

Church Year Story 11

*Catechism and Memory Verse
from the Congregation at Prayer for the Week*

BIBLE STORY: THE PARABLE OF THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD

Matthew 20:1-16

Central Thoughts

- No one can save himself from the problem of sin.
- Salvation is by grace alone and not by works.
- Jesus alone died for our sin to give us this gift.
- The kingdom of heaven is the gift of salvation in Jesus.
- We are not only saved by grace alone and not by works, but we also live the Christian life by the strength of God's grace alone. We are His workmanship.
- We rejoice in the gift of salvation in Jesus whenever a sinner comes to faith in Christ.

Discussion Questions

What is the kingdom of heaven?

It is the gift of salvation in Jesus.

Who is the landowner?

The Lord

Who are the laborers?

Believers, those called to be disciples of Jesus

What is a denarius?

A day's wage

What did all the laborers receive from the landowner, regardless of how long they worked in the vineyard?

They all received the same wage as if they had worked the whole day.

Does paying everyone the same wage seem fair?

No

What does the wage of a denarius represent?

Salvation

What does "being hired" actually refer to?

Being called to faith in Jesus

What does "working in the vineyard" actually refer to?

The Christian life of faith in Christ

Why did the laborers who were hired first complain?

They didn't think it was fair.

What does this parable warn us about as believers in Jesus?

No matter when we were called to faith in Jesus, no matter how long we have lived as a Christian, our faith, salvation, and even living the Christian life, from beginning to end, is entirely a gift of God's grace.

Can salvation from sin, death, and the power of the devil be earned or worked for?

No

Can we live faithfully as Christians by any strength of our own?

No, it is entirely a gift of God's grace.

How is the gift of salvation received?

It can only be received as a gift of God's grace.

Why is it impossible for us to earn our salvation?

Because we are all sinners, separated from God and unable to save ourselves

What has God done for us in love?

He gave us His Son to suffer and die for our sins.

What does His grace continue to do for us as Christians?

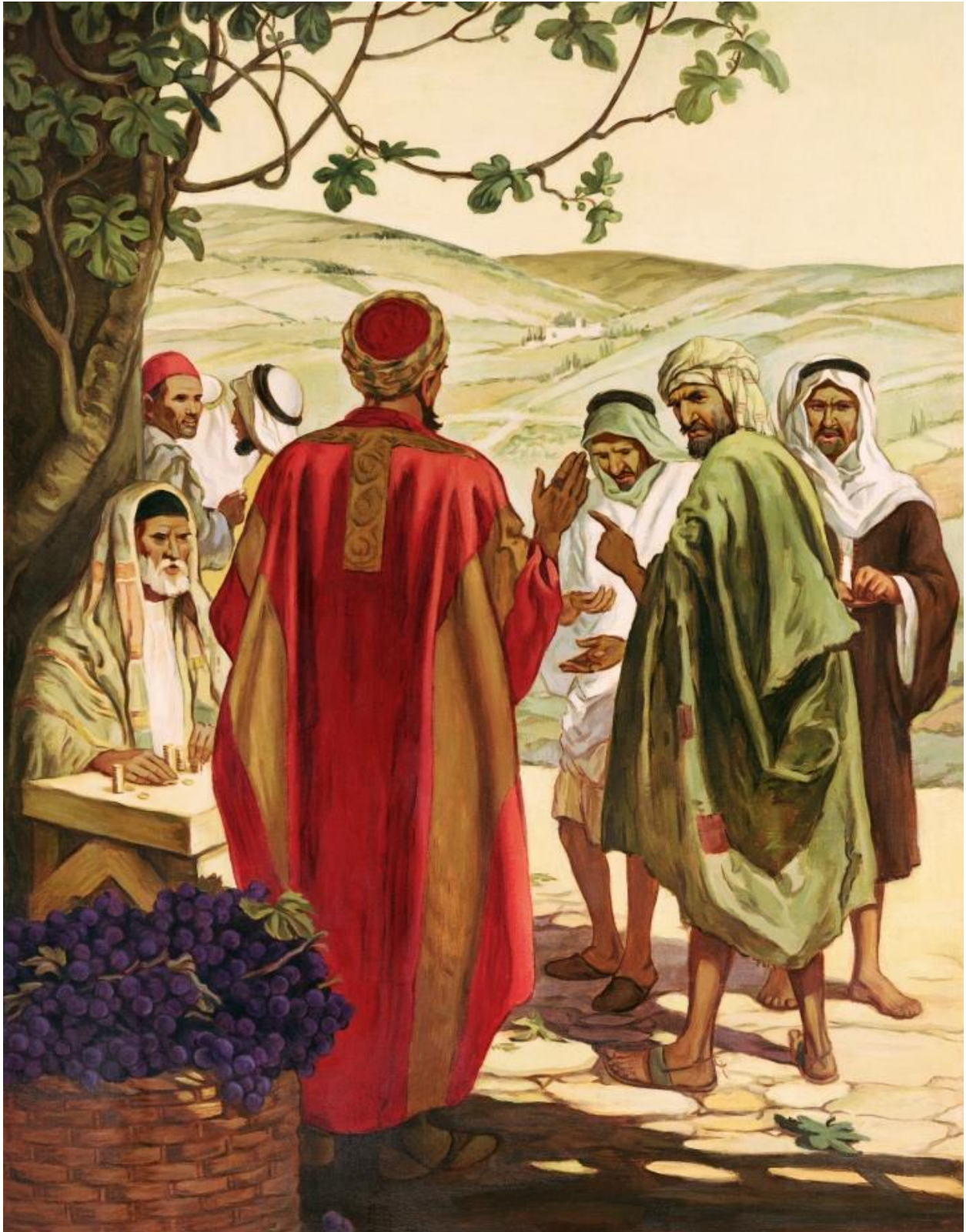
God's grace—His undeserved love, mercy, and forgiveness—is that by which we are saved and that by which we live faithfully as Christians no matter when we are called to faith in Jesus and no matter how long we live.

Meditation on the Bible Story

The parable of the laborers in the vineyard runs contrary to human reason, because the sinful flesh in each one of us believes it can save itself by its own works and achievements. This is a lie, but it is a part of our flesh and it is seen in the self-centeredness of the workers who believed that they were being treated unfairly. To human reason salvation seems unfair because it is NOT based on works. But the problem of sin killed us. It brought death into the world and separated us from God. Only the Lord in His love could fix the problem that we caused. If it were possible for us to have saved ourselves there would have been no reason for Jesus to die upon the cross. But the only one who could successfully work for our salvation is the Lord Himself. He alone could rescue us from sin and death. He died for us because He loves us and by His death alone we have the kingdom of heaven: forgiveness of sins, eternal life, AND the strength to live each day as Christians. This gift applies to the thief on the cross who received salvation moments before his death as well as to the ninety-year-old Christian who was baptized as an infant. Salvation, from beginning to end, is a gift of God's grace. God's grace is a radical love that is completely different from the ways of the world. The Bible says, "God made us alive who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Ephesians 2:8-10a). The grace of God is proclaimed by the landowner in the words of the parable: "Friend, I am doing you no wrong..." It is as if Jesus were saying, "Friend, I am forgiving you your sins! I am dying for you upon the cross! It is my desire to do this for all sinners! I wish to give the gift of salvation to the last man the same as I gave to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Since I alone earned forgiveness, life, and salvation for the whole world in my death upon the cross, do I not have the authority to give it to whomever I choose?" Of course, the answer is "YES!" and it is this gift of God's grace which is the source of our comfort and strength.

Prayer on the Bible Story

Heavenly Father, we give thanks to You for your gift of grace and salvation to us in Jesus. Forgive us for boasting in our works, teach us to live each day by faith in Jesus alone, and help us to rejoice in the gift of salvation whenever any sinner receives the kingdom of heaven; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard
Matthew 20:1-16