

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

The workers in the vineyard

20¹—This story throws light on the kingdom of heaven. A landowner went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ²He agreed to pay the workers a salary of a silver coin for the day, and sent them to his vineyard.

³—He went out again at about nine in the morning, and seeing others idle in the square, ⁴he said to them: ‘You, too, go to my vineyard and I will pay you what is just.’ So they went.

—The owner went out at midday and again at three in the afternoon, ⁵and he did the same. ⁶Finally he went out at the last working hour—it was the eleventh—and he saw others standing there. So he said to them: ‘Why do you stay idle the whole day?’ ⁷They answered: ‘Because no one has hired us.’ The master said: ‘Go and work in my vineyard.’

⁸—When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager: ‘Call the workers and pay them their wage, beginning with the last and ending with the first.’ ⁹Those who had come to work at the eleventh hour turned up and were given a denarius each (a silver coin). ¹⁰When it was the turn of the first, they thought they would receive more. ¹¹But they, too, received a denarius each. So, on receiving it, they began to grumble against the landowner.

¹²—They said: ‘These last hardly worked an hour, yet you have treated them the same as us who have endured the day’s burden and heat.’ ¹³The owner said to one of them: ‘Friend, I have not been unjust to you. Did we not agree on a denarius a day?’ ¹⁴So take what is yours and go. I want to give to the last the same as I give to you. ¹⁵Don’t I have the right to do as I please with my money? Why are you envious when I am kind?’

¹⁶—So will it be: the last will be first, the first will be last.

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