just asked them about the **cup**. Peter had just asked "What's in it for us?" and while Jesus did promise them thrones (Mt 19:28+), He qualified it with the parable teaching the last will be first and the first will be last. Here these two disciples are saying in effect "We want to be first and we are able to drink the cup to show You we are able." Guess what? They far overestimate their ability to be steadfast, for (1) three of them could not remain awake with Him in Gethsemane and (2) they all fled when He was arrested! Pride can be very deceptive and make you think you are capable of doing things that you cannot do! The day would come when they were "able," but it would only be because the "Enabler," the Holy Spirit, came at Pentecost to indwell them, empowering them and making them **ABLE**!

**THOUGHT** - That which was true then is still true today. In other words, the only way we as believers today are **ABLE** is because the Spirit indwells us and we learn to jettison self-effort and rely more and more on Spirit empowerment, which is the **ONLY** way to live a truly supernatural life! Are you daily, continually filled with His Spirit (Eph 5:18+), so that you may walk by the Spirit and not fulfill the desires of your flesh? (Gal 5:16+) Don't say **YOU** are **ABLE** like the disciples! Admit you are not **ABLE** but **HE** is **ABLE** and then rely daily on Him. An OT verse that I think applies to our enablement is 1Chr 16:11 says "**Seek the LORD and His strength; Seek His face continually.**"

*"Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit"*

-- Apostle Paul

Philippians 2:3+

**Grant Osborne** says "Jesus is aware of his destiny and deliberately chooses the cross, while the disciples, aware of nothing, are consumed with their own desire for greatness."....We must be willing to drink the cup of Jesus' suffering (see note on Mt 10:17-31), but the clear message here is that we seek no greatness but the path of Christ, which will often involve suffering and persecution. As Jesus said in Mt 16:24+, we must "take up [our] cross," and that means a willingness to die if God so wills. In Phil 3:10 Paul talked about "participation in his suffering," and in Col 1:24+ Paul discussed filling up "what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions." Paul meant that suffering was a participation in Christ's life and a special eschatological event connected with the eschaton. (See [Matthew - Page 743](#))

**Wuest** - The contrast between the self-abnegation and self-sacrificial heroism and courage of our Lord, and the utter absence of any self-ambition, stands out vividly with the petty self-interest and ambition of the disciples, and puts the latter in a most unfavorable light. He was going to the Cross. They had their thoughts centered on self-advancement in the kingdom. (Borrow [Mark in the Greek New Testament for the English reader - page 210](#))

**Edwards** makes an interesting observation (based on Mark's Gospel) - Following each of Jesus' passion predictions in Mk 8:31+, Mk 9:31+, and Mk 10:33-34+, the disciples jockey for position and prestige. The request of James and John in Mk 10: 37 is the third and most blatant example of human self-centeredness in contrast to Jesus' humility and self-sacrifice.

**NET NOTE** - The verbs in Greek are plural here, indicating that Jesus is not answering the mother but has turned his attention directly to the two disciples. **We are able.**" - No more naïve words have ever been spoken as those found here coming from James and John, "We are able." They said it with such confidence and ease, yet they had little clue as to what they were affirming. In the next sentence Jesus confirms that they will indeed suffer for his name.

**Ray Pritchard** - Sometimes our perspective gets a bit out of whack and we forget our limitations. James and John **underestimated** the cost of following Christ and they **overestimated** their own importance. They didn't ask for work in the coming Kingdom (which would have been a nobler request). They asked only for a place of honor. Seniority was their plea. We've been here longer than anyone except Peter! They probably thought the Kingdom was coming soon (cf Acts 1:6+) so they wanted to get their applications in



early! To use a phrase from the college admissions process, they wanted “*early decision*” by Jesus. And perhaps they intended to trade on family ties and friendship to get a high place. Jesus doesn’t turn them down and he doesn’t put them down. He doesn’t say, “Forget about it. You’ll never have a place of honor at my table.” Not at all. He merely raises the bar. “You want to sit next to me? Fine. Here’s what it will cost you.” Warren Wiersbe ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#)) reminds us to be careful when we pray because we might get what we ask for. James and John assumed their suffering was over and their work was done. They were wrong on both counts. Their suffering was still ahead of them and their work was just starting. It’s almost as if He’s saying, “You want to be on my right hand and my left hand? Great! Stay with me for a few days and you’ll see who is on my right hand and my left. A dying thief on one side and a dying thief on the other side. I’m about to be crucified and the Romans have got two empty crosses. You guys want to make a reservation?” Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “*When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.*” That’s the deal. Do you want in or not? ([Can You Drink the Cup I Drink?](#))

---

**Cup** ([4221](#)) **poterion** refers to a literal cup (Mt 10:42; Mt 26:27; Mk 7:4; 9:41; 14:23; Lk 11:39; 22:17, 20; 1 Cor 10:16, 21; 11:25a, 27f; Rev 17:4). The cup stands, by metonymy, for what it contains ( Lk 22:20b; 1 Cor 11:25b, 26. Figuratively it referred to undergoing a violent death (Mt 20:22f; 26:39, 42; Mk 10:38f; 14:36; Lk 22:42; Jn 18:11; Rev 14:10; 16:19; 18:6) In the New Testament the cup represents the sufferings of Christ—the divinely appointed portion of sufferings which were necessary to bring about man’s redemption (Matthew 20:22; 26:39 and parallel passages; John 18:11). Metonymically cup as used for the contents of a cup, a cupful, cup of wine, spoken of the wine drunk at the Eucharist or communion (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 10:16) Metaphorically from the Hebrew meaning lot, portion, under the emblem of a cup which God presents to be drunk, either for good (Ps. 16:5; 23:5) or for evil (Ps. 11:6; 75:8; Ezek. 23:31ff.). In the NT the cup of sorrow, meaning the bitter lot which awaited the Lord in His sufferings and death (Matt. 20:22, 23; 26:39, 42; Mark 10:38, 39; 14:36; Luke 22:42; John 18:11). Spoken also of the cup from which God in His wrath causes the nations to drink so that they reel and stagger to destruction (Rev. 14:10; 16:19; 18:6).

---

#### Uterior Motives - Selwyn Hughes

You don't know what you're asking.—MATTHEW 20:22

There are many people in the Scriptures who appear to be spiritually minded but whose hearts harbor deeply unspiritual motives. Take the mother of the sons of Zebedee, for example, who according to Matthew 27:55 was one of the women who followed Jesus from Galilee in order to minister to Him.

Most commentators believe this small band of women to have been devotees of Christ, assisting Him and the disciples by preparing meals, washing and repairing clothes, and so on. Onlookers would have classified them as deeply spiritual, willing to give up their time to minister to Jesus—and of course, in the main, they were. In one place, however, the Scripture draws aside the veil from the heart of one of them, the mother of James and John, and shows her approaching Jesus with the request: "Promise ... that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right and the other on Your left, in Your kingdom." ... "You don't know what you're asking," Jesus said (Mt 20:21-22).

Yes, she served Jesus. Of that there can be no doubt. But she had a secret and selfish motive in her heart: a privileged position for her sons. It is easy to excuse her action, as many have done, on the grounds that she was doing only what any other concerned mother would have done—attempting to get the best for her children. But Jesus saw right into her heart and said: "You don't know what you're asking." How sad that her beautiful ministry to Jesus was spoiled by ulterior motives.

Prayer -- My Father, help me to see that I cannot be a fully integrated person when I harbor within me two mutually exclusive loves. I cannot love You fully when I love my own interests fully. Set me free, dear Lord, to live only for You. Amen.

---

#### QUESTION - [Why did Jesus ask God to “let this cup pass from me”?](#)

**ANSWER** - The gospels contain an account of the time the disciples and Jesus spent in the [Garden of Gethsemane](#), just before Jesus was arrested. In the garden Jesus prayed to his Father three times, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will”—the KJV says, “Let this cup pass from me” (Matthew 26:39). A little later, Jesus prays, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done” (Matthew 26:42). These prayers reveal Jesus’ mindset just before the crucifixion and His total submission to the will of God.

The “cup” to which Jesus refers is the suffering He was about to endure. It’s as if Jesus were being handed a cup full of bitterness with the expectation that He drink all of it. Jesus had used the same metaphor in Matthew 20:22 when prophesying of the future suffering of James and John. When Jesus petitions the Father, “Let this cup pass from me,” He expresses the natural human desire to avoid pain and suffering.

Jesus is fully God, but He is also fully human. His human nature, though perfect, still struggled with the need to accept the torture



and shame that awaited Him; His flesh recoiled from the cross. In the same context, Jesus says to His disciples, “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Mathew 26:41). In praying, “Let this cup pass from me,” Jesus was battling the flesh and its desire for self-preservation and comfort. The struggle was intense: Jesus was “overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death” (Matthew 26:38), and Luke the physician observed that Jesus was [sweating blood](#)—a sign of extreme anguish (Luke 22:44). If anything shows that Jesus was indeed fully man, this prayer is it.

Jesus knew of what was to come (see Mark 8:31). The agony He faced was going to be more than physical; it would be spiritual and emotional, as well. Jesus knew that God’s will was to crush Him, to allow Him to be “pierced for our transgressions” and wounded for our healing (Isaiah 53:5–10). Jesus loves mankind, but His humanity dreaded the pain and sorrow He faced, and it drove Him to ask His Father, “Let this cup pass from me.”

Jesus’ prayer to “let this cup pass from me” contains two important qualifications. First, He prays, “If it is possible.” If there was any other way to redeem mankind, Jesus asks to take that other way. The events following His prayer show that there was no other way; Jesus Christ is the only possible sacrifice to redeem the world (John 1:29; Acts 4:12; Hebrews 10:14; Revelation 5:9). Second, Jesus prays, “Yet not as I will, but as you will.” Jesus was committed to the will of God, body, mind, and soul. The prayer of the righteous is always dependent on the will of God (see Matthew 6:10).

In Gethsemane, Jesus conquered [the flesh](#) and kept it in subjection to the spirit. He did this through earnest prayer and intense, willful submission to God’s plan. It is good to know that, when we face trials, Jesus knows what it’s like to want God’s will and yet not to want it; to act out of love yet dread the hurt that often results; to desire righteousness and obedience, even when the flesh is screaming out against it. This conflict is not sinful; it is human. Our Savior was “fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God” (Hebrews 2:17). He had come “to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10), and He accomplished His mission, even though it meant drinking the cup of suffering to the bitter end.

**Matthew 20:23 He \*said to them, “My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father.”**

KJV Matthew 20:23 And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.

BGT Matthew 20:23 λ γει α το ς τ μ ν ποτ ρι ν μου π εσθε, τ δ καθ σαι κ δεξι ν μου κα ξ ε ων μων ο κ στιν μ ν [το το] δο ναι, λλ ο ς το μασται π το πατρ ς μου.

NET Matthew 20:23 He told them, "You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right and at my left is not mine to give. Rather, it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father."

CSB Matthew 20:23 He told them, "You will indeed drink My cup. But to sit at My right and left is not Mine to give; instead, it belongs to those for whom it has been prepared by My Father."

ESV Matthew 20:23 He said to them, "You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father."

NIV Matthew 20:23 Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."

NLT Matthew 20:23 Jesus told them, "You will indeed drink from my bitter cup. But I have no right to say who will sit on my right or my left. My Father has prepared those places for the ones he has chosen."

NRS Matthew 20:23 He said to them, "You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left, this is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father."

- **My cup you shall drink:** Ac 12:2 Ro 8:17 2Co 1:7 Col 1:24 2Ti 2:11,12 Rev 1:9
- **for whom it has been prepared by My Father:** Mt 25:34 Mk 10:40 1Co 2:9 Heb 11:16

#### Related Passages:

Acts 12:2+ And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword.

Romans 8:17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

2 Corinthians 1:7+ and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort.

Revelation 1:9+ I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Matthew 25:34+ "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'

The "Cup" Jesus "Drinks"

## JESUS PREDICTS THEY WILL DRINK OF HIS CUP

**He \*said to them, "My cup you shall drink** - He is addressing James and John at this point. His **cup** speaks of suffering, sacrifice and ultimately death. James and John wanted a crown, but Jesus says first they must drink of His cup! They would indeed drink of His cup, for as early as Acts 12:2+ James was martyred. His brother John suffered exile and persecution (Revelation 1:9+) and is the only disciple that apparently died a natural death. Indeed, most of the 11 disciples (Judas committed suicide) are believed to have been martyred for their faith in Jesus, though not all accounts are equally verified—some are based on church tradition rather than historical documentation.

**Spurgeon** - Hearing their professed willingness to have fellowship with himself in all things, our Lord assures them that he does not refuse to be associated with them; but he points them to the immediate and certain result of that fellowship. Our practical present business is not to aim at eminence in the kingdom, but submissively to drink the cup of suffering, and plunge into the deeps of humiliation which our Lord appoints for us. It is a great honor to be allowed to drink of his cup and to be baptized with his baptism: this he grants to his believing disciples. This fellowship is the essence of the spiritual kingdom. If our cup be bitter, it is his cup; if our baptism be overwhelming, it is the baptism that he is baptized with; and this sweetens the one, and prevents the other from being a death-plunge. Indeed that the cup and the baptism are his, makes our share in them to be an honor bestowed by grace.

**R T France** has an interesting observation that "Their open bid for leadership now is therefore a direct challenge to Peter's leading position: if James and John are at Jesus' right and left, where will Peter be?" (See [The Gospel of Matthew - Page 758](#))

*"He who goes nearest in time to Christ the crucified shall get nearest in eternity to Christ the glorified."*

-- Morison

**But to sit on My right (dextros) and on My left (euonumos), this is not Mine to give** - Rewards are not handed out on request but are gifts of grace as the Father has ordained to give. Jesus yields to His Father's authority. SEE [subordination/hierarchy in the Trinity](#). In John 6:38+ Jesus said "I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

**Hiebert** - "Jesus replied that He had no positions to give as a mere personal favor. Their request asked Him to act as an earthly monarch, bestowing personal favors on His favorites according to His own caprice."

*Personal ambition is not a factor  
in the eternal, sovereign plan of God.*

-- John MacArthur

**Spurgeon** - He comes to do not his own will, but the will of him that sent him, and so he correctly says of rank in his kingdom, It is not mine to give. How thoroughly did our Lord take a lowly place for our sakes! In this laying aside of authority, he gives a silent rebuke to our self-seeking."

**Uttley** - This is another example of Jesus' subordination to the Father's plan and purpose. There is a divine plan (cf. Acts 2:3; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29)

**But it is for those for whom it has been prepared (hetoimazo) by My Father** - Prepared is in the [perfect tense](#) which means that the matter has already been settled and remains settled. This speaks of the Father's foreknowledge, His divine foreordination—God has a perfect plan for those who are faithful, and He will reward accordingly. It follows that the way the disciples were wrangling and jostling among themselves over such positions was utterly futile. The thrones are reserved not for the presumptuous, but for those who walk the path of humble obedience, even unto suffering (like the cross). True honor will come not by grabbing glory, but by imitating Christ's humility.

*Those for whom the positions have been prepared  
will themselves be prepared for them.*

-- D Edmond Hiebert

**THOUGHT** - Jesus' words to the disciples remind us that in God's Kingdom, positions of honor aren't requested—they're prepared for those who live with humble faithfulness, embracing suffering and service for the sake of Christ. God prepares blessings, people, places, and purposes ahead of time. Believers are called to prepare their hearts for Christ's return and to serve.

**Spurgeon** - Other rewards of the kingdom are not arbitrarily granted, but fittingly bestowed. Jesus says that the high places in the kingdom will be given to them for whom they are prepared of his Father. He has no hesitation in speaking of what his Father has "prepared." Everything about our Lord's Kingdom is divinely arranged and fixed; nothing is left to chance or fate. Even Jesus will not interfere with the divine appointment concerning his kingdom. As a friend, he may not be solicited to use a supposed private influence to alter the arrangements of infinite wisdom. Eternal purposes are not to be changed at the request of ill-advised disciples. In a sense, Jesus gives all things; but as Mediator, he comes not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him, and so he correctly says of rank in his kingdom, It is not mine to give. How thoroughly did our Lord take a lowly place for our sakes! In this laying aside of authority, he gives a silent rebuke to our self-seeking. It may be that he intended to reprove, not only the mother of Zebedee's children, but all the disciples, who were constantly seeking great things for themselves.

---

**Left (2176) euonumos** from **eu** - well, good + **onoma** - name, literally speaks of good name, honorable, of good omen; usually substantively in both feminine singular and neuter plural, used by the Greeks as a euphemism for left, the left hand, the left side, as a replacement for avristero,j (left) in opposition to the right, since omens on the left were regarded as unfortunate ( MT 20.21) Liddell-Scott and Thayer say it speaks of good omen, prosperous, fortunate, in the latter sense used in taking auguries; but those omens were euphemistically called euonuma which in fact were regarded as unlucky, i. e. which came from the left, sinister omens (for which a good name was desired). In an inscription from Ephesus dealing with augury (divination from auspices or omens), where it is laid down that if a bird flying from right to left concealed its wing, it was a good omen (dexios) but if it raised its left wing, then, whether it raised or concealed the wing, it was of ill omen (euonumos).

**EUONUMOS - 9v** - Matt. 20:21; Matt. 20:23; Matt. 25:33; Matt. 25:41; Matt. 27:38; Mk. 10:40; Mk. 15:27; Acts 21:3; Rev. 10:2

**Prepared (2090) (hetoimazo** from **heteos** = fitness - see **hetoimasia**) means to make ready, put in readiness, specifically to make ready beforehand for some purpose, use, or activity. In Mt 3:3 **"Make ready** the way of the Lord..." In Jn 14:2-3 **"I go to prepare** a place for you..." 1Cor 2:9 **"What God has prepared** for those who love Him" Rev 21:2 **"Prepared** as a bride adorned for her husband"

**HETOIMAZO - 40V** - **get ready(1), get...ready(1), made ready(1), made...ready(1), make arrangements(1), make ready(4), prepare(11), prepared(20).** Matt. 3:3; Matt. 20:23; Matt. 22:4; Matt. 25:34; Matt. 25:41; Matt. 26:17; Matt. 26:19; Mk. 1:3; Mk. 10:40; Mk. 14:12; Mk. 14:15; Mk. 14:16; Lk. 1:17; Lk. 1:76; Lk. 2:31; Lk. 3:4; Lk. 9:52; Lk. 12:20; Lk. 12:47; Lk. 17:8; Lk. 22:8; Lk. 22:9; Lk. 22:12; Lk. 22:13; Lk. 23:56; Lk. 24:1; Jn. 14:2; Jn. 14:3; Acts 23:23; 1 Co. 2:9; 2 Tim. 2:21; Phlm. 1:22; Heb. 11:16; Rev. 8:6; Rev. 9:7; Rev. 9:15; Rev. 12:6; Rev. 16:12; Rev. 19:7; Rev. 21:2

---

#### **QUESTION - Who is greatest in the kingdom?**

**ANSWER** - The greatest person in the kingdom will of course be Jesus. After that, ranking the greatest is full of surprises. Matthew 18:1–5 records, "At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' [Jesus] called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me'" (see also Mark 9:35–37; Luke 9:46–48).

This incident occurred after the Transfiguration and after Jesus' second prediction of His death. Jesus had also just spoken about paying temple taxes, essentially claiming exemption as the Son of God yet miraculously providing for both Peter's tax and His own so as not to cause offense. Too, Jesus had healed a demon-possessed boy whom His disciples were unable to heal (Matthew 17:14–21). Jesus' power was evident, and the disciples recognized Him as Messiah and King. Evidently, they were interested in what their roles would be in Jesus' kingdom. Rather than provide qualifications for the greatest or talk about a hierarchical structure, Jesus said those who became like children—humble—were the greatest (Matthew 18:4).

Interestingly, after Jesus talks about the greatest being like a child, John tells Jesus that he had tried to stop others who were

casting out demons in Jesus' name (Mark 9:38; Luke 9:49). Apparently, the lesson had not quite sunken in, or perhaps John was convicted by Jesus' words and chose to confess his mistake. Jesus explained that what mattered was not who was doing the works but the Name in which the works were being done. It is God who deserves the glory, not an elite group of His followers. We also see in Matthew 20 and Mark 10 a request from John and James to sit with Jesus in His kingdom. Jesus replied by asking them if they were able to suffer as He was going to suffer. He then said, "To sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father" (Matthew 20:23). Being great in God's kingdom is not about prestige or privilege. Rather, it involves responsibility and sacrifice. Jesus told His disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done" (Matthew 16:24–27). To be great is to serve self-sacrificially. Being great in God's kingdom is about giving oneself for the sake of God's glory and for the benefit of others.

Luke 22 tells about another dispute among the disciples about who was the greatest, this time during the Last Supper. Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:25–27). This is the same night Jesus performed the service of the lowest of servants by [washing His disciples' feet](#). John 13 tells us Jesus did this because of His love for the disciples and also fully knowing His own relationship with the Father. Again, we see that the greatest is not the one with power or prestige, but the one who is secure in the Father's love and willing to serve.

Consistent in Jesus' teaching is that His kingdom is not like the kingdoms of this world. Humans tend to be concerned with social status, political clout, and pecking order. We tend to rank people according to how things look to us in this world, but Jesus warned that using earthly criteria will never give us an accurate picture of rank in God's kingdom. Human judgment will give way to God's some day: "Many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first" (Matthew 19:30).

Rather than strive to be the greatest in this world, we should simply trust in Jesus and serve others, thereby serving Him. Positions of power are meant to be positions of service. Rather than lord power over others, we are to use any influence or resources we have to serve others. The greatest in the kingdom are those who have the humility of a child and the meekness of Jesus. "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). What is valued in God's kingdom is loving the way He loved us—selflessly.

---

#### Related Resource:

- [What does the Bible say about humility?](#)

#### Matthew 20:24 And hearing this, the ten became indignant with the two brothers.

KJV Matthew 20:24 And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.

BGT Matthew 20:24 Καὶ κοίσαντες ὁ ὁ καὶ γὰρ κτησαν περὶ τὸ ὁ δὲ λφ ν.

NET Matthew 20:24 Now when the other ten heard this, they were angry with the two brothers.

CSB Matthew 20:24 When the 10 disciples heard this, they became indignant with the two brothers.

ESV Matthew 20:24 And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers.

NIV Matthew 20:24 When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers.

NLT Matthew 20:24 When the ten other disciples heard what James and John had asked, they were indignant.

NRS Matthew 20:24 When the ten heard it, they were angry with the two brothers.

NJB Matthew 20:24 When the other ten heard this they were indignant with the two brothers.

NAB Matthew 20:24 When the ten heard this, they became indignant at the two brothers.

YLT Matthew 20:24 And the ten having heard, were much displeased with the two brothers,

GWN Matthew 20:24 When the other ten apostles heard about this, they were irritated with the two brothers.

BBE Matthew 20:24 And when it came to the ears of the ten, they were angry with the two brothers.

## Related Passages:

Mark 10:41+ Hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John.

Luke 22:23-25+ And they began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this thing. 24And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest. 25And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.'

## RESENTMENT IN THE RANKS!

**And hearing this, the ten became indignant** ([aganakteo](#) - sorely displeased, resentful) **with the two brothers - MIT** = "When that news got around to the other ten apostles, they became hot under the collar about what the two brothers were up to." Jesus has just told them about His coming crucifixion which should have made them **indignant** toward the Jewish officials. Note that even Peter joins in the indignation against James and John! After all he surely thought he had done enough to warrant "first place." The ten had forgotten their earlier words "They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He began to question them, "What were you discussing on the way?" But they kept silent, for on the way **they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest.**" (Mk 9:33-34+) And they will soon forget again even at the Last Supper (!!!) Luke recording that "there arose also a dispute among them as to **which one of them was regarded to be greatest.**" (Luke 22:24+) As the old saying goes **"It takes one to know one!"**

**The ten** is a designation used only in this incident. **Indignant** describes a strong emotional response (used of Jesus in Mk 10:14+) meaning to feel pain and here describes the angry resentment of the other ten disciples. In short the 10 became angry! Division was beginning to infiltrate the ranks. The other 10 disciples thought that James and John had taken advantage of their relationship with Jesus.

**Hiebert** - When Jesus bestowed special privileges on Peter, James, and John (Mk 5:37; Mk 9:2), the others showed no resentment; that was His prerogative. But they were deeply offended when the two brothers privately requested preferential treatment for themselves. **Began** (Mk 10:41) apparently suggests that their strong feeling against James and John was not allowed to continue for long; Jesus acted at once to arrest it. Their reaction was no more praiseworthy than the selfish ambition of the two. All of them would have gladly accepted the positions James and John had the audacity to ask for themselves, but they resented the unfair efforts of James and John to secure those positions. They "betrayed their spiritual shallowness by being indignant at the spiritual shallowness of the two." ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expositional Commentary](#))

**John MacArthur** - The rest of the apostles were furious, not because James's and John's blatant manifestation of pride offended their spiritual sensibilities but because the two approached Jesus first. The Twelve's selfish competitiveness survived until the very end; even on the solemn occasion of the Last Supper, "there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest" (Luke 22:24). (See [Mark Commentary](#))

**Spurgeon** - Naturally, the other ten apostles did not relish the attempt of the sons of Zebedee to steal a march upon them. We never hear that they resented our Lord's preference of Peter, James, and John; but when two of these sought precedence for themselves they could not bear it. Peter was with them in this, for we read, When the ten heard it. Unanimously they were angry with upstarts. That they were moved with indignation, was a proof that they were ambitious themselves, or at least that they were not willing to take the lowest place. Because they were guilty of the same fault, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren Here was a sad division in the little camp; how could it be healed? Jesus called them unto him: he personally dealt with this rising evil, and bade the twelve come aside, and listen to something meant only for their private ear.

**Warren Wiersbe** - "How great a forest a little fire kindles" (James 3:5, nkjv). Selfishness on the part of one believer can cause trouble in the lives of others. Jesus used this as an opportunity to teach the disciples a lesson on humility. The truly great person is one who serves others. Christ Himself is the example of this (see Phil. 2:3-11). To "exercise lordship" as the people of the world do is foreign to the spirit of the Christian life. While Christian leaders are to "shepherd the flock" (1 Peter 5:2; see Acts 20:28), they are not to govern in self-will and pride, but humbly as "undershepherds." (See [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament - Page 74](#))

---

**Indignant** (23)([aganakteo](#) from **ágan** = very much + **áchthos** = pain, grief) is a verb which means to be oppressed in mind, to be grieved, to be resentful, to be aroused. **Aganakteo** reflects intense displeasure. To be indignant against what is judged to be wrong. It describes Jesus' righteous indignation when His disciples rebuked those bringing children to Him (Mk 10:13-14). More often **aganakteo** is used to describe an unrighteous **indignation** including that manifested by Jesus' own disciples (Mt 20:24 and Mk 10:41 = of the 10 indignant toward James and John, Mt 26:8 and Mk 14:4 = indignation as the "wasting" of expensive perfume anointing Jesus!) and finally the ugly indignation of the hypocritical religious leaders (Mt 21:15, Lk 13:14).

**AGANAKTEO - 7V - feel indignant(1), indignant(5), indignantly(1).** Matt. 20:24; Matt. 21:15; Matt. 26:8; Mk. 10:14; Mk. 10:41; Mk. 14:4; Lk. 13:14

God's Way of Justice - Our desire for justice for ourselves and for others often complicates the issues, builds up factions and quarrels. Worldly justice and unworldly justice are quite different things. The supernatural approach, when understood, is to turn the other cheek, to give up what one has, willingly, gladly, with no spirit of martyrdom, to rejoice in being the least, to being unrecognized, the slightest. —Dorothy Day, "Reflections," Christianity Today, Vol. 44, no. 10.

**Matthew 20:25 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them.**

KJV Matthew 20:25 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

BGT Matthew 20:25 ὁ ἰησοῦς προσκαλεσάμενος αὐτοὺς ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἔρχονται τὴν θυνὴν κατακυριεύουσιν αὐτὴν καὶ οἱ μεγάλοι κατέξουσιν αὐτήν.

NET Matthew 20:25 But Jesus called them and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in high positions use their authority over them.

CSB Matthew 20:25 But Jesus called them over and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles dominate them, and the men of high position exercise power over them.

ESV Matthew 20:25 But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.

NIV Matthew 20:25 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.

NLT Matthew 20:25 But Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them.

- **called:** Mt 11:29 18:3,4 Jn 13:12-17
- **You know that the rulers:** Mk 10:42 Lu 22:25-27
- **exercise authority:** Da 2:12,13,37-45 3:2-7,15,19-22 5:19

## JESUS CONVENES THE TWELVE

**But Jesus called** ([proskaleo](#)) **them to Himself** - Presumably there was a crowd so Jesus sought to give the 12 some personal instruction on what constitutes true greatness in God's eyes. The verb [proskaleo](#) is in the middle voice emphasizing that Jesus immediately summoned them to Himself for what amounts to a "face to face" encounter. This division had to be curtailed immediately.

**Hiebert** - He acted to meet the threat to the harmony in the apostolic circle. The ten had reason to be offended, but all needed the lesson He wanted to teach. ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

**And said, “You know** ([eido](#)) **that the rulers** ([archon](#)) **of the Gentiles** ([ethnos](#)) **lord it over** ([katakuriuo](#) = "ruling down on") **them, and their great men** (NET - "those in high positions" - idea of distinguished, eminent) **exercise authority over** ([katexousiazō](#)) **them** - **Know** ([eido](#)) speaks of knowledge one has beyond a shadow of a doubt. Jesus began with their knowledge of greatness as it operated in the Gentile world. Rulers were often known for harsh, top-down authority, wealth, and control over others and **lord it over** ([katakuriuo](#)) means they dominated, ruled harshly, acted like a master over slaves, exerting power in order to exalt



self, control others, and maintain superiority. Note that **Great** is relative describing those with positions of earthly (transient) grandeur, and who are **great** in eyes of men but not in the eyes of God as the following context shows! **Exercise authority** (katexousiazō) reflects men who have charisma and control based on their popularity and personality ([the cult leader Jim Jones](#) came to mind) and in the [present tense](#) means that these men continually tyrannize others, exploiting those beneath them (prefix = kata - down), wielding power over them as tyrants (one thinks of men like Stalin, Hitler, etc). Sadly the modern church is replete with both these categories of men in leadership and pastoral positions! Woe to them at the judgment!

*Our human efforts at earthly greatness display  
our ignorance and misunderstanding of kingdom greatness.*  
-- Stu Weber

**R. T. France:** The question "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" was raised and answered in Mt 18:1–4 and in the portrayal of the "little ones" which followed in ch. 18; it was more obliquely addressed in the passages about the blessing of the children (Mt 19:13–15) and the rich man (Mt 19:16–26), and has come to the fore again in the discussion of rewards in Mt 19:27–29, especially in the repeated slogan "The first will be last and the last first" in Mt 19:30 and Mt 20:16 together with the illustrative parable which comes between them. Now the same question arises in its most memorable form in the request of the sons of Zebedee and is dealt with definitively by Jesus in Mt 20:25–28; it will be broached again in Mt 23:8–12. The natural human concern with status and importance is clearly one of the most fundamental instincts which must be unlearned by those who belong to God's kingdom. (See [The Gospel of Matthew - Page 755](#))

**Spurgeon** - They were confounding his kingdom with the ordinary government of men, and therefore they dreamed of being great, and exercising dominion in his name; but he wished them to correct their ideas, and turn their thoughts another way. It was true, that to be his followers was a highly honorable thing, and made them partakers of a kingdom; but it was not like earthly kingdoms. In the great Gentile monarchies, princes ruled by authority force, and pomp; but in his kingdom the rule would be one of love, and the dignity would be that of service. He who could serve most would be the greatest. The lowliest would be the most honored: the most self-sacrificing would have most power. Whenever we see the nobles of earth contending for precedence, we should hear our Master say, "But it shall not be so among you." We must for ever quit hunting after honor, office, power, and influence. If we aim at greatness at all, it must be by being great in service, becoming the minister or servant of our brethren.

**Warren Wiersbe:** There were several things wrong with their request. To begin with, it was born in ignorance. "Ye know not what ye ask," Jesus replied. Little did Salome realize that the path to the throne is a difficult one. James was the first of the disciples to be martyred, and John had to endure hard days on the isle of Patmos. These three believers wanted their will, not God's will, and they wanted it their way. Another factor was their lack of heavenly direction. They were thinking like the world: James and John wanted to "lord it over" the other disciples the way the unsaved Gentile rulers lorded it over their subjects. Their request was fleshly (sensual), because they were selfishly asking for glory for themselves, not for the Lord. No doubt they felt relieved that they had gotten to Jesus with this request before Peter did! Finally, the request was not only of the world and the flesh, but it was also of the Devil. It was motivated by pride. Satan had sought a throne (Isa. 14:12-15) and had been cast down. Satan had offered Jesus a throne and had been refused (Matt. 4:8-11). Satan magnifies the end (a throne) but not the means to that end. Jesus warned Salome and her sons that the special thrones were available to those who were worthy of them. There are no shortcuts in the kingdom of God. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

---

**Lord** (2634) **katakuriuo** from **katá** =an intensifier or down + **kurieuo** = have dominion over) means to have dominion "down" on others and includes the idea of domineering as in the rule of a strong person over one who is weak. It means to exercise dominion over, bring under one's power, bring into subjection, to become master, gain dominion over or to subdue. The preposition **kata** ("down") indicates intensity and depicts a heavy-handed use of authority for personal aggrandizement, manifesting itself in the desire to dominate and accompanied by a haughty demand for compliance. It speaks of a high-handed autocratic rule over the flock, something forbidden of true shepherds. The idea of exerting lordship over others combines elements of power and authority, the root word **kurios** being derived in turn from a root meaning "to swell," "to be strong," so that **kurios** means "having power," "empowered," "authorized," "valid." The power denoted is a power of control rather than physical strength.

**Exercise authority** (2715) **katexousiazō** (**kata** - down, against + **exousiazō** - exercise authority over) speaks of the possession and exercise of authority - rule, reign, have dominion over, possibly in a negative sense lord it over, tyrannize. to exercise lordship over. Only twice in NT - Mt 20:25, Mk 10:42.

**Matthew 20:26 "It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant,**

KJV Matthew 20:26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your

minister;

BGT Matthew 20:26 ο χ ο τω ς σ ται ν μ ν, λ λ ς ν θ λ ν μ ν μ γ α ς γ ε ν σ θ αι σ ται μ ν δ ι κ ο ν ο ς,

NET Matthew 20:26 It must not be this way among you! Instead whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant,

CSB Matthew 20:26 It must not be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,

ESV Matthew 20:26 It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,

NIV Matthew 20:26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,

NLT Matthew 20:26 But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant,

NRS Matthew 20:26 It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant,

NJB Matthew 20:26 Among you this is not to happen. No; anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant,

- **it:** Mt 23:8-12 Mk 9:35 10:43,45 Lu 14:7-11 18:14 Jn 18:36 2Co 1:24 2Co 10:4-10 1Pe 5:3 3Jn 1:9,10 Rev 13:11-17 17:6
- **servant:** Mt 25:44 27:55 Eze 24:13 Ac 13:5 2Ti 1:18 Phm 1:13 Heb 1:14 1Pe 4:11

## GREATNESS: SERVING OTHERS NOT RULING OVER OTHERS

**It is not** (*οὐκ* - absolutely not be) **this way among you** - **NET** phrases it as "It must not be this way among you!" **NLT** = "But among you it will be different." What does "**IT**" refer to? In context, **IT** refers to men who lord it over and exercise authority over others. I think **Grant Osborne's** phrasing is accurate for he paraphrases this as "*It must not be this way among you*" (*οὐ χ ο τω ς σ ται ν μ ν*). "**Must be**" (*σ ται*) is an example of the future with imperatival force (cf. Mt 5:21, 27, 33, 43; 23:10). The citizens of the kingdom must never be like the Gentiles in a lust for power. (See [Matthew - Page 741](#)) This brash brand of leadership style has no place **among** the disciples of Jesus! Dear pastor, what's your style of leadership?

**John MacArthur** adds that "The world's way of greatness is like a pyramid. The prestige and power of the great person is built on the many subordinate persons beneath him. But in the kingdom, the pyramid is inverted. As the great commentator R. C. H. Lenski has observed, God's "great men are not sitting on top of lesser men, but bearing lesser men on their backs." Unfortunately, however, there are still many people in the church who, like James and John, continually seek recognition, prestige, and power by manipulating and controlling others to their own selfish advantage. A tragic number of Christian leaders and celebrities have gained great followings by appealing to people's emotions and worldly appetites. But that is not to be so among Christ's disciples today any more than among the Twelve." Jesus went on to explain that it is not wrong to desire great usefulness to God, only wrong to seek the world's kind of greatness. (See [Matthew Commentary - Page 240](#))

**Wuest** - Our Lord meets this crisis by showing the disciples the difference between that which is esteemed great in the Gentile world system, and the standard of greatness in the spiritual kingdom which He was inaugurating. It was pomp and circumstance, privilege and power, position and authority in the Gentile world, which was esteemed great, and the greatness of the individual came from his place in the system. But in the kingdom of God, the greatness of the individual comes from the lowly place he takes as a servant of all. (Borrow [Mark in the Greek New Testament for the English reader - page 212](#))

**But** - Term of contrast. Jesus is contrasting world's view of greatness with God's way of greatness.

**Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant** (*διακονος*) - **Whoever** leaves this open to all while **wishes** leaves it to the desire of each individual. Note carefully that Jesus does not condemn this desire **to become great**. He condemns the **modus operandi**! What is condemned in the previous passages is a desire from selfish motives and not a desire to glorify and honor the Father in Heaven. Jesus' formula for greatness in His Kingdom is simply to be a servant, serving others with one's life just as He did.

**John MacArthur** - This kind of greatness is pleasing to God, because it is humble and self-giving rather than proud and self-serving. The way to the world's greatness is through pleasing and being served by men; the way to God's greatness is through pleasing Him

and serving others in His name....The surest mark of the true servant is willing sacrifice for the sake of others in the name of Christ. The sham servant avoids suffering, while the true servant accepts it. (See [Matthew 16-23 MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Page 240](#))

*Service to God through service to mankind is the only motivation acceptable to God for diligence and hard work in our vocational calling.*

-- Jerry Bridges

**Uttley** - Jesus does not discourage greatness or ambition, but defines true greatness as service and humility (cf. Matt. 20:26; Mark 9:35).

**THOUGHT** - Play this old Maranatha chorus "[If you want to be great in God's kingdom, learn to be the servant of all](#)" and then enabled by the Spirit of Christ serve like Jesus served. This is pleasing to the Father.

*If we aim at greatness at all, it must be by being great in service, becoming the minister or servant of our brethren.*

**Spurgeon** - They were confounding his kingdom with the ordinary government of men, and therefore they dreamed of being great, and exercising dominion in his name; but he wished them to correct their ideas, and turn their thoughts another way. It was true, that to be his followers was a highly honorable thing, and made them partakers of a kingdom; but it was not like earthly kingdoms. In the great Gentile monarchies, princes ruled by authority force, and pomp; but in his kingdom the rule would be one of love, and the dignity would be that of service. He who could serve most would be the greatest. The lowliest would be the most honored: the most self-sacrificing would have most power. Whenever we see the nobles of earth contending for precedence, we should hear our Master say, "**But it shall not be so among you.**" We must for ever quit hunting after honor, office, power, and influence. If we aim at greatness at all, it must be by being great in service, becoming the minister or servant of our brethren.

*True greatness, the greatness of the kingdom, is reached only through service and self-sacrifice. Jesus is himself the supreme model of that kind of greatness.*

-- Donald Hagner

A good picture of the meaning of this word group is found in the use of **diakoneo** to describe Peter's mother-in-law who was healed by Jesus "and she immediately got up and **waited (diakoneo)** on them." (Lk 4:39+)

*Those whom God will employ are first struck with a sense of their unworthiness to be employed.*

-- Matthew Henry

**William Law** in [A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life](#) wrote "Let every day be a day of humility; condescend to all the weaknesses and infirmities of your fellow-creatures, cover their frailties, love their excellencies, encourage their virtues, relieve their wants, rejoice in their prosperities, compassionate their distress, receive their friendship, overlook their unkindness, forgive their malice, be a servant of servants, and condescend to do the lowliest offices of the lowest of mankind."

**Samuel Brengle** wrote "If I appear great in their eyes, the Lord is most graciously helping me to see how absolutely nothing I am without Him, and helping me to keep little in my own eyes. He does use me. But I am so concerned that He uses me and that it is not of me the work is done. The axe cannot boast of the trees it has cut down. It could do nothing but for the woodsman. He made it, he sharpened it, and he used it. The moment he throws it aside, it becomes only old iron. O That I may never lose sight of this. (Quoted by [Oswald Sanders, Spiritual Leadership](#) - borrow.)

---

**Servant** (minister, deacon) (1249) **diakonos** see related words **diakoneo**, **diakonia**) is of uncertain origin. Some say it is from **dia** (through) + **konis** (dust) which denotes one who hurries through the dust to carry out his service. (**Thayer** and others doubt this derivation for technical reasons). **Diakonos** (and cognates) was originally purely secular, referring to a person who did menial labor, such as house cleaning or serving tables. It was not necessarily a term of dishonor but simply described the lowest level of hired help, persons who needed little training or skill. **Vine** says that **diakonos** is probably from **diako** which means to hasten after, to pursue and so to run on errands. "Then the root idea is one who reaches out with diligence and persistence to render a service on behalf of others. This would imply that the deacon reaches out to render love-prompted service to others energetically and persistently." (Hiebert) This word group (**diakonos**, **diakoneo**, **diakonia**) focuses on the rendering or assistance or help by performing certain duties, often of a humble or menial nature, and including such mundane activities as waiting on tables or caring for household needs, activities that to many would seem to be without dignity (not true of course in God's eyes, Pr 15:3, Rev 22:12+). In summary, the basic idea of this word group is that of humble, submissive, personal service, with less emphasis on a specific office or a particular function. As Matthew Henry once said "Those whom God will employ are first struck with a sense of their unworthiness to be employed."

**Lawrence Richards** observes that "A survey of NT passages using the **diakoneo word group** ([diakonos](#), [diakoneo](#), [diakonia](#)) reveals how we can serve others and what "ministry" involves. It will include the following activities: caring for those in prison (Mt 25:44), serving tables (i.e., meeting physical needs) (Ac 6:2), teaching the Word of God (Ac 6:4), giving money to meet others' needs (2Co 9:1), and all the service offered by Christians to others to build them up in faith (1Co 12:5; Ep 4:12+). Although Paul and other apostles are called **ministers**, and although there was the office of **deacon** in the early church, there is a sense in which **every believer is a minister** and is to use his or her gifts to serve others

---

When Pastor Howard Sugden preaches on the upper room, where Jesus washed the disciples' feet, he speaks of "God with a towel in His hand." That towel symbolizes One who "did not come to be served, but to serve" (Matt. 20:28). Yet how quickly we reverse the pattern and expect others to serve our needs. We may even go so far as to complain when other believers disappoint us and don't do as we expect. That's why we need to keep Jesus' example before us.

Vernon Grounds, then president of Denver Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary, challenged the graduating class of 1973 with the truth of John 13. Dr. Grounds gave the graduates a tangible symbol that he said would help them in their future ministries. As the classmates filed quietly to the front, they expected a special Scripture verse, a little book, or an inscribed medallion. To their surprise, he gave them a small square of white terry cloth. One graduate, who has served as an overseas missionary, says,

"We were commissioned to go into the world as servants. That small piece of towel, frayed and grubby from years in my wallet, is a constant reminder of that moving moment and of our basic call to serve."

The example Christ gave in the upper room challenges us to ask ourselves if we have a servant's attitude. Perhaps it's time for us to realize that the "towel in our hand" is a servant's towel. —D. C. Egnor (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

The believer's talents are not to be laid up for self—they are to be laid out in service.

---

**John MacArthur - SERVANTHOOD: HUMILITY IN ACTION - Matthew 20:26-27** [Strength for Today: Daily Readings for a Deeper Faith - Page 29](#)

*In God's sight, greatness is marked by  
a humble, servant's heart.*

Bible commentator R.C.H. Lenski once wrote that God's "great men are not sitting on top of lesser men, but bearing lesser men on their backs." Jesus would have agreed with Lenski's observation, but He did not see it as wrong to desire greater usefulness to God. Those standards of usefulness, however, are much more demanding than any worldly ideals for self-serving, domineering leadership. For example, Paul lists for us the high standards God has for church overseers (1 Tim. 3:1–7). God considers men great who are among those willing to be servants.

In Matthew 20:26–27, Jesus was speaking of genuine servanthood, not the "public servant" who merely uses his position to gain power and personal prestige. The original Greek word for "servant" referred to a person who did menial labor and was the lowest level of hired help. Jesus could have used a more noble word to denote obedient discipleship, but He picked this one (from which we get *deacon*) because it best described the selfless humility of one who served.

But in verse 27, Jesus intensifies His description of God's way to greatness. He tells us if we want to be great in His kingdom, we must be willing to be slaves. Whereas servants had some personal freedom, slaves were owned by their masters and could go only where their masters allowed and do only what their masters wanted. The application for us as believers is that "whether we live or die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. 14:8).

If you desire real spiritual greatness, you will be willing to work in the hard place, the lonely place, the place where you're not appreciated. You'll be willing to strive for excellence without becoming proud, and to endure suffering without getting into self-pity. It is to these godly attitudes and more that Christ will say, "Well done, good and faithful slave ... enter into the joy of your master" (Matt. 25:21).

✧✧✧

Suggestions for Prayer: Ask the Lord to help you cultivate a servant's heart.

For Further Study: Read 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and make a list of the qualifications for an overseer (elder). ✧ Meditate on the implications of each trait, and write down ways in which humility relates to these leadership qualities.

---

## TODAY IN THE WORD

In Mere Christianity, C. S. Lewis wrote, "If anyone would like to acquire humility, I can, I think, tell him the first step. The first step is to realize that one is proud. And a biggish step, too. At least, nothing whatever can be done before it. If you think you are not conceited, it means you are very conceited indeed."

In today's reading, Jesus revisited the topic of humility and greatness in the kingdom of heaven. To begin, He reminded us that He's the King, not us. If we need a reason to be humble, all we need to remember is that He's the sovereign of the universe! This lesson comes through loud and clear in the parable of the workers in the vineyard. To grumble and grab for our "rights" is to forget whose vineyard it is. The owner has every right to do as he likes—who then can complain about his promise keeping and generosity? When we do, it shows our pride.

Another key point here is the familiar phrase, "The last will be first, and the first will be last" (Mt 20:16). God does not order things the way we would or for the reasons we would. Jesus predicted that He would be betrayed, condemned, beaten, mocked, and executed. In the eyes of the world, He would be a loser—but in God's eyes, He would be the ultimate winner. His resurrection would be the greatest victory in history!

In short, servanthood is part of the road to greatness in God's kingdom. Jesus had already taught much on this topic, but apparently the disciples had not tuned in. They were preoccupied with jockeying for position and power. They should have known how ironic their request was—to ask to be "first" meant they wanted to be "last" from an earthly perspective. Jesus clarified that being a leader in His kingdom meant that they would, like Him, suffer for righteousness' sake.

**TODAY ALONG THE WAY** Almost all of us find ourselves in some sort of leadership position, whether at church, at work, or in your home.

---

## IS THERE A SERVANT IN THE HOUSE?—Matthew 20:26 NASB

In Matthew, the disciples James and John came to Christ with their mother. She filed this request: "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left" (Matthew 20:21 NASB), which being interpreted means, "Could my sons have the most powerful and influential positions in the new government?" The text goes on to say that when the other ten heard about her appeal they were "indignant." Probably for a lot of reasons. But, no doubt, the real rub was that they all wanted the big spots in what they assumed would be the soon-to-arrive kingdom. If they had a choice, none of them wanted to play the lesser part.

Christ reproved them for their advanced cases of "big-shot-itis" and went on to tell them that if they were to be authentic followers, they would have to pursue servanthood as a life goal. In fact, He noted that those who would be considered great in His kingdom would be those who served. God wants followers who are willing if necessary to play the small part, the unaffirmed part. As for those whom He has given visibility and clout, He is looking to see if they manage their leadership from a servant's perspective.

After all, God was willing to stoop low enough to serve us all the way to the painful injustice of a cross. The thought that some things are beneath us, that we deserve better, that we really should be served instead of serving, denies the very essence of Jesus and our identity in Him. If we are striving to be like Him, no task is too small, no venue too unnoticed, no legitimate sacrifice too great. Because He served, we gladly live to serve. And we do it all the way home to heaven whether anyone notices or not. Knowing all the while that He notices and will say to us when we arrive, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21 KJV). Which is a recognition worth not being recognized for!

What serving role do you play—parent, Sunday school teacher, prayer warrior? Keep it up. It's so much like Christ!

"Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant" (Matthew 20:26).

---

When Pastor Howard Sugden preaches on the upper room, where Jesus washed the disciples' feet, he speaks of "God with a towel in His hand." That towel symbolizes One who "did not come to be served, but to serve" (Matt. 20:28). Yet how quickly we reverse the pattern and expect others to serve our needs. We may even go so far as to complain when other believers disappoint us and don't do as we expect. That's why we need to keep Jesus' example before us.

Vernon Grounds, then president of Denver Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary, challenged the graduating class of 1973 with the truth of John 13. Dr. Grounds gave the graduates a tangible symbol that he said would help them in their future ministries. As the classmates filed quietly to the front, they expected a special Scripture verse, a little book, or an inscribed medallion. To their surprise, he gave them a small square of white terry cloth. One graduate, who has served as an overseas missionary, says,

"We were commissioned to go into the world as servants. That small piece of towel, frayed and grubby from

years in my wallet, is a constant reminder of that moving moment and of our basic call to serve."

The example Christ gave in the upper room challenges us to ask ourselves if we have a servant's attitude. Perhaps it's time for us to realize that the "towel in our hand" is a servant's towel. —D.C.E. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

The believer's talents are not to be laid up for self—they are to be laid out in service.

### Matthew 20:27 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave;

KJV Matthew 20:27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

BGT Matthew 20:27 καὶ ὁ ἐπιθέλων μὲν εἶναι πρῶτος μὲν δοῦλος·

NET Matthew 20:27 and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave—

CSB Matthew 20:27 and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave;

ESV Matthew 20:27 and whoever would be first among you must be your slave,

NIV Matthew 20:27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave--

NLT Matthew 20:27 and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave.

NRS Matthew 20:27 and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave;

NJB Matthew 20:27 and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave,

NAB Matthew 20:27 whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave.

YLT Matthew 20:27 and whoever may will among you to be first, let him be your servant;

- **whoever:** Mt 18:4 Mk 9:33-35 Lu 22:26 Ac 20:34,35 Ro 1:14 1Co 9:19-23 2Co 4:5 11:5,23-27 12:15

### Related Passages:

Matthew 18:4+ "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Mark 9:33-35+ They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He began to question them, "What were you discussing on the way?" 34 But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest. 35 Sitting down, He called the twelve and \*said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."

Luke 22:26+ "But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant.

## GOD'S WAY TO BE FIRST

**And whoever wishes** ([thelo](#) - present tense) **to be first** ([protos](#)) **among you shall be your slave** ([doulos](#)) - MIT = "On the contrary, whoever among you who has ambition for greatness will become your servant. In other words, whoever among you wants to be number one will make himself your slave." Note that the phrase **whoever wishes** opens the door to all who desire to bring glory and honor to God in this short time on earth. Here's another [Biblical paradox](#) - The way "up" is "down."

We see truth illustrated in Paul's declaration in 2 Corinthians 4:5+ "For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your **bond-servants** ([doulos](#)) for Jesus' sake."

**Charles Swindoll:** You could have probably heard their jaws drop when Jesus uttered those words. The words were revolutionary. They turned the world's ways on their head. Once again, Jesus was unpacking the meaning of His statement that "the last shall be first, and the first last" (20:16). And with each pass at this confusing teaching, He hoped the disciples would get closer and closer to understanding His mission, which would become their own mission when He departed this world. Only when they fully grasped this mission would they understand what true greatness in the kingdom of heaven really is. He concluded the lesson by pointing to Himself as the ultimate example of what He had just been trying to teach them. (See [Insights on Matthew 16--28 - Page 134](#))



**Hiebert** - "Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all"—there is a threefold advance here. The chiefest, or "first," contemplates the individual who has the holy ambition of attaining to the highest position even among those who are "great." Servant, literally, "slave," denotes a lower position than minister, implying that such a one foregoes his own rights in order to serve others for Christ's sake. Of all enlarges the scope of service to all to whom he may be helpful. Preeminence in Christ's kingdom is attained through primacy in self-sacrificing services voluntarily rendered. "The test was not, What service can I extract? but, What service can I give?" ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

**John MacArthur** - "The road to that greatness in the kingdom lies in selfless service. The Lord's point is that believers are to consider everyone their master, and themselves slaves to serve all." (See [Mark Commentary](#))

**John MacArthur** - The cost of true greatness is humble, selfless, sacrificial service. The Christian who desires to be great and first in the kingdom is the one who is willing to serve in the hard place, the uncomfortable place, the lonely place, the demanding place, the place where he is not appreciated and may even be persecuted. Knowing that time is short and eternity long, he is willing to spend and be spent. He is willing to work for excellence without becoming proud, to withstand criticism without becoming bitter, to be misjudged without becoming defensive, and to withstand suffering without succumbing to self-pity. (See [Matthew Commentary - Page 243](#))

**William Barclay**: Therein is greatness. The world may assess people's greatness by the number of people whom they control and who are at their beck and call; or by their intellectual standing and their academic eminence; or by the number of committees of which they are members; or by the size of their bank balances and the material possessions which they have amassed; but in the assessment of Jesus Christ these things are irrelevant. His assessment is quite simply: how many people have they helped?

**Amy Carmichael** wrote,

Hast thou no scar?  
No hidden scar on foot, or side, or hand?  
I hear thee sung as mighty in the land,  
I hear them hail thy bright ascendant star;  
Hast thou no scar?

Hast thou no wound?  
Yet, I was wounded by the archers, spent.  
Leaned me against the tree to die, and rent  
By ravaging beasts that compassed me, I swooned:  
Hast thou no wound?

No wound? No scar?  
Yes, as the master shall the servant be,  
And pierced are the feet that follow Me;  
But thine are whole. Can he have followed far  
Who has no wound? No scar?

---

**First** (4413) **protos** has several nuances - first in time or place 1a) in any succession of things or persons 2) first in rank 2a) influence, honour 2b) chief 2c) principal 3) first, at the first. Classical usage of **prōtos** is very diverse. It can mean "first" in rank; "first" in order; "first" in quality, i.e., "best"; "first" in the temporal sense.

**Friberg** adds **protos** is "I. adjectivally first of several; (1) of time; (a) in comparison of past and present earlier, first, former (Rev 2:5); (b) in antithesis between the beginning and the end first, before anything else (Rev 1:17), opposite *σχατος* (last, final); (2) of rank and value first (of all), foremost, chief, most important of all; (a) of things (Mt 22:38); (b) substantivally, of persons ο *πρ τοι* the leading men, the most important persons (Mk 6:21); (3) of number or sequence first (Mt 21:28; HE 10:9); (4) spatially front; substantivally *πρώτη* the outer (tent) (Heb 9:2, 6, 8); II. substantivally, neuter singular *πρ τον* as an adverb; (1) of time at first, to begin with, (for) the first time (Ro 1:16); before, earlier (Jn 15:18); (2) of priority or value first of all (Mt 5:24); of degree above all, especially, in the first place (Mt 6:33) (Borrow [Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament](#))

**PROTOS IN MATTHEW** - Matt. 5:24; Matt. 6:33; Matt. 7:5; Matt. 8:21; Matt. 10:2; Matt. 12:29; Matt. 12:45; Matt. 13:30; Matt. 17:10; Matt. 17:27; Matt. 19:30; Matt. 20:8; Matt. 20:10; Matt. 20:16; Matt. 20:27; Matt. 21:28; Matt. 21:31; Matt. 21:36; Matt. 22:25; Matt. 22:38; Matt. 23:26; Matt. 26:17; Matt. 27:64

**Slave** (1401) **doulos** from **deo** = to bind) (Click additional notes on **doulos**) was an individual bound to another in servitude and

conveys the idea of the slave's close, binding ties with his master, belonging to him, obligated to and desiring to do his will and in a permanent relation of servitude. In sum, the will of the **doulos** is consumed in the will of the master. A bondservant is one who surrendered wholly to another's will and thus devoted to another to the disregard of his own interest. Paul and Timothy were not their own but had been bought with the price of the blood of Christ. They were now the property of our Lord Jesus Christ and were His slaves exclusively. No man can serve two masters (Mt 6:24+). Paul and Timothy had been slaves of Sin (see note on ["the Sin"](#)) by their birth into Adam's likeness, but now they are slaves of Christ by their new, second birth. They had no will of their own, no business of their own, no time of their own and were acting for their Master, Christ; dependent upon Him and obedient to Him.

**MacArthur** - The position and work of a **slave** were much lower and demeaning even than those of a **servant**. A **servant** was to some degree his own person. He often owned little more than the clothes on his back, but he was free to go where he wanted and to work or not work as he pleased. But a slave (*doulos*) did not belong to himself but to his master and could go only where the master wanted him to go and do only what the master wanted him to do. He did not belong to himself but was the personal property of someone else.

**DOULOS - 120V** - Mt 8:9; Mt 10:24; Mt 10:25; Mt 13:27; Mt 13:28; Mt 18:23; Mt 18:26; Mt 18:27; Mt 18:28; Mt 18:32; Mt 20:27; Mt 21:34; Mt 21:35; Mt 21:36; Mt 22:3; Mt 22:4; Mt 22:6; Mt 22:8; Mt 22:10; Mt 24:45; Mt 24:46; Mt 24:48; Mt 24:50; Mt 25:14; Mt 25:19; Mt 25:21; Mt 25:23; Mt 25:26; Mt 25:30; Mt 26:51; Mk 10:44; Mk 12:2; Mk 12:4; Mk 13:34; Mk 14:47; Lk 1:38; Lk 1:48; Lk 2:29; Lk 7:2; Lk 7:3; Lk 7:8; Lk 7:10; Lk 12:37; Lk 12:43; Lk 12:45; Lk 12:46; Lk 12:47; Lk 14:17; Lk 14:21; Lk 14:22; Lk 14:23; Lk 15:22; Lk 17:7; Lk 17:9; Lk 17:10; Lk 19:13; Lk 19:15; Lk 19:17; Lk 19:22; Lk 20:10; Lk 20:11; Lk 22:50; Jn. 4:51; Jn 8:34; Jn 8:35; Jn 13:16; Jn 15:15; Jn 15:20; Jn 18:10; Jn 18:18; Jn 18:26; Acts 2:18; Acts 4:29; Acts 16:17; Ro 1:1; Ro 6:16; Ro 6:17; Ro 6:19; Ro 6:20; 1Co 7:21; 1Co 7:22; 1Co 7:23; 1Co 12:13; 2Co 4:5; Gal 1:10; Gal 3:28; Gal 4:1; Gal 4:7; Ep 6:5; Ep 6:6; Ep 6:8; Phil. 1:1; Phil. 2:7; Col. 3:11; Col. 3:22; Col. 4:1; Col. 4:12; 1 Tim. 6:1; 2 Tim. 2:24; Tit. 1:1; Tit. 2:9; Phlm. 1:16; Jas. 1:1; 1 Pet. 2:16; 2 Pet. 1:1; 2 Pet. 2:19; Jude 1:1; Rev 1:1; Rev 2:20; Rev 6:15; Rev 7:3; Rev 10:7; Rev 11:18; Rev 13:16; Rev 15:3; Rev 19:2; Rev 19:5; Rev 19:18; Rev 22:3; Rev 22:6

---

#### QUESTION - [What does the Bible say about self-sacrifice / being self-sacrificial?](#)

**ANSWER** - Self-sacrifice is one of the major themes of the New Testament. Jesus modeled it for us in the way He lived. Though He was God, He did not demand His rights as God, but demonstrated servant leadership in everything He did (Philippians 2:6–8). He said to His disciples, "Whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:27–28).

Some people through the centuries have defined self-sacrifice as extreme forms of bodily punishment we must undergo in order to please God. Some branches of pseudo-Christianity have encouraged all manner of physical deprivation and abuse as though self-inflicted punishment could make people right with God. Certain sects of monks and nuns have lived in abject poverty, rejected legitimate marriage, and taken vows of silence that are nowhere suggested in Scripture. These are akin to the man-made laws that Jesus despised (Mark 7:7–9; Colossians 2:8). They do not represent the kind of self-sacrifice the Bible requires.

Jesus clarified the path to godly self-sacrifice in Luke 9:23, saying, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up his cross daily and follow me." The kind of self-sacrifice that pleases the Lord is the natural result of having taken up our cross to follow Jesus. A cross always represents death. So, in order to take up a cross, we must be willing to die to ourselves, our agendas, and our rights. When we crucify our fleshly desire to be our own boss, we begin to make decisions based on what Jesus would have us do (Galatians 2:20; 5:24).

The greatest commandments require self-sacrifice. The first commandment is that we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. The second is to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:36–40). We can do neither of these while still demanding our own way. We must sacrifice our rights and desires in order to fully obey God. Biblical self-sacrifice is being willing to set aside one's own desires for the good of others. Galatians 5:13–14 says, "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

When we willingly limit our freedoms, set aside our own rights, and pursue the best interest of those God has called us to serve, we are being self-sacrificial biblically. Self-sacrifice demands that we daily die to the passions of our flesh that are in opposition to God's will for our lives (Romans 6:6–7; Galatians 2:20). We don't do this in order to appease God or earn His favor. We already have that because of Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 1:4–7). We choose it because we know it pleases our Father and we want to be more like His Son (Romans 8:29).

Matthew 20:27 Sometimes I get the feeling that we are experiencing a leadership crisis among Christians. Although plenty of people are eager to assume the top positions, far too few are willing to accept the biblical pattern of authority. They assume that headship

means dominance, so they ignore the basic teaching of passages like Matthew 20. The pattern established by Christ for leadership in the church can be summed up in one word: servanthood. Jesus Himself exemplified this when he washed the disciples' feet as "an example" (John 13:2-16).

In *The Mark of a Man*, Elisabeth Elliot told of a relative who was the dean of a Christian college in the Midwest. One night some boys in a dorm smeared the walls with shaving cream, peanut butter, and jelly. When the dean heard about it, he wondered what action to take. He could force the young men to clean it up or he could order the janitor to do it. Instead, he started to clean up the mess himself. Soon doors began to open, and before long the guilty ones were helping him wash the walls. Because he was willing to take the role of a servant, he solved the problem and taught the boys a valuable lesson at the same time.

Whenever we're in a position of leadership and seem to be failing, we should examine our attitude toward service in light of Matthew 20 and John 13. Perhaps we need more practice in the principle of leading by serving. —D.C.E. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Lead players are always improving their serve.

---

### **Ian Paisley - Get Down From Your High Horse**

"Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" Matthew 20:27

#### **The Exemplification**

"The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for the many" (Mark 10:45).

Christ has set us the example that we should follow in His steps. With our eye on Him we will never mount our high horse nor ride it. Then we will certainly never fall off.

#### **The Education**

"Learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:29).

The first lesson we learn in Christ's College is humility. The second lesson, humility, and the third lesson, humility. In all thy getting get humility.

#### **The Exhortation**

He that would be ministered unto must first minister. He that would rule must first be ruled. He that would be lord must first be lorded over

---

### **QUESTION - [What is servant leadership?](#)**

**ANSWER** - Servant leadership is best defined by Jesus Himself: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:26–28). In the Christian realm, all leadership should be servant leadership.

A common misconception among those who want to exercise a leadership role over others is that it comes with glory, power, and positions of honor. In fact, such a mistaken belief was the occasion for Jesus' words in the above passage. James and John had just asked Jesus to place them at His side when He assumed His throne in the kingdom to come. The other disciples became indignant at the arrogance of their request (Mark 10:41). And, as an object lesson, Jesus modeled the true servant style of leadership. He, the Lord incarnate, bent down and washed their feet, teaching them the true measure of leading by first serving others (John 13:12–17).

The word servant in Matthew 20:27 means "slave." Not every servant was a slave, but every slave was a servant. It is sad commentary in the church today that we have many celebrities but very few servants. There are many who want to "exercise authority" (Matthew 20:25), but few who want to take the towel and basin and wash feet. Paul reminds us that our attitude is to be like Christ's in that we consider others better than ourselves and do nothing out of vanity or selfishness. Rather, we look out for the interests of others (Philippians 2:3–4). In this sense, then, every Christian is a servant.

The focal point of servant leadership within the church is "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:12). This means, with Christ being the head of the church, the entire church body is served in the act of providing leadership. It's not just the church leaders who become acutely aware of their place at the foot of the cross but all those within the body of Christ. We all mutually submit ourselves to Jesus just as He was in submission to the Father. From a biblical perspective, servant leadership frees the church of the abuse of power and coercion and promotes mutual respect and love for one another.

A servant leader seeks to invest himself in the lives of his people so that, as a whole, the church community is challenged to grow to be more like Christ. This is demonstrated in the leader's willingness to give of himself to meet the needs, but not necessarily the

wants, of his people. Like a good parent, the true servant leader knows the difference between the needs of his spiritual children and their selfish wants and desires.

The bottom line to the application of servant leadership is that we don't emulate the examples of the world; our example is Jesus, who came as a servant. Therefore, our mission is to serve one another, to give of ourselves. Christ came to give His life. We are to give of our lives not only in service to Him but to our fellow man, including those in the church and outside it (Mark 12:31).

---

#### Related Resources:

- [What was the significance of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples?](#)
- [Why should I want to serve God?](#)

---

Sometimes I get the feeling that we are experiencing a leadership crisis among Christians. Although plenty of people are eager to assume the top positions, far too few are willing to accept the biblical pattern of authority. They assume that headship means dominance, so they ignore the basic teaching of passages like Matthew 20. The pattern established by Christ for leadership in the church can be summed up in one word: servanthood. Jesus Himself exemplified this when he washed the disciples' feet as "an example" (John 13:2-16).

In The Mark of a Man, Elisabeth Elliot told of a relative who was the dean of a Christian college in the Midwest. One night some boys in a dorm smeared the walls with shaving cream, peanut butter, and jelly. When the dean heard about it, he wondered what action to take. He could force the young men to clean it up or he could order the janitor to do it. Instead, he started to clean up the mess himself. Soon doors began to open, and before long the guilty ones were helping him wash the walls. Because he was willing to take the role of a servant, he solved the problem and taught the boys a valuable lesson at the same time.

Whenever we're in a position of leadership and seem to be failing, we should examine our attitude toward service in light of Matthew 20 and John 13. Perhaps we need more practice in the principle of leading by serving. —D. C. Egner (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Lead players are always improving their serve

**Matthew 20:28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."**

KJV Matthew 20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

BGT Matthew 20:28 σπερ υς το νθρ που ο κ λθεν διακονηθ ναι λλ διακονσαι κα δο ναι τ ν ψυχ ν α το λτρον ντ πολλ ν.

NET Matthew 20:28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

CSB Matthew 20:28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life-- a ransom for many."

ESV Matthew 20:28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

NIV Matthew 20:28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

NLT Matthew 20:28 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."

NRS Matthew 20:28 just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

NJB Matthew 20:28 just as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'

NAB Matthew 20:28 Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

YLT Matthew 20:28 even as the Son of Man did not come to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

MIT Matthew 20:28 Take as your model the human one. He did not come to be catered to, but to serve and to expend his life as a ransom in behalf of multitudes.

GWN Matthew 20:28 It's the same way with the Son of Man. He didn't come so that others could serve him. He came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many people."

BBE Matthew 20:28 Even as the Son of man did not come to have servants, but to be a servant, and to give his life for the salvation of men.

RSV Matthew 20:28 even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

NKJ Matthew 20:28 "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

- **come:** Lu 22:27 Jn 13:4-17 Php 2:4-8 Heb 5:8
- **and to give:** Job 33:24 Ps 49:7 Isa 53:5,8,10,11 Da 9:24-26 Jn 10:15 Jn 11:50-52 Ro 3:24-26 Ga 3:13 Eph 1:7 5:2 1Ti 2:6 Titus 2:14 Heb 9:28 1Pe 1:18,19 2:24 3:18 Rev 1:5 5:8,9
- **for many:** Mt 26:28 Mk 14:24 Ro 5:15-19 Heb 9:28 1Jn 2:2

#### Related Passages:

Isaiah 53:10-12+ But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. 11 As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, **will justify the MANY**, As He will bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet **He Himself bore the sin of MANY**, And interceded for the transgressors.

### THE PERFECT PATTERN THE SON OF MAN

**Just as** - GWT = "It's the same way with the Son of Man" What is He comparing? He has just spoken of servitude as the way to be first. Now He gives His own example of service.

**Wuest** - Even the resplendent beauty of the Son of Man came from the fact, that He as Very God of Very God, became incarnate in human flesh and a servant to mankind. What a check this gently given teaching must have put upon the personal ambitions of the disciples. (Borrow [Mark in the Greek New Testament for the English reader - page 212](#))

**The Son of Man** ([note](#)) **did not** ([ouk](#) - absolutely not) **come to be served** ([diakoneo](#)), **but to serve** ([diakoneo](#)), **and to give His life** ([psuche](#)) **a ransom** ([lutron](#)) **for** ([anti](#)) **many** (see "MANY" in Isaiah passage above) - This is a striking contrast for the Creator of everything to declare He came to serve His creatures! The Jesus way is (1) serve and (2) sacrifice. His sacrifice as the Lamb of God was to pay the price to set the captives free from sin, Satan, the world system and free from sins penalty.

**Hiebert** - "**Not to be ministered unto, but to minister**"—the motive of His life stated negatively and positively. Jesus did receive ministries rendered to Him as voluntary expressions of love (Luke 8:2–3), but that was not His purpose in coming. He did not compel others to serve Him but rather spent Himself in serving others. His total ministry was aimed at helping others. "Jesus did not identify the kind of service he performed but affirmed that his life was characterized by a servant attitude and by actually performing many kinds of service and ministry." ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Utley on ransom** - It reflects the OT term used of slaves and prisoners of war being bought back, often by a near kin (go'el). Jesus unites in Himself the love and justice of God the Father. Sin costs a life—God provided one!...Mark 10:45 is the theological heart of the Gospel. It came in response to personal ambition. Human ambition must be given back to God as a gift (cf. Ro 12:1–2+). Christians must emulate Christ's self-giving (cf. 1 John 3:16+).

The greatest illustration of this truth is in Philippians 2 (which also reiterates the call on believers to follow their Lord's example)...

**Have this attitude** ([present imperative](#) see [need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) in yourselves which

was also in Christ Jesus, 6 Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Php 2:5-11+)

*Having made the greatest sacrifice,  
Jesus received the greatest honor*  
-- John MacArthur

**For** ([anti](#)) could be paraphrased "for the sake of" or "in behalf of" and clearly speaks of Jesus' substitutionary sacrifice ([see note](#)). He died in our place, bore our sin (cf. Isa. 53:4–6+ - note the "**many**" of Mark 10:45+ is "**all**" in Isa 53:6+, cf similar parallels in Ro 5:18+ and Ro 5:19+).

The cost of redemption is blood and as Peter explains "knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but **with precious blood**, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. (1 Peter 1:18-19+).

**NET NOTE** - The Greek word for **ransom** (λύτρον, lutron) is found here and in Mark 10:45 and refers to the payment of a price in order to purchase the freedom of a slave. The idea of Jesus as the "ransom" is that he paid the price with His own life by standing in our place ([huper](#)) as a substitute, enduring the judgment that we deserved for sin.

**D Edmond Hiebert** - this verse (COMMENTING ON THE PARALLEL PASSAGE Mk 10:45) contains the clearest statement of the object of Christ's coming found in the Gospels. But this theological declaration was made to enforce a practical truth for everyday conduct. Came suggests a voluntary coming. He came of His own free will to carry out the principle of service just set forth.... "And to give his life a ransom for many"—His ministry would culminate in His death as the highest point of His service. "The subjects of the Kingdom must submit to the life of a slave, but the King submits to the death of a slave: the higher the position the greater the sacrifice." To give again denotes a voluntary act, while the aorist tense designates the full actuality of the self-giving. To give His life, or "his soul," is to give Himself, the supreme gift. A ransom is the price paid to effect the release of prisoners or captives. Jesus viewed men as the captives of sin, wholly unable to free themselves from its power. His death for them would be the means for effecting their release. The preposition rendered **for** ([anti](#)) (**ED**: Mt 20:28 IT IS [huper](#)) has the basic meaning of two equivalents that may be exchanged. It expresses the thought of equivalence and conveys the further thought of substitution, its common meaning in the papyri. Moulton and Milligan point out that in the papyri "by far the commonest meaning of anti is the simple 'instead of.' " This sense is in accord with the substitutionary view of Christ's death. He gave His own life "instead of"—dying as the substitute for—many. Many points to the contrasts between the one life of the Redeemer and the many thereby redeemed. It does not imply a contrast to "all" but pictures the great multitude affected by His gracious act. ([The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Kenneth Wuest** - The words, "**a ransom for many**" need special attention. The word "ransom" is lutron (λύτρον) "the price for redeeming, the ransom paid for slaves." The word "for" is anti (ἄντι), the predominant meaning in the koine (κοινὴ) being "instead of." It is the preposition of substitution. Our Lord paid the ransom money for slaves of sin who could not pay it themselves, namely, His own precious blood. The verb of the same root is used in I Peter 1:18, 19 where the Apostle tells us that we were not redeemed, set free by payment of ransom, with little silver and gold coins used to buy a slave out of slavery, but with precious blood, highly honored, blood as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, the blood of Christ. Our Lord here speaks of the substitutionary aspect of His atonement. This is usually Pauline as to presentation, but the Gospels which give the historic event, also interpret for the reader, the doctrinal significance of the Cross. (Borrow [Mark in the Greek New Testament for the English reader - page 212](#))

---

**For** ([473](#))([anti](#)) means (1) over against, opposite to, before (2) for, instead of, in place of (something) (2a) instead of 2b) for 2c) for that, because 2d) wherefore, for this cause. Over against, opposite, hence instead of, in comp. denotes contrast, requital, substitution, correspondence. By way of substitution, in place of, instead of (Luke 11:11; 1 Cor. 11:15; James 4:15).

[Complete Biblical Library](#) The preposition anti, "against, instead of," determines and influences the interpretation of a series of important Scriptures. The meaning in the New Testament conforms to the classical and Septuagintal usage. Therefore it is necessary to be aware that the term functions in a variety of ways, and that these are often determined by the context in each particular case. The word has the following basic meanings, which sometimes may overlap each other.

#### **New Testament Usage**

**1. At times anti indicates the reason for something.** An example of this is Luke 1:20: "Thou shalt be dumb,



and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because (anti) thou believest not my words . . .” In a similar fashion, Jesus explained that the fate of Jerusalem (i.e., utter destruction) would occur “because (anti) thou knewest not the time of thy visitation” (Luke 19:44). In Ephesians 5:31 Paul cited an Old Testament text: anti toutou kataleipsei anthrōpos ton patera . . . (“For this reason will a man leave his father . . .”). The text in Genesis actually reads heneken, “on account of” rather anti (Genesis 2:24, Septuagint). This demonstrates clearly the sense of “because, on account of” (cf. Acts 12:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:10).

**2. Sometimes anti stands for comparison of two things which are similar to one another.** The most distinct example of this usage is found in 1 Corinthians 11:15 where Paul said that a woman’s long hair is “given her for (anti) a covering” (veil). This does not mean that the hair is given to the woman instead of a veil, but as a veil.

**3. According to the basic definition of “against,” anti can be used to contrast two things.** This is especially evident in compound words, such as antidikos (473), “opponent”; antikathistēmi (475), “oppose,” (literally “stand against”); antilegō (480), “speak against.”

**4. Sometimes anti is used in connection with retribution.** This is so in the familiar lex talionis, i.e., “law of retaliation,” found in Exodus 21:24 and quoted by Jesus: “Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for (anti) an eye, and a tooth for (anti) a tooth” (Matthew 5:38). This is the principle of God’s just judgment. But Jesus said that men are not to take the law into their own hands. They should leave retaliation to God: “Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord” (Romans 12:19). The principle for the Christian life is: “Recompense to no man evil for (anti) evil” (Romans 12:17; compare 1 Thessalonians 5:15).

**5. In some places anti stands for the price which is paid when something is exchanged.** An example is found in Hebrews 12:16 where it is reported that Esau, “for (anti) one morsel of meat” sold his birthright.

**6. Finally anti can mean “instead of, in place of.”** Abraham offered the ram **instead of** (anti) Isaac (Genesis 22:13). Judah offered to remain in Egypt “in place of” (anti) Benjamin (Genesis 44:33). And David wished that he were dead “instead of” his son Absalom (2 Samuel 18:33 [LXX 2 Kings 18:33]). In the New Testament Archelaus ruled as king in Judea in place of his father Herod, who was dead (Matthew 2:22).

*Jesus paid the price for us by doing it instead of us,*

*by standing in our place as our substitute.*

*The full thought of substitution is present here.*

*His life was given instead of our lives.*

What makes the fifth and sixth points of such tremendous theological significance is that anti is used in these meanings in the **language of redemption**. Christians are bought with a price, the blood of Christ. When Jesus talked about His earthly assignment, He said that He came “to give his life a ransom for (anti) many” (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45). But here anti does not only mean “**in exchange for,**” but “**instead of many.**” Jesus paid the price for us by doing it **instead of us**, by standing in our place **as our substitute**. The full thought of substitution is present here. His life was given instead of our lives.

In 1 Timothy 2:6, in the phrase antilutron huper pantōn, there is the double sense that Jesus’ death was “instead of us” and “on our behalf.” The preposition joined with [lutron](#) alone does not give the sense of exchange, but when accompanied by [huper](#) it is sound to conclude that both exchange and substitution are in the writer’s mind.

**ANTI - 20V** - Matt. 2:22; Matt. 5:38; Matt. 17:27; Matt. 20:28; Mk. 10:45; Lk. 1:20; Lk. 11:11; Lk. 12:3; Lk. 19:44; Jn. 1:16; Acts 12:23; Rom. 12:17; 1 Co. 11:15; Eph. 5:31; 1 Thess. 5:15; 2 Thess. 2:10; Heb. 12:2; Heb. 12:16; Jas. 4:15; 1 Pet. 3:9

**ANTI IN THE SEPTUAGINT** - Gen. 2:21; 4:25; 9:6; 22:13,18; 26:5; 29:27; 30:2,15-16,18; 31:41; 36:33ff; 44:4,33; 47:16-17,19; Exod. 21:23ff,36; 22:1,3,15; 29:30; Lev. 6:22; 14:42; 17:11; 24:18,20; 26:24,43; Num. 3:12,41,45; 8:16,18; 18:21,31; 25:13; 32:14; Deut. 2:12,21-23; 8:20; 10:6; 19:21; 22:29; 28:47,62; Jos. 2:14; 5:7; 24:20,33; Jdg. 2:20; 15:2; 1 Sam. 2:20; 25:21; 26:21; 2 Sam. 3:30; 10:1; 12:6,10; 14:7; 16:8,12; 17:25; 18:33; 19:13,21; 1 Ki. 1:30,35; 2:35; 3:7,11; 5:1,5; 8:18,20; 9:9; 10:29; 11:11,33,43; 12:24; 13:21; 14:27,31; 15:8,24; 16:2,6,10,28; 19:16; 20:24,28,36,39,42; 21:6; 22:40,50; 2 Ki. 3:27; 8:15,24; 10:24,30,35; 12:21; 13:9,24; 14:16,21,29; 15:7,10,22,25,30,38; 16:20; 17:24; 18:12; 19:37; 20:21; 21:11,15,18,24,26; 22:17,19; 23:30,34; 24:6,17; 1 Chr. 1:44ff; 4:41; 5:22; 19:1; 23:1; 29:28; 2 Chr. 1:8,11; 6:10; 9:31; 12:10,16; 14:1; 17:1; 21:1,12; 22:1; 24:27; 26:1,23; 27:9; 28:27; 32:33; 33:20,25; 34:25; 36:1,4,8; Est. 2:4; 4:17; 8:12; Job 16:4; 28:15; 31:40; 36:15,20; Ps. 35:12; 38:20; 45:16; 90:15; 109:4-5,16; Prov. 1:32; 11:8; 17:13; Eccl. 4:15; Isa. 3:16,24; 37:38; 53:9,12; 55:13; 60:17; 61:3; Jer. 5:14,19; 7:13; 11:17; 16:11; 18:20; 19:4; 22:9,11; 23:38; 28:13; 29:26; 31:20; 37:1; 50:7; Ezek. 4:15; 5:7,11; 13:8,10,22; 15:8; 16:36,43; 20:16,24; 21:4,24; 22:19; 23:35; 24:13; 25:3,6,8,12,15; 26:2; 28:2,7; 29:6,9,20; 31:10; 34:8-9; 35:5; 36:2-3,6,13,34; 39:23,29; 44:12; Dan. 4:1,32; 11:30; Hos. 8:1; Joel 2:25; 3:3,5,19; Amos 1:3,9,13; 2:1,6; 5:11; 8:6; Mic. 3:4; 5:15; Hab. 3:7; Zeph. 2:10; Hag. 1:9; Zech. 1:15; 9:12; 12:10; 13:4; Mal. 2:9

**Served** (waited on) ([1247](#)) [diakoneo](#) derivation uncertain - cp **diakonīs** = in the dust laboring or running through the dust or possibly **diako** = to run on errands; see also study of related noun - [diakonia](#) means to minister by way of rendering service in any

form or to take care of by rendering humble service. The root word diakonos refers to one who serves as a waiter upon tables performing menial duties (Matt 8:15; 20:28; 27:55; Mark 1:31; 10:45; 15:41; Luke 4:39; 10:40; 12:37; 17:8; 22:26, 27; John 12:2).

More general senses include “to care for, provide for,” or “to do the work of a servant.” Beyer notes that in the eyes of the Greek serving was viewed with disdain, and “ruling and not serving is proper to a man...” (ibid.). Somewhat surprisingly the Septuagint does not use the verb diakoneō at all. Slightly over one-half of the instances of diakoneō occur in the Gospels. At times the term denotes the kind of “waiting on tables” or “serving” described in its classical usage (e.g., Matthew 8:15; Mark 1:31; Luke 10:40; 17:8). In more general terms, it refers to the kind of “care” that women followers of Jesus provided (e.g., Matthew 27:55; Mark 15:41).

Of more theological significance is the place of “service” in the life of the disciple, which of course is predicated upon Jesus’ own model as servant. Jesus himself “did not come to be served (ouk diakonethēnai), but to serve (diakonesai)” (Matthew 20:28, NIV; Mark 10:45). He was in their midst as a servant (ho dianonōn) (Luke 22:26). Jesus invited His followers to serve if they wished to lead (Luke 22:27; cf. John 12:26; cf. Matthew 20:26; Mark 9:35). Outside of the Gospels the idea of “to wait tables” is seen, most clearly in Acts 6:2 (in this case, money tables as in Matthew 21:12).

**DIAKONEO - 32V - administered(1), administration(1), cared(1), contributing...support(1), do...the serving(1), employ...in serving(1), minister(3), ministered(2), ministering(3), servant(1), serve(4), serve as deacons(1), served(2), served as deacons(1), serves(5), services...rendered(1), serving(4), take care(1), wait(1), waited(3).** Matt. 4:11; Matt. 8:15; Matt. 20:28; Matt. 25:44; Matt. 27:55; Mk. 1:13; Mk. 1:31; Mk. 10:45; Mk. 15:41; Lk. 4:39; Lk. 8:3; Lk. 10:40; Lk. 12:37; Lk. 17:8; Lk. 22:26; Lk. 22:27; Jn. 12:2; Jn. 12:26; Acts 6:2; Acts 19:22; Rom. 15:25; 2 Co. 3:3; 2 Co. 8:19; 2 Co. 8:20; 1 Tim. 3:10; 1 Tim. 3:13; 2 Tim. 1:18; Phlm. 1:13; Heb. 6:10; 1 Pet. 1:12; 1 Pet. 4:10; 1 Pet. 4:11

**Ransom** (3083) [lutron/lytron](#) from [luo](#) = to loose) is a neuter noun which literally refers to the ransom price which is necessary to free a slave, loosing them from their bonds and setting them at liberty. It is the price paid for release of a slave from slavery, a prisoner from captivity (such as a prisoner of war) or forfeited piece of land or other possession. The suffix “-tron” highlights the instrument or means of the releasing, that is, the ransom or the actual payment itself. Remember that the basic idea of **ransom** is the payment which sets something or someone free from some kind of bondage, slavery, captivity, or obligation. In classic Greek **lutron** “always means a payment which releases a man from an obligation which otherwise he was bound to fulfill....

In the contemporary Greek of the NT times **lutron** has two main uses. **(a)** It is regularly used of ‘the price which is paid to redeem something which is in pledge or in pawn’ **(b)** It is regularly used of ‘the purchase price paid or received for the liberation of a slave’. So a papyrus reads, ‘I have given Helene her liberty and I have received (huper lutron autes) as the purchase price for her,’ and then follows the actual sum of money received.” ([Barclay](#))

In the NT **lutron** refers to the blood of Christ which paid the price to set the captives free into liberty, freeing them from slavery to the harsh master **Sin** (See [Sin = Principle](#)). This ransom-debt (price) was completely paid by Christ’s substitutionary sacrifice at Calvary (Jn 19:30+; See word study [Tetelestai-Paid in Full](#)).

**John MacArthur** commenting on **lutron** in Mt 20:28 - The unbeliever is a slave to sin, the flesh, Satan, and death, and it was to redeem men from those slaveries that Jesus gave His life a ransom in exchange for sinners. “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,” Paul explained to believers in Rome. “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:1–3). “Having been freed from sin,” the apostle had told them earlier, “you became slaves of righteousness” (6:18). Christ’s sacrifice bought us back from the slavery of sin....Jesus’ ransom was paid to God to satisfy His holy justice, and it was more than sufficient to cover the sins of everyone who has ever lived and ever will live. His death was sufficient for “the whole world,” says John (1 John 2:2)....Although His ransom is sufficient for every person, it is valid only for those who believe in Him. It is in that sense that His redemption is for many, rather than for all. The Lord was not teaching limited atonement, the idea that He died only for the sins of a select few. Paul makes it dear that Christ died for the whole world: “The man Christ Jesus ... gave Himself as a ransom for all” (1Ti 2:5-6). (See [Matthew Commentary](#))

---

**QUESTION -**[What does it mean that the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve \(Mark 10:45\)?](#)

**ANSWER -** As Jesus prepares His disciples for His death, James and John—nicknamed the Sons of Thunder—come to Him with a

request: “When you sit on your glorious throne, we want to sit in places of honor next to you, one on your right and the other on your left” (Mark 10:37, NLT). Their selfish ambition to be recognized as “the greatest” of the disciples reveals that they had not yet grasped the nature of Christ’s kingdom that He would establish through His suffering and death on the cross. Jesus cautions them to consider the cost of all they will have to endure as His followers (Mark 10:38–40). Then the Lord delivers a brief and astonishing synopsis of His extensive teachings on servanthood: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45; see also Matthew 20:28).

James and John mistakenly presumed that prominence in God’s kingdom is based on position, power, and authority. Jesus explained that the path to greatness is a harrowing journey of suffering—the same kind of suffering Jesus would endure (Mark 10:38–39; John 15:20). Ironically, James and John would indeed suffer much like Jesus. [James](#) would go on to become the first Christian martyr, beheaded by Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:2), and John would experience severe persecution throughout his life and eventually be exiled on Patmos Island.

Jesus Christ is the ultimate example of a servant in God’s kingdom (Luke 22:27; Philippians 2:6–7). Everything He did while He lived and ministered with the apostles set an example for them and us today. Jesus healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ministered to the weakest, most marginalized members of society (Matthew 8:2–3; 9:32–33; 20:29–34; Luke 6:17–19; John 6:1–14). Jesus came to pour out His life in service; consequently, we ought to give our lives in service to Him and others.

The Lord and Creator of the universe, who “knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God,” stood up from the Passover table, “took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel he had around him” (John 13:3–5, NLT). The ever-emotional Peter resisted Christ’s humble ministrations, but Jesus explained: “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” (John 13:14–17ESV).

In God’s kingdom, greatness is measured by the extent we are willing to serve one another humbly. No one gave up more to become a servant than Jesus. The apostle Paul describes the steep drop that Jesus experienced when He lowered Himself to earth to serve and die for us: “Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross” (Philippians 2:6–8, NLT). Considering what Jesus did, it’s absurd for His followers to take offense or feel demeaned when performing down-to-earth, unassuming, and even unrewarding tasks. Jesus left behind a glorious and exalted position in heaven yet obediently obeyed His Father in everything (Luke 22:42; John 5:19; 1 Corinthians 15:27–28; Hebrews 5:7–8; 10:5–7). Christ, the Good Shepherd, laid down His life for us (John 10:11). “So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters” (1 John 3:16, NLT).

The basis for greatness in God’s kingdom does not rest on status, power, or authority but on humble, Christlike character. In [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#), Warren Wiersbe states, “We get a throne by paying with our lives, not by praying with our lips. We must identify with Jesus Christ in His service and suffering, for even He could not reach the throne except by way of the cross” ([Vol. 1, Victor Books, 1996](#), SEE PAGE 62).

Jesus is our [Suffering Servant King](#). If our supreme representative, the Son of Man, did not come to be served, but to serve, then so we ought to serve others. No matter who we are in God’s kingdom—whether the most distinguished leader or meekest acolyte—we must strive to be like Christ, demonstrating the same kind of humble, sacrificial servanthood.

#### **Related Resources:**

- [What was the significance of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples?](#)

---

#### **QUESTION - [What is the doctrine of substitution?](#) | [GotQuestions.org](#)**

**ANSWER** - Substitution is one of the major themes of the Bible. God instituted the principle of substitution in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned. By killing an animal to cover their nakedness (Genesis 3:21), God began to paint a picture of what it would take to bring humanity back into proper relationship with Him. He continued that theme with His chosen people Israel. By giving them the Law, God showed them His holiness and demonstrated their inability to achieve that holiness. God then granted them a substitute to pay the price for their sin, in the form of blood sacrifices (Exodus 29:41–42; 34:19; Numbers 29:2). By sacrificing an innocent animal according to God’s specifications, human beings could have their sins forgiven and enter the presence of God. The animal died in the sinner’s place, thereby allowing the sinner to go free, vindicated. Leviticus 16 tells of the [scapegoat](#), upon which the elders of Israel would place their hands, symbolically transferring the sins of the people onto the goat. The goat was then set free into the wilderness, bearing the sins of the people far away.

The theme of substitution is found throughout the Old Testament as a precursor to the coming of Jesus Christ. The Passover feast conspicuously featured a substitute. In [Exodus 12](#), God gives instruction to His people to prepare for the coming destroyer who would strike down the firstborn male of every family as a judgment upon Egypt. The only way to escape this plague was to take a perfect male lamb, kill it, and put the blood on the lintels and doorposts of their houses. God told them, "The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt" (Exodus 12:13). That Passover lamb was a substitute for every male firstborn who would accept it.

God carried that theme of substitution into the New Testament with the coming of Jesus. He had set the stage so that mankind would understand exactly what Jesus came to do. Second Corinthians 5:21 says, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." God's perfect Lamb took the sins of the world upon Himself, laid down His life, and died in our place (John 1:29; 1 Peter 3:18). The only acceptable sacrifice for sin is a perfect offering. If we died for our own sins, it would not be sufficient payment. We are not perfect. Only Jesus, the perfect God-Man, fits the requirement, and He laid down His life for ours willingly (John 10:18). There was nothing we could do to save ourselves, so God did it for us. The Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 53 makes the substitutionary death of Christ abundantly clear: "He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed" (verse 5).

Jesus' substitution for us was perfect, unlike the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament. Hebrews 10:4 says, "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." Someone might say, "You mean, all those sacrifices the Jews made were for nothing?" The writer is clarifying that animal blood itself had no value. It was what that blood symbolized that made the difference. The value of the ancient sacrifices was that the animal was a substitute for a human being's sin and that it pointed forward to the ultimate sacrifice of Christ (Hebrews 9:22).

Some people make the mistake of thinking that, since Jesus died for the sins of the world, everyone will go to heaven one day. This is incorrect. The substitutionary death of Christ must be personally applied to each heart, in much the same way that the blood of the Passover had to be personally applied to the door (John 1:12; 3:16-18; Acts 2:38). Before we can become "the righteousness of God in Him," we must exchange our old sin nature for His holy one. God offers the Substitute, but we must receive that Substitute personally by accepting Christ in faith (Ephesians 2:8-9).

#### **Related Resources:**

- [What is the substitutionary atonement? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is the doctrine of penal substitution? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What does it mean that Jesus took our place? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is the concept of the vicarious atonement? | GotQuestions.org](#)

---

#### **TODAY IN THE WORD**

Eta Linnemann had a position that few achieved and many envied as a theology professor in a German university. Yet for all her academic acclaim, Eta felt something was missing. At the invitation of her students, she attended an evangelical prayer meeting and committed her life to Christ. She then resigned her position at the university and went to Indonesia to teach in a Bible college as a missionary. She found true fulfillment in her work of service rather than in what the world considered success.

Our passage today builds on the closing verse of Mt 19:30 "Many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first." Jesus then offered a parable to illustrate this kingdom reality. The focus here is on the landowner, who continues hiring workers throughout the day. There's no indication that he needs more laborers; rather, he hires out of generosity. Those hired first find that they receive what was promised but have no priority over those hired last. God's great goodness and abundance cannot be measured according to human standards.

The prediction of Jesus' death and resurrection that follows might seem randomly placed, but it illustrates the reversal of first and last in the kingdom. Jesus will be crucified, which appears as "last" to the world. But He will be raised to life, a victory over sin and death—the "firstfruits" of the resurrection (see 1 Cor. 15:20).

Right after this prediction, the disciples revealed their continued misunderstanding about the nature of the kingdom. Their concern for status contradicted Jesus' emphasis on servanthood. Here is the climax of the instructions from Jesus to His followers: leadership in the kingdom is defined by servanthood, and we know how to be a servant through the example of Jesus.

Concluding this chapter, two blind men addressed Jesus as the Messiah (Mt 20:30) and requested healing. These blind men saw more than the spiritually blind crowd (Mt 20:31).

#### **TODAY ALONG THE WAY**

Today is Good Friday, the traditional Christian observance of the crucifixion of our Lord. Spend some extra time with Mt 20:17-28,

pondering the sacrifice of Jesus. Reflect on how His example makes it possible for us to live sacrificial lives. We should beware of hastily asserting that we can drink from His cup (Mt 20:22). But we know that He will strengthen us for the work He has called us to do—works of mercy, humility, and compassion that bring glory to God our Father.

---

## TRUE SUCCESS—Matthew 20:28 - Joseph Stowell

If you were asked to define success, what would you say? Most of us would answer in terms of houses, neighborhoods, cars, influence, clothes, and what it says on our business card. And while there is nothing wrong with being successful in these ways, according to Jesus true success is measured on a far different scale. When James and John came with their mother asking to be “big shots” in the kingdom, Christ did not reprove the disciples’ desire for success. He simply redirected their thinking about what success is and held Himself up as the model.

Success, according to Jesus, is not about credentials but rather character. It is not measured in what you have but in who you are. And in this text it is the Christlike character of servanthood that spells success. True success dedicates itself to others by serving their needs and enabling them to grow and prosper, just as Christ came to serve our needs and gave Himself to us to guarantee our success against sin.

What, then, of those elements of secular success we tend to be so addicted to? What about people who hold rank and possess the credentials of earthly prosperity? For Jesus, the issue is not how many earthside symbols of success we have piled up; it is how we use them and whether or not we use our “success” to serve and empower others for God’s glory and their gain.

No one has ever equaled the power and position, nor possessed the resources that Christ did. Yet Philippians 2:5–9 says that He used His power to serve our need for salvation and growth.

Only those who see their true identity as that of a servant have the potential for real success. If we live up to this level of success, we may hear Him say to us, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21 KJV). That’s what I call true success!

What could you do to serve your way to success?

---

## QUESTION - [What does it mean that Jesus is the Son of Man?](#)[WATCH VIDEO](#)

**ANSWER** - Jesus is referred to as the “Son of Man” 82 times in the New Testament (NIV and ESV). In fact, Son of Man is the primary title Jesus used when referring to Himself (e.g., Matthew 12:32; 13:37; Luke 12:8; John 1:51). The only use of Son of Man in a clear reference to Jesus, spoken by someone other than Jesus, came from the lips of Stephen as he was being martyred (Acts 7:56).

***Son of Man* is a title of humanity.** Other titles for Christ, such as [Son of God](#), are overt in their focus on His deity. *Son of Man*, in contrast, focuses on the humanity of Christ. God called the prophet Ezekiel “son of man” 93 times. In this way, God was simply calling Ezekiel a human being. *Son of man* is simply a periphrastic term for “human.” Jesus Christ was truly a human being. He came “in the flesh” (1 John 4:2).

***Son of Man* is a title of humility.** The Second Person of [the Trinity](#), eternal in nature, left heaven’s glory and took on human flesh, becoming the Son of Man, born in a manger and “despised and rejected by mankind” (Isaiah 53:3). The Son of Man had “no place to lay his head” (Luke 9:58). The Son of Man ate and drank with sinners (Matthew 11:19). The Son of Man suffered at the hands of men (Matthew 17:12). This intentional lowering of His status from King of Heaven to Son of Man is the epitome of humility (see Philippians 2:6–8).

***Son of Man* is a title of deity.** Ezekiel may have been a son of man, but Jesus is *the* Son of Man. As such, Jesus is the supreme example of all that God intended mankind to be, the embodiment of truth and grace (John 1:14). In Him “all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9). For this reason, the Son of Man was able to forgive sins (Matthew 9:6). The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28). The Son of Man came to save lives (Luke 9:56; 19:10), rise from the dead (Mark 9:9), and execute judgment (John 5:27). At His trial before the high priest, Jesus said, “I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matthew 26:64). This statement immediately ended the trial, as the court accused the Lord of blasphemy and condemned Him to death (verses 65–66).

***Son of Man* is a fulfillment of prophecy.** Jesus’ claim before the high priest to be the Son of Man was a reference to the prophecy of Daniel 7:13–14, “I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the **Son of Man**, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away,



And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed” (NKJV). Daniel saw glory, worship, and an everlasting kingdom given to the Messiah—here called the “Son of Man”—and Jesus applied this prophecy to Himself. Jesus also spoke of [His coming kingdom](#) on other occasions (Matthew 13:41; 16:28). The author of Hebrews used a reference to the “son of man” in the Psalms to teach that Jesus, the true Son of Man, will be the ruler of all things (Hebrews 2:5–9; cf. Psalm 8:4–6). The Son of Man, in fulfillment of [Old Testament prophecy](#), will be the King.

Jesus was fully God (John 1:1), but He was also fully human (John 1:14). As the Son of God and the Son of Man, He is deserving of both titles.

- [Why is Ezekiel called son of man if it is a title for Jesus?](#)

---

#### QUESTION - [What is the doctrine of substitution?](#)

**ANSWER** - Substitution is one of the major themes of the Bible. God instituted the principle of substitution in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned. By killing an animal to cover their nakedness (Genesis 3:21), God began to paint a picture of what it would take to bring humanity back into proper relationship with Him. He continued that theme with His chosen people Israel. By giving them the Law, God showed them His holiness and demonstrated their inability to achieve that holiness. God then granted them a substitute to pay the price for their sin, in the form of blood sacrifices (Exodus 29:41-42; 34:19; Numbers 29:2). By sacrificing an innocent animal according to God’s specifications, human beings could have their sins forgiven and enter the presence of God. The animal died in the sinner’s place, thereby allowing the sinner to go free, vindicated. Leviticus 16 (ED: SEE COMMENTARY) tells of the [scapegoat](#), upon which the elders of Israel would place their hands, symbolically transferring the sins of the people onto the goat. The goat was then set free into the wilderness, bearing the sins of the people far away.

The theme of substitution is found throughout the Old Testament as a precursor to the coming of Jesus Christ. The Passover feast conspicuously featured a substitute. In Exodus 12, God gives instruction to His people to prepare for the coming destroyer who would strike down the firstborn male of every family as a judgment upon Egypt. The only way to escape this plague was to take a perfect male lamb, kill it, and put the blood on the lintels and doorposts of their houses. God told them, “The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt” (Exodus 12:13). That Passover lamb was a substitute for every male firstborn who would accept it.

God carried that theme of substitution into the New Testament with the coming of Jesus. He had set the stage so that mankind would understand exactly what Jesus came to do. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” God’s perfect Lamb took the sins of the world upon Himself, laid down His life, and died in our place (John 1:29; 1 Peter 3:18). The only acceptable sacrifice for sin is a perfect offering. If we died for our own sins, it would not be sufficient payment. We are not perfect. Only Jesus, the perfect God-Man, fits the requirement, and He laid down His life for ours willingly (John 10:18). There was nothing we could do to save ourselves, so God did it for us. The Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 53 makes the substitutionary death of Christ abundantly clear: “He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed” (verse 5).

Jesus’ substitution for us was perfect, unlike the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament. Hebrews 10:4 says, “For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.” Someone might say, “You mean, all those sacrifices the Jews made were for nothing?” The writer is clarifying that animal blood itself had no value. It was what that blood symbolized that made the difference. The value of the ancient sacrifices was that the animal was a substitute for a human being’s sin and that it pointed forward to the ultimate sacrifice of Christ (Hebrews 9:22).

Some people make the mistake of thinking that, since Jesus died for the sins of the world, everyone will go to heaven one day. This is incorrect. The substitutionary death of Christ must be personally applied to each heart, in much the same way that the blood of the Passover had to be personally applied to the door (John 1:12; 3:16-18; Acts 2:38). Before we can become “the righteousness of God in Him,” we must exchange our old sin nature for His holy one. God offers the Substitute, but we must receive that Substitute personally by accepting Christ in faith (Ephesians 2:8-9).

---

**WITNESSING FROM A WHEELCHAIR** - A woman named Nancy put this ad in her local newspaper: “If you are lonely or have a problem, call me. I am in a wheelchair and seldom get out. We can share our problems with each other. Just call. I’d love to talk.” The response to that ad has been tremendous -- 30 calls or more every week.

What motivated this woman to reach out from her wheelchair to help others in need? Nancy explained that before her paralysis she had been perfectly healthy but in deep despair. She tried to commit suicide by jumping from her apartment window, but instead she became paralyzed from the waist down. In the hospital, utterly frustrated, she sensed Jesus saying to her, “Nancy, you’ve had a healthy body but a crippled soul. From now on you will have a crippled body but a healthy soul.” As a result of that experience, she



surrendered her life to Christ. When she was finally allowed to go home, she prayed for a way to share God's grace with others, and the idea of the newspaper ad occurred to her.

Every believer can do something to help needy people. Limited as we may be by sickness, old age, or disability, we can still pray, call, or write. No matter what our condition, we can be an effective witness for Jesus Christ. - V C Grounds (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Lord, let me be a shining light  
So others then may view  
Your mercy and Your love displayed  
In all I say and do  
--Sper

Only after you talk to God about needy people are you ready to talk to needy people about God.

---

#### **FROM SIGNIFICANCE TO SERVANTHOOD—Matthew 20:28**

Living to establish our own significance disables us from fulfilling our primary calling as followers of Jesus. It is clear from Jesus' teachings that we are called to serve Him and others rather than ourselves (Matthew 20:20–28). Yet living as a servant is obviously less than a "significant" calling. Which is just the point! If we live for our own significance, our ambitions will fight against His agenda at every turn. In fact, as Paul made clear in Philippians 2, we have to give up our right to significance before we can obey our Father, who often calls us to do things that seem to work against our own sense of self-esteem.

Followers forgive and humbly bear the reproach of a fallen world. They serve unnoticed and live to please someone besides themselves. They give of their possessions to the poor and surrender their wills to the will of their God. They submit to the needs and interests of others and refuse inner impulses that others consume with pleasure.

The choice is clear. Our lives will be about significance or servanthood. Jesus chose the latter. In becoming a servant Jesus accomplished significant things for God and others. And that's the twist. When I live for my own significance, it often ends in emptiness and loss . . . ultimately. But servanthood is satisfyingly productive.

Think about it. We wouldn't be redeemed from the ravages of sin with hell canceled and heaven guaranteed if it weren't for the fact that He served us all the way to the cross . . . nakedly bearing our shame as a despised criminal. If personal significance was His intention, redemption would have gone by the wayside.

Servants love their spouses regardless, sacrifice for their children, and consider personal integrity of higher value than their careers. They trust God to deal with their enemies, and they forgivingly serve their enemies in return. Servants give up their significance to do significant things, believing that in due time He will exalt them (1 Peter 5:6). Servanthood is our responsibility; significance is His. Have you chosen your identity yet? How would others know?

**Matthew 20:29 As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him.**

- Mk 10:46-52 Lu 18:35-43

#### **Related Passages:**

Mark 10:46-52+ Then they \*came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road. 47 When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 48 Many were sternly telling him to be quiet, but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 49 And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him here." So they \*called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage, stand up! He is calling for you." 50 Throwing aside his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus. 51 And answering him, Jesus said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" And the blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, I want to regain my sight!" 52 And Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him on the road. (See [What is the story of blind Bartimaeus?](#))

Luke 18:35-43+ As Jesus was approaching Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the road begging. 36 Now hearing a crowd going by, he began to inquire what this was. 37 They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. 38 And he called out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 39 Those who led the

way were sternly telling him to be quiet; but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 40 And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him; and when he came near, He questioned him, 41 "What do you want Me to do for you?" And he said, "Lord, I want to regain my sight!" 42 And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." 43 Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.

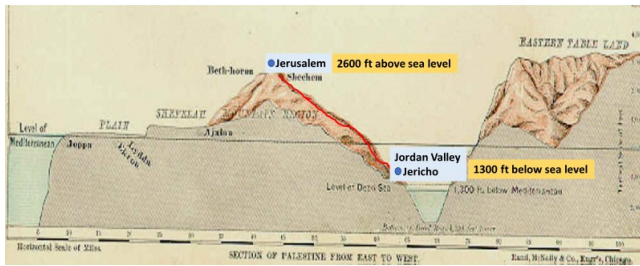


DIAGRAM DEMONSTRATING WHY ONE ALWAYS GOES "UP" TO JERUSALEM

## THE FINAL LAP OF JESUS' RACE

**As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him** - See map above. At Jericho they are at one of the lowest places on earth. Leaving Jericho, they now go up hill toward Jerusalem. Why is a **large crowd** following? They have seen or heard of Jesus' miracles and everyone wants a piece of the Miracle Man. Secondly, they were headed for the Passover, one of the three feasts every Jewish male was to attend in Jerusalem.

**Michael Wilkins:** Jesus leaves Jericho for the final approach to Jerusalem, which lies ahead on a winding road for fifteen miles as it ascends three thousand feet through dry desert. It would take some six to eight hours of uphill walking, so he and the disciples are naturally eager to make it to their destination before nightfall, because the road was infamous for highway robberies (cf. Luke 10:30ff.).

**John MacArthur** on **leaving Jericho** - Whereas Matthew's account has Jesus going out from Jericho, Mark reports that He was coming "to Jericho" (Mk 10:46) and Luke that "He was approaching Jericho" (Lk 18:35). The difficulty can be explained by the idea that Matthew was referring to the old Jericho, some of the ruins of which are still evident today, and that the other two writers were referring to the contemporary city. In that case, Jesus would have been moving out of the ruins of the old city and into the new. Or it may have been that Jesus had gone through the city to the outskirts and was now **leaving**. When He responded to the cries of the two blind men whom He had passed, He may have turned and gone back toward the city. After that He decided to go into the city again, where He later encountered Zaccheus (Luke 19:1-2). (See [Matthew Commentary](#)) (See also See [Geisler's explanation](#) of the difference between the accounts in Mark and Matthew.)

**Matthew Henry Concise** - Mt 20:29-34. It is good for those under the same trial, or infirmity of body or mind, to join in prayer to God for relief, that they may quicken and encourage one another. There is mercy enough in Christ for all that ask. They were earnest in prayer. They cried out as men in earnest. Cold desires beg denials. They were humble in prayer, casting themselves upon, and referring themselves cheerfully to, the Mediator's mercy. They showed faith in prayer, by the title they gave to Christ. Surely it was by the Holy Ghost that they called Jesus, Lord. They persevered in prayer. When they were in pursuit of such mercy, it was no time for timidity or hesitation: they cried earnestly. Christ encouraged them. The wants and burdens of the body we are soon sensible of, and can readily relate. Oh that we did as feelingly complain of our spiritual maladies, especially our spiritual blindness! Many are spiritually blind, yet say they see. Jesus cured these blind men; and when they had received sight, they followed him. None follow Christ blindly. He first by his grace opens men's eyes, and so draws their hearts after him. These miracles are our call to Jesus; may we hear it, and make it our daily prayer to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

---

**QUESTION** - [Did Jesus heal two blind men \(Matthew 20:29-34\) or one blind man \(Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43\)?](#)

**ANSWER** - In spite of apparent discrepancies, these three passages do refer to the same incident. The Matthew account cites two men healed as Jesus left Jericho. Mark and Luke refer to only one blind man healed, but Luke says it happened as Jesus was entering Jericho while Mark records it happening as He left Jericho. There are legitimate explanations for the apparent discrepancies. Let's look at them rather than deciding this is a contradiction and the Bible is in error.

That this is the same incident is seen in the similarity of the accounts, beginning with the two beggars sitting on the roadside. They

call out to Jesus, referring to Him as “Son of David” (Matthew 20:30; Mark 10:48; Luke 18:38), and in all three accounts, they are rebuked by those nearby and told to be quiet but continue to shout out to Jesus (Matthew 20:31; Mark 10:48; Luke 18:39). The three accounts describe nearly identical conversations between Jesus and the beggars and the conclusions of the stories are also identical. The beggars receive their sight immediately and follow Jesus.

Only Mark chooses to identify one of the beggars as Bartimaeus, perhaps because Bartimaeus was known to Mark’s readers, or they knew Bartimaeus’s father, Timaeus, whereas the other blind man was a stranger to them. In any case, the fact that Mark and Luke only mention one beggar does not contradict Matthew’s account. Mark and Luke never say there was *only* one beggar. They simply focus on the one, Bartimaeus, who was probably the more vocal of the two. Matthew refers to both of the blind men calling out to Jesus, clearly indicating there were two.

The other issue in question is whether Jesus was entering Jericho or leaving it. Bible commentators cite the fact that at that time there were two Jerichos—one the mound of the ancient city (still existing today) and the other the inhabited city of Jericho. Therefore, Jesus could have healed the two men as He was leaving the ancient city of Jericho and entering the new city of Jericho.

In any case, to focus on these minor details to the exclusion of all else is to miss the point of the story—Jesus healed the blind men, proving that He was indeed the Son of God with powers beyond anything a mortal man could have. Unlike the Pharisees who refused to see what was before their eyes, our response to Jesus should be the same as that of the blind men—call on Him to give us eyes to see spiritual truth, recognize Him for who He is, and follow Him.

---

#### Related Resources:

- [What is the story of blind Bartimaeus?](#)
- [Why are there two demon-possessed men in the Gerasene tombs in Matthew, but only one in Mark and Luke?](#)
- [What does it mean that the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve \(Mark 10:45\)?](#)
- [Does the Bible contain errors, contradictions, or discrepancies?](#)
- [Are the miracles in the Bible to be taken literally?](#)
- [Why doesn't God still perform miracles like He did in the Bible?](#)

---

**Norman Geisler** - [When Critics Ask](#) - MATTHEW 20:29–34 (cf. Mark 10:46–52; Luke 18:35–43)—**Did Jesus heal two blind men or just one?**

**PROBLEM:** Matthew says that Christ healed two men, but Mark refers to only one man being healed (Mk 10:46). This appears to be a clear contradiction.

**SOLUTION:** Although Mark records one individual getting healed, this does not mean that there were not two, as Matthew says there were. First of all, **Mark does not declare that there was only one blind man healed**. Matthew says there were two, and where there are two there is always one, every time! Matthew earlier mentions **two** demoniacs where Mark and Luke mention **one** (Matt. 8:28–34), so Matthew again mentions the **two** blind men where Mark mentions just **one**. Further, the fact that Mark mentions the name of one blind man, Bartimaeus, and his father (Timaeus, 10:46), indicates that Mark is centering on the one that was personally known to him. If two men were to receive a medal of honor from the president of the United States and one was your friend, it is understandable that when you relate the story you might only speak of the one whom you knew receiving the medal.

---

**Norman Geisler** - [When Critics Ask](#) - MATTHEW 20:29–34 (cf. Mark 10:46–52; Luke 18:35–43)—**Did Jesus heal the blind man coming into or going out of Jericho?**

**PROBLEM:** According to Luke, a blind man was healed as Jesus entered the city of Jericho (18:35), but Matthew and Mark declare that the healing took place as Jesus left the city of Jericho. Again, the accounts do not seem to be harmonious.

**SOLUTION:** Some believe that the healing in Luke may have actually taken place as Jesus left Jericho, claiming that it was only the initial contact that took place as “He was coming near Jericho” (Luke 18:35) and the blind man may have followed Him through the city, since he was continually begging Jesus to heal him (vv. 38–39). But this seems unlikely, since even after the healing (v. 43) the very next verse (19:1) says, “then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.”

Others respond by noting there were two Jerichos, the old and the new, so that as He went out of one He came into the other.

Still others suggest that these are two different events. Matthew and Mark clearly affirm the healing occurred as Jesus left the city (Matt. 20:29; Mark 10:46). But Luke speaks of healing one blind man as He entered the city. This is supported by the fact that Luke refers only to a “multitude” of people being present as Jesus entered the city (18:36), but both Matthew (20:29) and Mark (10:46)

make a point to say there was a “great multitude” of people there by the time Jesus left the city. If the word spread of the miraculous healing on the way into the city, this would account for the swelling of the crowd. It might also explain why two blind men were waiting on the other side of the city to plead for Jesus to heal them. Perhaps the first blind man who was healed went quickly to tell his blind friends what happened to him. Or maybe the other blind men were already stationed at the other end of the city in their customary begging position. At any rate, there is no irresolvable difficulty in the passage. The two accounts can be understood in a completely compatible way.

---

**Steven Cole** addresses Luke's **approaching Jericho** and Matthew and Mark's **leaving Jericho** which seem to be contradicting descriptions -

There have been numerous solutions proposed, but before I mention some of them, let me point out that the variance indicates that Luke was not relying on either Matthew or Mark as his source, or the accounts would line up. Also, we are dealing with eyewitness accounts of what happened. Matthew was there personally; Mark got his story from Peter, who was there; and Luke carefully researched his account from eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1-4). Sometimes, eyewitness accounts of the same event can vary greatly and yet all be true. We may lack sufficient information to piece it all together, but it would be arrogant for us, from our limited perspective, to pronounce that one of the authors was in error.

Here, then, are several proposed solutions. Some say that Jesus was leaving old Jericho and about to enter the rebuilt Jericho when this incident occurred. This view is possible, but the problem is that old Jericho was not inhabited in Jesus' day, and thus it would be unusual to speak of Jesus leaving the ruins as if He were leaving the city itself. Others propose that a two-part event was condensed into one account. Bartimaeus cried out as Jesus entered the city, tagged along with the crowd, and eventually was heard by Jesus and healed along with the other beggar as Jesus left the city. Another variation is that Jesus entered and passed through the city when He encountered Zaccheus (Lk 19:1). When Zaccheus responded, Jesus turned to go back into the city, at which point He met Bartimaeus. Thus, depending on how you view it, Jesus had left the city or was entering it. Luke merely separates the accounts for his purposes.

However you resolve it, both this story (which is Luke's last miracle) and the next (about Zaccheus) are examples of how the nation should have responded to her Messiah. Bartimaeus and Zaccheus line up with the publican in Jesus' parable (Lk 18:9-17), who cried out to God for mercy. They stand in contrast to the Pharisee in the parable and the rich young ruler (Lk 18:18-27), who both tried to approach God based on their own merit. **The Pharisee and the rich young ruler were likely candidates for salvation who missed it because they trusted in themselves and refused to acknowledge their sin. Bartimaeus and Zaccheus were unlikely candidates for salvation who obtained it through faith in God's mercy, apart from anything in themselves.** Thus Luke uses this unlikely blind beggar to teach us that...When Jesus passes by, we should cry out to Him in faith and He will be merciful to us. ([When Jesus Passes By](#))

---

**QUESTION - [Matthew 20:29-34 says Jesus healed two blind men as He left Jericho. Mark 10:46-52 and Luke 18:35-43 say He healed one man as He entered Jericho. Is this a contradiction?](#)**

**ANSWER** - In spite of apparent discrepancies, these three passages do refer to the same incident. The Matthew account cites two men healed as Jesus left Jericho. Mark and Luke refer to only one blind man healed, but Luke says it happened as Jesus was entering Jericho while Mark records it happening as He left Jericho. There are legitimate explanations for the apparent discrepancies. Let's look at them rather than deciding this is a contradiction and the Bible is in error.

That this is the same incident is seen in the similarity of the accounts, beginning with the two beggars sitting on the roadside. They call out to Jesus, referring to Him as “Son of David” (Matthew 20:30; Mark 10:48; Luke 18:38), and in all three accounts, they are rebuked by those nearby and told to be quiet but continue to shout out to Jesus (Matthew 20:31; Mark 10:48; Luke 18:39). The three accounts describe nearly identical conversations between Jesus and the beggars and the conclusions of the stories are also identical. The beggars receive their sight immediately and follow Jesus.

Only Mark chooses to identify one of the beggars as Bartimaeus, perhaps because Bartimaeus was known to Mark's readers, or they knew Bartimaeus's father, Timaeus, whereas the other blind man was a stranger to them. In any case, the fact that Mark and Luke only mention one beggar does not contradict Matthew's account. Mark and Luke never say there was *only* one beggar. They simply focus on the one, Bartimaeus, who was probably the more vocal of the two. Matthew refers to both of the blind men calling out to Jesus, clearly indicating there were two.

**The other issue in question is whether Jesus was entering Jericho or leaving it.** Bible commentators cite the fact that at that

time there were two Jerichos—one the mound of the ancient city (still existing today) and the other the inhabited city of Jericho. Therefore, Jesus could have healed the two men as He was leaving the ancient city of Jericho and entering the new city of Jericho.

In any case, to focus on these minor details to the exclusion of all else is to miss the point of the story—Jesus healed the blind men, proving that He was indeed the Son of God with powers beyond anything a mortal man could have. Unlike the Pharisees who refused to see what was before their eyes, our response to Jesus should be the same as that of the blind men—call on Him to give us eyes to see spiritual truth, recognize Him for who He is, and follow Him. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

#### Related Resources:

- [Does the Bible contain errors, contradictions, or discrepancies? | GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)
- [What is spiritual blindness? | GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

---

**Walter Kaiser** on Matthew's mention of 2 (demon possessed men, donkeys, blind men) - The second preliminary issue is that Matthew mentions two demonized men, while Mark and Luke mention only one. This is a common problem in Matthew. For example, in Matthew 9:27 and Matthew 20:30 he mentions two blind men where the other Gospels mention only one, and in Matthew 21:2, 6 he says that two donkeys were brought to Jesus while the other Gospels mention only one. In each case it is not at all unlikely that two (or more) were present. Blind beggars (and other types as well) would group at city gates, a donkey young enough not to have been used for work would likely be with its mother, and more than one demonized person might find refuge in the same groups of tombs. But even if there is no necessity of seeing a historical problem, we may wonder why Matthew would mention two when one seems to do for the others. While other answers also may suffice, one reason is that Matthew's interest in the miracles is due to his Christology. That is, the miracles show the power of Christ. By mentioning two he heightens that power. The healing of one may have been a coincidence, but not the healing of two. Similarly, if two donkeys are brought to Jesus, the significance of his fulfillment of the Scriptures is underlined. ([Go to page 335](#))

**Matthew 20:30 And two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"**

KJV Matthew 20:30 And, **behold** ([idou](#)), two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.

BGT Matthew 20:30 κα ὁ δ ο τυφλο καθ μενοι παρ τ ν δ ν κο σαντες τι ησο ς παρ γει, κραξαν λ γοντες· λ ησον μ ς, [κ ριε,] υ ς Δαυ δ.

NET Matthew 20:30 Two blind men were sitting by the road. When they heard that Jesus was passing by, they shouted, "Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David!"

CSB Matthew 20:30 There were two blind men sitting by the road. When they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"

ESV Matthew 20:30 And **behold** ([idou](#)), there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"

NIV Matthew 20:30 Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

NLT Matthew 20:30 Two blind men were sitting beside the road. When they heard that Jesus was coming that way, they began shouting, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

- **two:** Mt 9:27-31 12:22 21:14 Ps 146:8 Isa 29:18 35:5,6 42:16,18 Isa 59:10 61:1,2 Mk 10:46 Lu 4:18 7:21 Jn 9:1-12
- **have mercy:** Mt 12:23 15:22 21:9 22:42 Ac 2:30 Ro 1:3,4

#### Related Passages:

Mark 10:46-47+ Then they \*came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road. 47 When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, **have mercy** on me!"

Luke 18:35-38+ As Jesus was approaching Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the road begging. 36 Now hearing a crowd going by, he began to inquire what this was. 37 They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was



passing by. 38 And he called out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, **have mercy** on me!"

Matthew 21:9+ (**IN THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY**) The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting, "Hosanna to the **Son of David**; BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Hosanna in the highest!"

## **THE BLIND "SEE" THE SON OF DAVID**

**And** - NAS (as well as NET, CSB, NIV, NLT) for some reason fails to translate the Greek [idou](#) which is rendered **Behold** ([idou](#)) in the ESV and is important because it adds "a dramatic emphasis to a scene." (Osborne)

**John MacArthur** explains why **Behold** ([idou](#)) is important in this context - **Behold** ([idou](#)) was used to call special attention to something or someone, in this case two blind men who ordinarily would have gone unnoticed. Blind people were extremely common in the Near East, especially in the cities. Because none of them could work and few had families who could or would support them, the majority of blind people were beggars, as were these two (see Mark 10:46). Like most other beggars, they congregated outside the city gates to take advantage of travelers, who were more likely to be carrying money than the average person on the street. A special balsam bush grew in Jericho from which a medicine was made to treat blindness. Consequently, that city had an unusually large number of blind people who came there in hope of a cure. The two blind men who cried out to Jesus were but two among perhaps hundreds in the vicinity. (See [Matthew Commentary](#))

**Two blind** ([tuphlos](#)) **men sitting by the road** - These **two blind men** were at the right place at the right time (God's providence in action)!

Mark 10:46+ gives different details - "a blind beggar named Bartimaeus (See [What is the story of blind Bartimaeus?](#)). See [Geisler's explanation](#) of the difference between the accounts in Mark, Luke (also describes only one blind man) and Matthew.

**MacArthur** on one versus two blind men - Mark and Luke mention only one man, whom Mark identifies as "Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus," and who apparently was spokesman for the two of them (see Mark 10:46; Luke 18:35). Mark touches a distinctly human chord by naming this man and even his father. Although Bartimaeus was doubtlessly unknown while he was a blind beggar, it is possible that he later became highly respected in the early church and well known to Mark and those to whom he wrote. Mark would have been saying to his readers, in effect, "And do you know who one of those blind men was? Bartimaeus, our dear friend and brother in Christ!" (See [MacArthur Commentary](#))

**Hearing** ([akouo](#)) **that Jesus was passing by** ([parago](#)) - If they were blind, how did they know it was Jesus? (See [notes above](#) about difference in the accounts in Luke and Mark) Lk 18:36-37 says the blind man "began to inquire who this was. They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by." Mark 10:47 adds "When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene." They may have been physically blind but as the story unfolds it appears that they have 20/20 spiritual vision. Most of those in crowd with good physical sight were spiritually blind to who Jesus really was.

**Jesus was passing by** making this the opportunity of a lifetime for these two blind men! But it was a **passing**" (pun intended) opportunity (as are most opportunities).

The word **OPPORTUNITY** is derived from the Latin "**ob portu**." In ancient times before modern harbors, ships had to wait for the timing of the tide before they could make it safely to port. Thus "OB PORTU," described the ship waiting "FOR PORT," ready to seize the crucial moment when it could ride the tide into safe harbor. The captain knew that if he missed the passing tide, the ship would have to wait for another tide to come in. God gives each of us many "ob portu's", but we must be spiritually wise and Spirit filled in order to see and seize them. As Charles Swindoll said "We are all faced with a series of great opportunities (ob portu's) brilliantly disguised as impossible situations." Shakespeare's famous line from Julius Caesar conveys the same thought: "There is a tide in the affairs of men (an "ob portu"), Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; Omitted, all the voyage of their life Is bound in shallows and in miseries. On such a full sea are we now afloat; And we must take the current when it serves, Or lose our ventures." In short, these two blind men had a deep sense that this was an "opportune time," their small "window of opportunity!" (cf 2 Cor 6:2, Isa 55:6) (From Redeem the Time)

**THOUGHT** - Dear reader, if you have yet to see yourself at a sinner bound for Hell, then you need to repent and believe the Good News that Jesus will deliver you from having to go to Hell and you will spend eternity with Him in Heaven. So today Jesus is passing by your heart. Cry out for His mercy. Beg Him for spiritual sight. And by all means DO NOT put off today what you may not be able to do tomorrow, because Jesus may never pass by your heart again. (2 Cor 6:2).



It is ironic that while most of the nation of Israel was blind to the presence of the Messiah, two other blind men also had the spiritual insight to recognize and acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, the "**Son of David**"...

Matthew 9:27+ As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, "Have mercy on us, **Son of David!**"

**Cried out** ([krazo](#) - screamed) refers to a loud cry or anguished shout, and is a strong word expressing deep emotion. **Krazo** is one of those [onomatopoeic](#) words, the very pronunciation of which imitates the hoarse cry of the raven ([listen](#)), and can be an inarticulate and brutish sound or an exclamation of fear or pain.

**THOUGHT** - How tragic that so many spiritually blind souls are wandering aimlessly through life oblivious to their desperate need for a Saving Shepherd! Jesus is ever "passing by" and His ears are attentive to the sincere plaintiff cry "Have mercy." If you are not yet a believer, you too are spiritually blind and only a miracle of God can open your eyes to the truth. I implore you to cry out today and ask Jesus to have mercy on you. If you do, you will not be disappointed in this life or the next!

**Lord** ([kurios](#)), **have mercy** ([eleeo](#) - [aorist imperative](#)) **on us, Son of David!**" - Their designation of Jesus as **Lord** ([kurios](#)) was by itself not indicative that they saw Him as Messiah for it was a common term to honor men with special respect. But then they added the significant term **Son of David** ([see note below](#)) which seems to support the premise that they saw (pun intended) Jesus as the Expected One, the Messiah Who would come from the line of David (cf Lk 1:32+). Son of David was the same cry the crowd greeted Jesus with as He "[triumphantly entered Jerusalem](#)" a few days later (Mt 21:9+). These two men who were physically blind seemed to express better spiritual sight than most of the crowd who were spiritually blind! In their helpless state, these two blind men did all they could do (and all they needed to do) which was to cry out and cry for **mercy**.

The verb **have mercy** ([eleeo](#) - [aorist imperative](#)) is a command in Greek but in this context is not a demand that presumes authority over Jesus, but rather a reverent and urgent appeal to Him, expressing their deep need and their faith (believing He has the power to show mercy). One might paraphrase it something like "Please, Lord—do this!" As such it reflects more of a cry for help than a command to control. In Jewish prayer tradition, especially in the Psalms, it's very common to find imperative forms addressed to God. For example in Psalm 51:1 David prayed "Have mercy on me, O God" which is an imperative in Hebrew (רַחֵם). However David clearly was not being irreverent, but rather was desperately appealing to the One He knew could show him mercy. And in our present passage note that Jesus does not rebuke their use of the imperative but in fact He responds to it with compassion and healing. Their urgent plea is met with divine mercy.

**THOUGHT** - Beloved, it strikes me that it is not just the blind man who needed to cry "have mercy on me," but it is me, it is you, for daily we commit sins of thought, word and deed, some we are not aware of, some that sadly are presumptive, but daily we too are like this blind beggar and should frequently find ourselves crying out for mercy from Jesus our great High Priest "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that **we may receive mercy** and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb 4:15-16+). Rich Mullins has a great song entitled [Let Mercy Lead](#). May God grant you a few minutes to listen to the song, and then listen to the Spirit, in Jesus' Name. Amen

Alfred Edersheim beautifully observed that "the faith of the blind rose to the full height of divine possibility."

*"Never plead merit when asking God for things,  
always plead mercy."*

**NET NOTE** - **Have mercy on us** is a request for healing. It is not owed to the men. They simply ask for God's kind grace. There was a tradition in Judaism that the Son of David (Solomon) had great powers of healing (Josephus, Ant. 8.2.5 [8.42–49]).

**Son of David** - 26x/25v in the Bible (MOST OFTEN IN MATTHEW) - 2 Sam. 13:1; 1 Chr. 29:22; 2 Chr. 1:1; 2 Chr. 11:18; 2 Chr. 13:6; 2 Chr. 30:26; 2 Chr. 35:3; Prov. 1:1; Eccl. 1:1; Matt. 1:1; Matt. 1:20; Matt. 9:27; Matt. 12:23; Matt. 15:22; Matt. 20:30; Matt. 20:31; Matt. 21:9; Matt. 21:15; Matt. 22:42; Mk. 10:47; Mk. 10:48; Mk. 12:35; Lk. 3:31; Lk. 18:38; Lk. 18:39

---

**Cried out** (2896) [krazo](#) refers to a loud cry or vociferation, and is a strong word expressing deep emotion and was used for any sort of screaming or anguished shout. **Krazo** is one of those [onomatopoeic](#) words, the very pronunciation of which imitates the hoarse cry of the raven ([listen](#)), and can be an inarticulate and brutish sound or an exclamation of fear or pain. Abbott-Smith says "generally used of inarticulate cries, *to scream, cry out* (Aesch., etc.)" It is used of the cry of an animal, the barking of a dog and two men in a quarrel, trying to bawl each other down (so Aristophanes, Knights, 1017)" "The prophet in awful earnestness, and as with a scream

of anguish, cries over Israel' (Morison)" **Krazō** was also a technical, rabbinic term to refer to the loud summons of a prophet, needing to be heard. In Lk 18:39<sup>+</sup> the blind beggar cried "to cry clamorously; to scream or shriek." (You can almost hear him shrieking! He is motivated because he is blind and thinks this Man might help him see!)

**Krazo** was used of the rantings of insane people and of a woman's cries at childbirth. It was used of the Canaanite woman near Tyre and Sidon who cried out for Jesus to heal her daughter (Matt. 15:22), of the crowd's shouting for Jesus' crucifixion (Mark 15:13–14), and even of Jesus' crying out from the cross (Matt. 27:50).

**Have mercy** (1653) **eleeo** from **eleos** means "to feel sympathy with the misery of another, especially such sympathy which manifests itself in action, less frequently in word." Describes the general sense of one who has compassion or person on someone in need. It indicates being moved to pity and compassion by tragedy and includes the fear that this could happen to me. To see someone in dire need (including one who may not deserve the misfortune), to have compassion on them, and to give help to remove the need. **NIDNTT** writes of the root word **eleos** that in classical Greek -- It is "the emotion roused by contact with an affliction which comes undeservedly on someone else"

**Vincent** writes that **eleeo** means "to succor or to show compassion... The (root) word (eleos) emphasizes the misery with which grace deals; hence, peculiarly the sense of human wretchedness coupled with the impulse to relieve it, which issues in gracious ministry. Bengel remarks, "Grace takes away the fault, mercy the misery."

**MacArthur** has an interesting insight noting that "Mercy is integral to God's redemptive work for man. From the time of the Fall, man has had no way back to God except through His merciful grace. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the New Testament and the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) various forms of the verb **eleeo** (to have mercy) are used some five hundred times. (See [Matthew Commentary - Page 469](#))

**ELEE0 - 29V** - Matt. 5:7; Matt. 9:27; Matt. 15:22; Matt. 17:15; Matt. 18:33; Matt. 20:30; Matt. 20:31; Mk. 5:19; Mk. 10:47; Mk. 10:48; Lk. 16:24; Lk. 17:13; Lk. 18:38; Lk. 18:39; Rom. 9:15; Rom. 9:16; Rom. 9:18; Rom. 11:30; Rom. 11:31; Rom. 11:32; Rom. 12:8; 1 Co. 7:25; 2 Co. 4:1; Phil. 2:27; 1 Tim. 1:13; 1 Tim. 1:16; 1 Pet. 2:10; Jude 1:22; Jude 1:23

---

## James Smith - THE TWO BLIND MEN Matthew 20:30–34

"Behold two blind men."

There are many important lessons for us in this short narrative. Here we see—

### I. A Sorrowful Picture. "Two blind men." They were—

1. **POOR**. They sat by the wayside, evidently begging. They were men who had no promise to live on, no prospect to cheer them. Such were all of us, at that time having no promise, and without hope. All who are without Christ are poor indeed.
2. **BLIND**. They had no eyes even to look on the passing Saviour. Picture of those who are destitute of spiritual vision, walking in darkness, and having no light.
3. **HELPLESS**. Although there were two of them, the one could in no wise help the other. All are alike guilty and impotent before the Lord. Help must come from above.

### II. A Passing Opportunity. "Jesus passed by."

In the coming near of the Son of God lies man's only chance of getting deliverance from the power of darkness. These men embraced their opportunity by putting themselves "in the way." Jesus has come near by the light of His Word. Flee not from Him by preferring the darkness (Hosea 7:13).

### III. An Earnest Prayer. "They cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord." See their—

1. **BOLDNESS**. "They cried out." It was nothing to them who heard their voice. They were poor men, crying out of the depths of their dire and conscious need.
2. **FAITH**. "They cried, saying, Lord." They acknowledge Him as Messiah and Master. Dost thou believe on the Son of God? Hast thou confessed Him?
3. **PETITION**. "Have mercy on us." They confess their helplessness and need by begging for mercy. The prayer of the self-righteous is, "I am not as other men" (Luke 18:11), or, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee" (Matt. 18:26). "God be merciful to me." (Luke 18:23).
4. **WISDOM**. "When they heard, they cried." They did not wait for a more convenient season. "Faith cometh by

hearing" (Rom. 10:17). "Hear and your soul shall live" (Isa. 55:3).

#### IV. **A Rebuking Crowd.** "The multitude rebuked them."

Anxious and inquiring sinners are often rebuked by a multitude of false fears and feelings, but perhaps a greater obstacle lies in the multitude of inconsistent disciples—those who outwardly follow Christ, but who have no sympathy with Him in His great work of saving sinners. Do with the hindrances that arise through the failings of some professing Christians what these blind men did with the rebuking multitude, "Cry the more."

#### V. **A Willing Saviour.** "He willeth not the death of any." He—

1. **STOOD.** The cry of need has a magical power to arrest the passing Saviour, and draw out the living waters of divine compassion. He stood. What a privilege! "Behold, I stand at the door and knock" (Rev. 3:20).
2. **CALLED.** Liberty of access is now given. Nearness invited, He seeks the fellowship of those whom He blesses. He that stands at the door and knocks still calls, "If any man hear My voice, and open the door" (Rev. 3:20). He has made room for you; make room for Him.

#### VI. **A Gracious Offer.** "What will ye that I should do unto you?" (v. 32).

He invited them. Now He throws the door of infinite fulness open before them, that all their needs may be fully met. Oh, what a wonderful Saviour is Jesus! The rebuking multitude cannot hinder Him from pouring out the treasures of His love and grace upon all who come. "Come unto Me, and I will give ye—" What will ye?

#### VII. **A Perfect Cure.** God's remedy for needy man is a wonderful compound of infinite love and precious blood. The order here is very beautiful—

1. **HE HAD COMPASSION.** The need of the blind men touched the very depths of His heart, and His whole soul moved out in mighty, misery-melting merry.
2. **HE TOUCHED THEIR EYES.** The presence of Jesus is always a conscious presence. To be blessed we must come within His touch. Here the dead live, and sin is blotted out. His gentle yet almighty hand is laid on the cause and source of their misery. He opened Lydia's heart.
3. **THEY RECEIVED SIGHT.** What a change! Old things have passed away, all things became new. Salvation is a very great and conscious blessing we know.
4. **THEY FOLLOWED HIM.** He touched them. Now they keep in touch with Him. Blessed life! "Follow Me!" "Wilt thou go with this Man?" (Gen. 24:58).

---

#### **Puritan Daily Readings - Son of David Matthew 20:30**

"O Lord, thou Son of David!" In this compellation consider why Christ is called the Son of David, never the son of Adam, never the son of Abraham. It is true He is called frequently the Son of man; but never when any prays to Him: and He is reckoned, in His genealogy, David's son. Abraham's son, the Son of Adam; but the Son of David is His ordinary style, when prayers are directed to Him in the days of His flesh. The reasons are, first, Christ had a special relation to Abraham, being his seed; but more special to David, because the covenant was in a special manner established with David, as a king, and the first king in whose hand the church, the feeding thereof as God's own flock, was, as God's deposit and pawn laid down. The Lord established the Covenant of Grace with David, and his son Solomon, who was to build him a house; and promised to him an eternal kingdom, and grace, and perseverance in grace, and that by a sure covenant, "the sure mercies of David" (Isa. 55:3; 2 Sam. 7:8-16; 1 Chron. 22:9, 10; 2 Sam. 23:5)...Now, it was necessary, that Christ the Messiah should lineally descend of a king: Abraham was not a king; Adam was not formally a king by covenant, as David was. Second, Christ changes names with David, as He never did with any man. Christ is never called Abraham; but "David my servant shall be a prince among them" (Ezek. 34:23-24). "They shall seek the Lord their God, and David their king" (Hosea 3:5).

---

#### **John Mayshack - A Plea for Mercy Matt. 20:30** Have mercy on us, O Lord, because:

- I. We have acknowledged our condition before you
- II. We believe that you have the power to save
- III. We are willing to follow you

---

#### **QUESTION - [What does it mean that Jesus is the son of David?WATCH VIDEO](#)**

**ANSWER** - Seventeen verses in the New Testament describe Jesus as the "**son of David.**" (Matt. 1:1; Matt. 1:20; Matt. 9:27; Matt. 12:23; Matt. 15:22; Matt. 20:30; Matt. 20:31; Matt. 21:9; Matt. 21:15; Matt. 22:42; Mk. 10:47; Mk. 10:48; Mk. 12:35; Lk. 3:31; Lk.

18:38; Lk. 18:39) But the question arises, how could Jesus be the **son of David** if David lived approximately 1,000 years before Jesus? The answer is that Christ (the Messiah) was the fulfillment of the prophecy of the seed of David (2 Samuel 7:12–16). Jesus is the promised Messiah, which means He had to be of the lineage of David. Matthew 1:1+ gives the genealogical proof that Jesus, in His humanity, was a direct descendant of Abraham and David through Joseph, Jesus' legal father. The genealogy in Luke 3 traces Jesus' lineage through His mother, Mary. Jesus is a descendant of David by adoption through Joseph and by blood through Mary. "As to his earthly life [Christ Jesus] was a descendant of David" (Romans 1:3).

Primarily, the title "**Son of David**" is more than a statement of physical genealogy. It is a Messianic title. When people referred to Jesus as the Son of David, they meant that He was the long-awaited Deliverer, the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.

Jesus was addressed as "Lord, thou son of David" several times by people who, by faith, were seeking mercy or healing. The woman whose daughter was being tormented by a demon (Matthew 15:22) and the two blind men by the wayside (Matthew 20:30) all cried out to the Son of David for help. The titles of honor they gave Him declared their faith in Him. Calling Him "Lord" expressed their sense of His deity, dominion, and power, and calling Him "Son of David," expressed their faith that He was the Messiah.

The Pharisees understood exactly what the people meant when they called Jesus "Son of David." But, unlike those who cried out in faith, the Pharisees were so blinded by their own pride that they couldn't see what the blind beggars could see—that here was the Messiah they had supposedly been waiting for all their lives. They hated Jesus because He wouldn't give them the honor they thought they deserved, so when they heard the people hailing Jesus as the Savior, they became enraged (Matthew 21:15) and plotted to destroy Him (Luke 19:47).

Jesus further confounded the scribes and Pharisees by asking them to explain the meaning of this very title: how could it be that the Messiah is the son of David when David himself refers to Him as "my Lord" (Mark 12:35–37; cf. Psalm 110:1)? The teachers of the Law couldn't answer the question. Jesus thereby exposed the Jewish leaders' ineptitude as teachers and their ignorance of what the Old Testament taught as to the true nature of the Messiah, further alienating them from Him.

Jesus' point in asking the question of Mark 12:35 was that the Messiah is more than the physical son of David. If He is David's Lord, He must be greater than David. As Jesus says in Revelation 22:16, "I am the Root and the Offspring of David." That is, He is both the Creator of David and the Descendant of David. Only the Son of God made flesh could say that.

---

#### Related Resources:

- [Who is Jesus Christ?](#)
- [What does it mean that Jesus is the Son of God?](#)
- [Was Jesus the biological son of Mary? If so, how did He not inherit a sin nature?](#)
- [What does it mean that Jesus is God's only begotten son?](#)

**Matthew 20:31 The crowd sternly told them to be quiet, but they cried out all the more, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"**

KJV Matthew 20:31 And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.

BGT Matthew 20:31 ὁ ὄχλος πέτῃσεν αὐτοὺς νᾶσιωπῶσαι· ὁ δὲ μεζὸν κράξαν ἐγένετο· λέγοντες· ἡσὼν μὲς, κριε, υἱὲ Δαυὶδ.

NET Matthew 20:31 The crowd scolded them to get them to be quiet. But they shouted even more loudly, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"

CSB Matthew 20:31 The crowd told them to keep quiet, but they cried out all the more, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"

ESV Matthew 20:31 The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent, but they cried out all the more, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"

NIV Matthew 20:31 The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

NLT Matthew 20:31 "Be quiet!" the crowd yelled at them. But they only shouted louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

- **sternly told them to be quiet:** Mt 15:23 19:13
- **but they cried:** Mt 7:7,8 Ge 32:25-29 Lu 11:8-10 18:1-8,39 Col 4:2 1Th 5:17

#### Related Passages:

Mark 10:48+ Many were **sternly telling him to be quiet**, but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Luke 18:39+ Those who led the way were **sternly telling him to be quiet**; but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

### CALLS TO BE QUIET STIRRED MORE CRIES

The crowd sternly told ([epitimao](#)) them to be quiet ([siopao](#)), but (term of contrast) they cried out ([krazo](#) shouted in anguish, screamed) all the more, Lord ([kurios](#)), **Son of David have mercy** ([eleeo](#) - [aorist imperative](#)) on us!" - They would not be deterred! F. F. Bruce wrote the two blind men "refused to be bludgeoned into silence by the indifferent crowd." The resistance stimulated louder, more persistent cries for mercy!

**Matthew Henry:** Here is an example of importunity in prayer. They cried out as men in earnest; men in need are earnest, of course. Cold desires only beg for denials. When they were discountenanced in it, they cried the more. The stream of fervency, if it is stopped, will rise and swell the higher. This is wrestling with God in prayer, and makes us the fitter to receive mercy; for the more it is striven for, the more it will be prized and thankfully acknowledged.

**Steven Cole** commenting on the parallel passage says "Whenever you trust in God, you will encounter **hindrances**. Bartimaeus cried out to Jesus in faith, and the crowd sternly told him to shut up (Lk 18:39). But the more they told him to be quiet, the louder he shouted. This was his one opportunity to be healed, and he wasn't about to sit there passively. He persisted until Jesus heard him. He was like the widow in Jesus' parable at the start of this chapter (Lk 18:1-8). She kept hounding the judge until he granted her request." ([When Jesus Passes By](#))

**NET NOTE** - **be quiet** Or "rebuked." The crowd's view was that surely Jesus would not be bothered with someone as unimportant as a blind beggar. Public opinion would not sway the blind man from getting Jesus' attention. The term shouted is strong as it can be used of animal cries.

**Todd M. Kinde** - These two men, though blind, saw Jesus as both Lord and Son of David. They understood that the Messianic Age was to be one in which the blind would receive sight (cf. Is. 35:5, 6). Their cry for mercy was a confession of faith in Jesus as the Christ. The rebuke of the crowds served to test the faith of these men. These men cried out again, a mark of the reality of their faith. They made a true confession of faith in Jesus in the face of opposition.

**Sternly told** ([2008](#))([epitimao](#)) means to express strong disapproval of someone, reproving or censuring them. This is the very verb the disciples used to discourage parents from bringing their children to Jesus (Lk 18:15). **Epitimao** is the word used by Jesus to rebuke demons (Lk 4:35, 41, 9:42), fever (Lk 4:39), the wind and waves (Lk 8:24), His disciples James and John (Lk 9:55).

**Epitimao** - 30v - **rebuke(6), rebuked(13), rebuking(3), sternly telling(2), sternly told(1), warned(5).** Matt. 8:26; Matt. 12:16; Matt. 16:20; Matt. 16:22; Matt. 17:18; Matt. 19:13; Matt. 20:31; Mk. 1:25; Mk. 3:12; Mk. 4:39; Mk. 8:30; Mk. 8:32; Mk. 8:33; Mk. 9:25; Mk. 10:13; Mk. 10:48; Lk. 4:35; Lk. 4:39; Lk. 4:41; Lk. 8:24; Lk. 9:21; Lk. 9:42; Lk. 9:55; Lk. 17:3; Lk. 18:15; Lk. 18:39; Lk. 19:39; Lk. 23:40; 2 Tim. 4:2; Jude 1:9

**Be quiet** ([4623](#))([siopao](#) from **siope** = silence, a hush, properly, muteness, i.e. involuntary stillness, or inability to speak) means to be silent, hold one's peace, say nothing (Mt 26:63; Mk 3:4; 9:34; 14:61; Acts 18:9). To stop speaking or become quiet (Mt 20:31; Mk 10:48; Lk 18:39, 19:40) and here in Luke 1:20 meaning to lose the ability to speak. In one use Jesus commands the wind (and waves) to "Hush!" or quieten down, becoming calm (Mk 4:39). In classic Greek it was a command to "be silent" (Iliad 23.568; *Odyssey* 17.513) Socrates before a jury. (Cf Plato before the popular assembly on Aegina, on trial for his life "did not say a single word.")

**Matthew 20:32 And Jesus stopped and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?"**

- **What:** Mt 20:21 Eze 36:37 Ac 10:29 Php 4:6

## Related Passages:

Mark 10:49-50+ And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him here." So they \*called the blind man, saying to him, **"Take courage, stand up!** He is calling for you." Throwing aside his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus.

Luke 18:40+ And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him; and when he came near, He questioned him, 41 "What do you want Me to do for you?" And he said, "Lord, I want to regain my sight!"

## JESUS STOPPED!

**And Jesus stopped** (KJV - stood still) **and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?"** - Blind men on the side of the street would normally be begging for money. Jesus is on His way to the Cross but is willing to stop and call these two men. He could have kept walking for He was on the most important journey any man would ever make, to suffer and die for the sins of mankind. Jesus' question is not for information—He already knows. It is an invitation to relationship, a chance for them to express faith out loud. They don't ask for thrones or glory. They ask to see. And Jesus gives them more than sight. He gives them attention, compassion, and dignity.

**THOUGHT** - Lord thank You for stopping—for hearing me when I call, even in a crowd, even in the chaos. Give me faith like the blind men, to cry out without shame, and to believe You will respond with mercy. Help me also to stop for others—to notice, listen, and love as You do. All for Your glory and in Your Name. Amen.

**David Guzik** on **"What do you want Me to do for you?"** - This is a wonderful, simple question God has not stopped asking. Sometimes we go without when God would want to give us something simply because we will not answer this question, and we do not have because we do not ask (James 4:2+). Jesus asked this question with full knowledge that these men were blind. He knew what they needed and what they wanted, but God still wants us to tell Him our needs as a constant expression of our trust and reliance on Him.

---

## Stan Toler - Mission

If one's mission is too small, too vague, too parochial, there is the supreme danger of ending up being driven by someone else's mission. —Author Unknown

Organizations, marriages, families, churches, and governments are no stronger than their shared sense of mission. The mission of your church or ministry is not carried out until that mission is written in the minds of the people you lead.

When we use the word mission, we are talking about a foundational intention that gives meaning and direction to life. A mission well articulated will provide guidance to all who adhere to the organization.

Jesus Christ had a mission that he never once walked away from. Even when his closest friends and critics tried to dissuade him, his mission guided his decisions and values.

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost. —Luke 19:10

Jesus' mission? He came to seek and save the lost. Therefore, **it is easy to understand why Jesus stopped by the roadside and responded to a blind man's plea**, why he spoke to a despised tax collector who climbed a tree, and why he allowed a prostitute to anoint him with expensive perfume.

In a world where souls drift easily in the myriad of choices and distractions, we ministers would do well to develop a simple covenant between ourselves and the Father—a covenant describing what his mission for our lives is—and never walk away from it.

Faith into action - What is your mission? Write it down, and make certain everyone who shares your mission has a copy.

---

## Matthew 20:33 They \*said to Him, "Lord, we want our eyes to be opened."

KJV Matthew 20:33 They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.

BGT Matthew 20:33 λ γουσιν α τ · κ ριε, να νοιγ σιν ο φθαλμο μ ν.

NET Matthew 20:33 They said to him, "Lord, let our eyes be opened."

CSB Matthew 20:33 "Lord," they said to Him, "open our eyes!"



ESV Matthew 20:33 They said to him, "Lord, let our eyes be opened."

NIV Matthew 20:33 "Lord," they answered, "we want our sight."

NLT Matthew 20:33 "Lord," they said, "we want to see!"

- **Lord:** Ps 119:18 Eph 1:17-19

#### Related Passages:

Mark 10:51+ And answering him, Jesus said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" And the blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, I want to regain my sight!"

Luke 18:40+ And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him; and when he came near, He questioned him, 41 "What do you want Me to do for you?" And he said, "Lord, I want to regain my sight!"

Psalms 119:18+ Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Your law.

Ephesians 1:17-19+ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might

### THEIR ONE REQUEST: OPEN OUR EYES

**They \*said to Him, "Lord ([kurios](#)), we want our eyes ([ophthalmos](#)) to be opened ([anoigo](#))** - The **Lord** (Rabboni in Mk 10:51+) knew what they needed and He also knew what they wanted but He wanted them to express the desire which they did. **opened ([anoigo](#))**

**THOUGHT** - Lord, let it be so that every blind (spiritually) person reading these notes might be willing to humble themselves and ask Jesus to open the eyes of their heart so that they might see with supernatural, eternal vision. For Your glory Lord. Amen.

**Adam Clarke** - "Reader, whosoever thou art, act in behalf of thy soul as these blind men did in behalf of their sight, and thy salvation is sure. Apply to the Son of David; lose not a moment; he is passing by, and thou art passing into eternity, and probably wilt never have a more favourable opportunity than the present. The Lord increase thy earnestness and faith!"

**Matthew 20:34 Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.**

KJV Matthew 20:34 So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.

BGT Matthew 20:34 σπλαγχνισθε ς δ ἦσο ς ψατο τ ν μμ των α τ ν, κα ε θ ως ν βλεψαν κα κολο θησαν α τ .

NET Matthew 20:34 Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.

CSB Matthew 20:34 Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes. Immediately they could see, and they followed Him.

ESV Matthew 20:34 And Jesus in pity touched their eyes, and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him.

NIV Matthew 20:34 Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.

NLT Matthew 20:34 Jesus felt sorry for them and touched their eyes. Instantly they could see! Then they followed him.

NRS Matthew 20:34 Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes. Immediately they regained their sight

and followed him.

NJB Matthew 20:34 Jesus felt pity for them and touched their eyes, and at once their sight returned and they followed him.

NAB Matthew 20:34 Moved with pity, Jesus touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight, and followed him.

YLT Matthew 20:34 and having been moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes, and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.

MIT Matthew 20:34 Jesus, empathizing with them, touched their eyes. Immediately they were enabled to see, and they followed along with him.

- **Jesus:** Mt 9:36 14:14 15:32 Ps 145:8 Lu 7:13 Jn 11:33-35 Heb 2:17 Heb 4:15,16 1Pe 3:8
- **touched:** Mt 9:29 Mk 7:33 Lu 22:51 Jn 9:6,7
- **and they:** Mt 8:15 Ps 119:67,71 Lu 18:43 Ac 26:18

#### Related Passages:

Mark 10:52+ And Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him on the road.

Luke 18:42+ And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." 43 Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.

## JESUS HEALS THEIR BLINDNESS

**Moved with compassion** (felt sorry - [splanchnizomai](#)) - ESV - "Jesus in pity" Ten of the 12 uses of this great verb are used to describe the deep feeling of pity that Jesus had for others in need.

**Jesus touched** ([hapto/haptomai](#)) **their eyes** ([ophthalmos](#)) - Jesus used different methods to heal, even mixing spittle and water to make a paste to put on the blind man's eyes (Jn 9:6-7+)

**Grant Osborne:** Jesus' compassion and touching their eyes are not found in Mark and add to the centrality of the messianic miracle in Matthew. Jesus' compassion is also found in Mt 9:36; 14:14; 15:32, all connected to his miraculous ministry to the crowds. Jesus had great pity for the human dilemma and always responded. Most busy teacher-rabbis, let alone messianic pretenders, would never have "stopped" in their rush to destiny to help the unfortunate, but Jesus does so every time. The use of "touch" for healing is also found in 8:3, 15; 9:29 (9:20–21; 14:36 of people touching Jesus) and stresses further the physicality of the miracle. (See [Matthew - Page 749](#))

**and immediately** ([eutheos](#)) **they regained their sight** ([anablepo](#)) **and followed** ([akoloutheo](#)) **Him** - Note Jesus' miracles were immediate, complete and wrought by different modalities (this case touch, sometimes just a word, etc). Notice the verb regained which carries the meanings of recovery from blindness, to see again or regain sight. You say "So what?" This verb ([anablepo](#)) would imply that these men had once been able to see and at some point became blind. Following Him is interesting as it raises the question did these 2 healed blind man follow Him as disciples, those who had been born again? Or did they just follow along with the crowd heading to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem, something they had likely not celebrated for many years because of their blindness? I think they became disciples (especially calling Him Son of David), but cannot be dogmatic. Heaven will be an exciting place as we see who's there!

**THOUGHT** - As a medical doctor subspecialized in infectious disease I would propose that these men could at one time see. At some point they contracted Chlamydia trachomatis a bacterial infection that can affect both the genital tract and the eyes. When it affects the eyes, it causes a disease called [trachoma](#) — a leading cause of preventable blindness globally. Historically, trachoma was widespread in many parts of the Middle East, due to: Poverty, Limited access to clean water, Crowded living conditions, Poor sanitation. The bacteria spread through: Direct contact (e.g., hands, clothing) and Flies that have been in contact with infected eye secretions. Initial infection leads to chronic conjunctivitis. Repeated infections cause the inner eyelid to scar. The scarring causes entropion (eyelashes turn inward). Eyelashes scrape the cornea, leading to corneal damage and eventual blindness. While this is conjecture, the good news is that Jesus effected an immediate, complete cure. He always does! And He can perform the same immediate, complete cure for spiritual scarred

eyes blinded to the truth in the Word of God. Hallelujah! What a Savior! Amen!

**Daniel Doriani:** In the Old Testament, there is no record that a prophet or servant of God ever heals the blind. But the healing of the blind is Jesus' most common miracle. Why? Because the Bible says God alone gives sight to the blind (Ex. 4:11; Ps. 146:8–9). When God restores all things, when his Servant comes, then “the eyes of the blind will see” (Isa. 29:18; 35:5; 42:7). Thus Matthew attests the deity of Christ.

**Donald Hagner:** Just before arriving in Jerusalem, Jesus performs a striking miracle in the healing of two blind men, who appeal to him using the title Son of David. This is the same title with which Jesus will be greeted on his entry into Jerusalem (21:9). In the temple Jesus will again heal the blind and the lame too (21:14). The present passage thus at once rounds out the preceding main section of the Gospel and serves as a transition to the arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem and the events to occur there. The present miracle has the effect of confirming the messianic identity of Jesus as the Son of David. With sovereign power he brings sight to the blind, and they respond by following him in discipleship—all this in strong contrast to the way he will be received by the Jerusalem authorities. . . Jesus on the way to his death in Jerusalem does not cease being the Messiah who meets the needs of individuals. The giving of sight to the blind is a dramatic miracle that points to the dawning of the era of messianic fulfillment. The Son of David is present among his people. And as he compassionately delivers them from their literal darkness, so he continues on his way to Jerusalem, where in his sacrificial death he will deliver all of humanity from an even greater darkness—that of the bondage to sin and death. . . This healing pericope thus may be seen as the gospel in a microcosm.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS HEALING THE BLIND

**Jesus' miracle of healing blindness was especially significant** because there is no record in the Old Testament of anyone healing blindness — not even great prophets like Moses, Elijah, or Elisha. They performed many miracles (e.g., raising the dead, parting waters, multiplying food), but restoring sight to the blind was unique to Jesus. This makes Jesus' healing of the blind stand out as a new, never-before-seen miracle. So why is this so significant? It is significant because **healing the blind** was one of the specific signs the Hebrew Scriptures associated with the coming of the Messiah. In Isaiah 35:5–6+ we read “Then **the eyes of the blind shall be opened**, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy...” This passage describes the Messianic Age, a time when God will come to save His people (Ro 11:26+, Zech 12:10+, Zech 13:8-9+) and bring healing and restoration. In addition, Jesus Himself Points to This Sign of healing the blind as evidence that He was the long expected Messiah. In Matthew 11:4–5+, when John the Baptist questioned if Jesus was the Messiah, Jesus said “Go and tell John what you hear and see: **the blind receive their sight**, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear...” That list is almost a direct fulfillment of Isaiah 35+ and Isaiah 61+ both classic Messianic texts.

---

**Moved with compassion** (4697) [splanchnizomai](#) from [splanchnon](#) = bowel, viscera - see [splanchnon](#) note below) means to experience a deep visceral feeling for someone, to feel compassion for, to feel [sympathy](#), to take [pity](#) on someone. [Compassion](#) is the sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it. This verb expresses an outward flow of one's life in contrast to our natural tendency toward self centeredness. It is notable that 8/12 NT uses describe this deep seated emotion in Jesus. It follows that if we desire to imitate Jesus, we need to be men and women of deep compassion!

**Zodhiates** note on [splanchnon](#) - In Class. Gr. writers, it is chiefly spoken of the upper viscera of animals, as the heart, lungs, and liver which were eaten during or after the sacrifice... Figuratively, the inward parts indicating the breast or heart as the seat of emotions and passions. In the NT, of the gentler emotions as compassion, tender affection indicating the mind, soul, the inner man (2Co 6:12, Philemon 1:7, 20; 1Jn 3:17; Sept.: Pr 12:10 (cf. Ge 43:30; 1Kgs. 3:26) (borrow [The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament](#))

**SPLANCHNIZOMAI - 12 VERSES** Matt. 9:36; Matt. 14:14; Matt. 15:32; Matt. 18:27; Matt. 20:34; Mk. 1:41; Mk. 6:34; Mk. 8:2; Mk. 9:22; Lk. 7:13; Lk. 10:33; Lk. 15:20

**Regained** (308) [anablepo](#) from [ana](#) = up, again + [blepo](#) = to look, to perceive and so discern) means to look up or direct one's vision upward (Of Jesus "**looking up** toward heaven, He blessed the food," = Mt 14:19; Mk 6:41; Lk 9:16; Of Jesus "and **looking up** to heaven with a deep sigh" = Mk 7:34, Of man who regained his sight "**he looked up** and said, "I see men..." = Mk 8:24; "at that very time I **looked up** at him" = Acts 22:13) To regain one's sight or recover from blindness and thus see again ("the **BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT**" = Mt 11:5; "'Rabboni, I want to **regain** my **sight**!" = Mk 10:51; "so that he might regain his sight" = Acts 9:12, 17, 18). Of one born blind [anablepo](#) means to gain sight, become able to see, receive sight ("I went away and washed, and I received sight." = Jn 9:11, 15, 18).

Friberg - (1) strictly look up (Mt 14:19); (2) of recovery from blindness = see again, regain sight (Mt 11:5); (3) of one born blind = gain sight, become able to see, receive sight (Jn 9:11) (Borrow [Analytical Lexicon of the](#)

