

S3.Parables: Workers getting Paid

Matthew 20:1-16

Multi-age One-Room Sunday School Lesson Plans

SUPPLIES: A large room to run around in; old newspapers (separate pages and then rip them in half); a large trash can or box; a whistle (optional)

TELL

- For the opening question, I'm going to ask you a question and then we'll go around the circle and say our names and then our answer to the question.
- I'll ask the question and then I'll answer first, ok?
- Here's the opening question: What's something that happened to you recently that you thought was unfair?
- (go around the circle)
- During this summer, we're going to be talking about parables. Parables are stories that can help us better understand an idea. For instance, I could tell you that you have to just try harder. Or, I could tell you the story of the "little engine that could" that shows us what trying harder might look like.
- The story we're going to hear now is about a number of different workers (or laborers) who do some work and get paid for it. Let's listen for how much they get paid...

MT 20:1-16 Workers getting paid

1 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. 2 After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. 3 When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; 4 and he said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." So they went. 5 When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. 6 And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, "Why are you standing here idle all day?" 7 They said to him, "Because no one has hired us." He said to them, "You also go into the vineyard." 8 When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, "Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first." 9 When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. 10 Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. 11 And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, 12 saying, "These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat." 13 But he replied to one of them, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? 14 Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. 15 Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?" 16 So the last

will be first, and the first will be last."

ASK

- At the very beginning of the story, what does the landowner agree to with the first set of laborers? (they agree to the usual daily wage)
- With the rest of laborers, the landowners agrees to pay them whatever is right, which turns out to be the same that he pays the first laborers. How do the first laborers feel about this? (they are upset)
- But did the landowner honor the deal he made with the first laborers? (yes)
- So what exactly are the first laborers upset about? (they're paying attention to what other people got, and that changes how they understand what they got)

TELL

- So the first laborers got a full day's wage. That's fair.
- Other laborers got a full day's wage without doing a full day of work - that's *more* than fair for those other workers, right?
- And the first laborers got upset because instead of paying attention to what they had received, they were paying attention to what other people received.
- So one of the things that's important for us to remember is that we need to keep our attention and focus on our relationship with God, not other people's relationship with God.

- This is important because if we're busy paying attention to other people and their relationship with God, then we start to miss what we ourselves are receiving from God and are unthankful and start to complain.
- We're going to do an activity now that helps us to think about this.

EXPLAIN VINEYARD WORKERS GAME

- First, we're going to take lots of newspaper and crumple it up.
- Now we're going to throw it around the room.
- Now that we've done that, we're going to clean up the room.
- When you do, you get a reward.
- I'm going count you off (1,2,3,4). Remember what your numbers are.
- Now what I'm going to do is yell out a 1,2,3, or 4. If the number I yell is your number, then you go and pick up one piece of paper at a time and throw it away in this trash can until I yell stop.
- Then I'll call another number and that group will do the same thing.

DO ACTIVITY

NOTE:

- Give each group a few seconds to collect trash, but vary the amount of time for the different numbered players to collect trash. Be obvious that some players are receiving more time to collect trash than other players - and tell them that they've collected a lot of trash - congratulate them in front of the other groups.
- When all the trash has been picked up and thrown in the trash can, make a big deal that some of them collected a lot of trash and really deserve a reward.
- Have each of the numbered groups go 3 or 4 times.

TELL

- OK, I'm going to then start giving out the rewards. I'm going to start with the group that got the least amount of time and therefore couldn't pick up very much stuff. You did a good job, though, and so I'm giving you two starbursts!
- Now, if they earned two pieces, how much should I give to the players that collected more trash? Two, three, four? (let 'em guess/argue)
- Nope, I'm giving two pieces to everyone.

ASK

- How is our game like the parable of the workers in the vineyard? (some of the players worked longer than the others)
- Was our game fair or unfair? (why or why not)
- What do you think this game will help you remember about the parable of the workers in the vineyard? (to remember to pay attention to what we're getting, not to pay attention to what others are getting)

CLOSING PRAYER