

*“The Unexpected Way of God”*

Text: Matthew 20:1-16

What’s important in the lives of people? There are those who as we say, “Spin their wheels” on the important matters of life and forget about God until a convenient time, or maybe not at all.

It would be different if they could see the with the eyes of God, yet people still wasted their time on things that don’t matter, it would be sad to see, so notes the pastor and writer Richard Baxter. We would think that to be a sad state of affairs if God had never told them what they were sent into the world to do, or what was before them in eternity; there would have been some excuse. But it is in his inspired word, and they profess to believe it.

Our text contains such a story in the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard. The owner hires at laborers various times during the day. They are all promised the same wage. The final group has wasted away the whole day, but is put to work and promised the same wage. According to human standards this seems unfair. People believe that because of their efforts and devotion they should have something extra or that they deserve more. Jesus speaks the words of the owner the seals the deal: “Am I not allowed to what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?”

God is indeed generous and he gives freely by his grace in Jesus Christ. It is not about what we have done, but about what God freely gives to us because it is-

**THE UNEXPECTED WAY OF GOD**

**I. He has come into our world**

**II. He blesses us beyond our understanding**

## I.

**A.** In order to have a better understanding of our text, it would be good to go into the preceding chapter. A young man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” Jesus referred him to God and told him to keep the commandments. After Jesus listed them, the man told him they he had kept them and wanted to know if there was anything else. Jesus told him to sell what he had, give it to the poor and to follow him.

The man couldn’t do it. Jesus told his disciples that It was hard for the rich to enter heaven. When the disciples wondered about who could be saved he said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” Peter then asked about the disciples. They had done exactly what the man refused to do and Jesus promised blessings in this life and finally the blessing of heaven.

This parable really speaks to the fact that God has come into our world and is active in our lives. This is what the kingdom of heaven is all about. God’s plans are quite different from our as our Old Testament lesson pointed out. God has come into our lives in Jesus Christ. In doing so, he has met all of his demands of the law and perfectly fulfilled them for us and we receive the benefits of what Christ has done even though we don’t deserve it.

**B.** The parable has several types of workers. The first group began at the start of the day. They had put much effort in and had endured the heat of the day. There were others who had not been hired at first for any number of reasons, but now they were. Both of these groups of workers received a day’s wage that was fair. The last straw comes with those hired at the eleventh hour. They had hardly built up a sweat! Still these workers were paid the same.

This becomes the difficult part of the parable for most people. A Sunday school teacher told her pastor, “I just hate this story as a Sunday School lesson!” he replied to her, “Yes, but you will love it in heaven!” It is a lesson that is difficult for us to understand this side of eternity. At the same time, we are privileged to serve our Lord. It is not about what we have accomplished, but what he accomplishes through us. That is really the wonder of it all. We celebrated three service anniversaries last weekend, and I believe all three of us would whole-heartedly endorse that statement.

Romans 12, Ephesians 4, I Peter 4, and I Corinthians 12 tell us of the gifts that God gives to his church through his people. Sometimes we have trouble with believing that the person, who becomes a believer at the end of life, receives the same benefit of eternal life as those who have been faithful all their lives. Again it is not about human effort, reward of service, or deserving rewards, but about the grace of God!

## II.

**A.** The way of God is beyond our understanding, because he gives it freely. We don’t always understand his working in our world. Yet his word remains as a faithful witness to that. Isaiah writes, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:9)

As our society of today points out, people are into what they deserve. That’s really dangerous territory you know! The Bible is clear on what we deserve. We are far from what God desires by our vary nature. This attitude makes some sense, because the law is written on our hearts. When it comes down to us we think “law” and not “gospel”

After a preacher had gone to heaven, he noticed that a New York cab driver had been given a higher place than he had. He complained to St. Peter, “I devoted my entire

life to my congregation.” Peter responded that the many people had slept during his sermons, but that the cab driver transported people that they not only stayed awake, but they prayed! Fortunately for us, heaven is not about our results of working in Christ’s kingdom but about his generosity.

**B.** After all the promise was the key in the parable. When you examine it, the same offer when out to all three groups of people in the story. The one who would stand to lose would be the owner. He stated that his generosity was what had caused their concern. If he chose to pay the last the same as the first, that was his choice, he would have to stand the loss.

Our life as God’s children is all about his promises. Heaven is ours not because of our keeping of the commandments, but on Christ’s keeping of them and our belief in him as our Savior. It is not about all we have done in the life of this congregation, or any congregation we have belonged to during our life. It is not about having a relationship with Christ all of our life or just for a short time.

It is about the generosity of our Savior and his promises to us. Jesus says, “Truly, truly I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.” (John 6:47) That’s God’s promise to you and it is one he keeps. Amen.