



**Kingdom Preparation**

*The First and the Last*

Matthew 19:27-20:16

How to Prepare

Begin preparing by reading the full passage a few times. Then answer the questions for yourself. Then think about how your Small Group might answer them. Try re-wording the questions to fit you and your Small Group. Don't feel tied down to the discussion guide, just be sure to discuss the main point of the text in your conversations.

Resources-

<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/who-will-judge-the-world>

<https://www.gotquestions.org/first-last-last-first.html>

<https://www.gotquestions.org/is-God-fair.html>

Sermon Outline:

Matthew 19:27-20:16

1. Christians Cannot Waste Their Lives Serving the Lord. Matt. 19:27-29
2. Christians Can Rob Their Joy While Serving the Lord. Matt. 19:30-20:16
3. Christians Must Receive Their Service and Reward as a Gift from the Lord. Matt. 20:13-16

**Matthew 19:27-20:16**

**The Disciples' Reward**

27 Then Peter said to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?"

28 And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life.

30 But many who are first will be last; and the last, first.

**Laborers in the Vineyard**

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

2 When he had agreed with the

laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard.

3 And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market place;

4 and to those he said, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' And so they went.

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

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?'

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

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.'

9 When those hired about the eleventh hour came, each one received a denarius.

10 When those hired first came, they thought that they would receive more; but each of

## Scripture (New American Standard Bible 1995)

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them also received a denarius.

- 11 When they received it, they grumbled at the landowner,
- 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.'
- 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?
- 14 Take what is yours and go, but I wish to give to this last man the same as to you.
- 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?'
- 16 So the last shall be first, and the first last."

# Discussion Questions

**Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 19:27-20:16.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Here is a question or two to help introduce the topic and jump-start discussion.

**1. Is it ever hard to sacrifice for the Lord? Why is that, and what helps motivate you to be faithful in those times?**

## **UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION**

These questions should help your Small Group dig deeper into the text and then apply it to your lives today.

### **I. Christians Cannot Waste Their Lives Serving the Lord. Matt. 19:27-29**

**2. Consider the apostles; what sort of things did they have to give up to follow Jesus? What more would they have to give up to continue following Him? In what similar ways do Christians have to give things up today?**

**3. Have someone read Matt. 19:28, 1 Cor. 6:2-3, and Rev. 3:21. At minimum, these texts teach us that the Apostles and all genuine believers will share in some way Christ's judgment of the world. How should we respond to this reality?**

**4. Have someone read Mark 10:30. What did Jesus mean about receiving physical blessings in this life, and how is this realized in our lives today? How does Jesus' promise of reward and eternal life change how we think about the sacrifice and seemingly boring aspects of faithfulness?**

### **II. Christians Can Rob Their Joy While Serving the Lord. Matt. 19:30-20:16**

**5. In Jesus' parable, why did the first group of workers suddenly feel insulted rather than blessed? How did they rob their own joy, and what are some ways we do the same today?**

**6. What did the workers' ingratitude show about their motivations and thoughts regarding themselves? How does pride and self-centeredness actually rob us of joy in our service to Christ today?**

**7. Why is pride and comparison so dangerous? How can we combat pride and comparison when we see the successes and blessings of other believers?**

**III. Christians Must Receive Their Service and Reward as a Gift from the Lord. Matt. 20:13-16**

**8. What does it mean to be "first" in life and what does it mean to be "last"? In the parable, why didn't being hired "first" earn more pay and being hired "last" earn less pay? What does this parable teach us about earning grace?**

**9. What are some ways the landowner was showing grace to every group of workers he hired? How does recognizing our unworthiness to be saved, tasked, and rewarded by Christ actually help us enjoy the grace we have been given?**

**10. What are some ways God has been generous to you in your life? How can we show gratitude to God for the gospel and His specific callings on our lives?**

## Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

**Matt. 19:27** we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have? In response to Peter's self-seeking and perhaps self-pity, Jesus acknowledges the rewards that his disciples will receive. But his parable in 20:1–15 will be a subtle rebuke.

**Matt. 19:28** the new world (Gk. *palingenesia*, lit., "renewal" or "regeneration"). The term occurs in the NT only here and in Titus 3:5. In Titus it refers to present, individual regeneration, but here it looks forward to the future end-time renewal of the world (cf. 2 Pet. 3:10–13; Revelation 21–22). judging. In this new world, the twelve apostles (except for Judas, see Acts 1:12–26) will participate in the final establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth.

**Matt. 19:29** receive a hundredfold. Cf. 13:8. Those who have given up the god of their lives to follow Jesus will receive abundant reward (the other Synoptics add "in this time"; cf. Mark 10:29–30 and note; Luke 18:30) and will inherit eternal life. Eternal life (which is a gift) is an inheritance, not an earned reward.

**Matt. 19:30** But many who are first will be last, and the last first. See note on 20:16.

**Matt. 20:1** the kingdom of heaven is like. See note on 13:24. vineyard. Grapes were one of ancient Israel's most important crops, and thus Israel was often referred to as the "vine" or "vineyard" of God (e.g., Isa. 5:1–7; Jer. 2:21; Hos. 10:1; cf. Matt. 21:28–46). "Vineyard" represents the activity of the kingdom in this world (cf. Matt. 21:28–46).

**Matt. 20:2–15** denarius. A typical day's wage for a laborer. third hour. 9:00 A.M. The workday was typically divided into four three-hour increments, running from approximately 6:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. eleventh hour. 5:00 P.M., near the end of the workday. These workers are desperate enough to continue waiting for work. each of them received a denarius. Surprisingly, the last laborers to be hired are paid a complete denarius, the same as those who had worked all day. Friend, I am doing you no wrong. The landowner addresses the worker gently, explaining the fairness of his actions. do you begrudge. 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.

**Matt. 20:16** So the last will be first, and the first last. 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 note on 1 Cor. 3:14–15) but is affirming that God's

## Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

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.

**Matt. 18:1–20:34** The Community of the Messiah Revealed. This is the fourth of Jesus' five major discourses in Matthew's Gospel (see Introduction: Key Themes; Literary Features). As his earthly ministry draws to a close, Jesus has spent considerable time clarifying his identity and mission (chs. 14–17). He instructs his disciples on the nature of his covenant community, explaining the kingdom community's characteristics (18:1–35), its implications for the sanctity of marriage (19:1–12), and its value (19:13–20:34).

**Matt. 19:1–20:34** Valuing the Kingdom Community. The great Galilean ministry has now ended, and Jesus and his disciples begin the momentous journey to Jerusalem. Jesus explains the sanctity of marriage (19:3–12) and reveals the tragedy of the rich young man (19:16–22), in contrast to the gracious reward awaiting those who follow him (19:23–30). This leads to the parable of the vineyard workers (20:1–16). Jesus then gives his third prediction of his death (20:17–19) and sets an example for community sacrifice, suffering, and service (20:20–28). As he and his disciples begin their ascent to Jerusalem, Jesus mercifully heals two blind men in Jericho (20:29–34).