

SHARE THE BIBLE LESSON

WEEK 17

Jesus teaches the parable of the equal wages

Matthew 19:27–20:16



DAY 1

God sent Samuel to anoint the next king • Matthew 19:27–28

READ

Matthew 19:27–20:16

EXPLAIN

The truth of Matthew 19:27–28

Is it worth it to be a Christian? It is ok to ask that question. Jesus Himself urged the disciples to accept the cost because His glory in the kingdom would be worth it (16:25–27). Unlike the rich young ruler, the disciples had listened to Jesus and left everything to follow Him (19:21–22). Now they were wondering if all the trouble was worth it. So Jesus encouraged the disciples that the future prize would be far greater than what they had given up. They would enter the “**new world**,” literally, *the “regeneration,” the universe recreated to be new, perfect, and glorious*. All believers will sit with Christ on His throne in the new world (Rev 3:21), but the disciples will sit on twelve thrones ruling over the twelve tribes of Israel. Not only would the disciples be given a special place of honor and responsibility in the kingdom, but they would be with Jesus forever, and that is the greatest treasure of salvation.

ASK

1. What did the disciples do that the rich young man was unwilling to do?
The disciples left everything to follow Jesus.
2. What did Peter ask Jesus?
What do we get for leaving everything to follow you.
3. Why did Peter ask about the reward?
He heard Jesus promise the rich man a reward, and Peter wondered if he and the other disciples would get an extra special reward for following Jesus from the beginning.
4. What will the disciples do in the new world?
They will reign with Jesus over the nation of Israel.

DISCUSS

1. What have you given up to follow Jesus? What are some things other believers around the world have given up to follow Jesus?
2. Does the reward—being with Jesus forever—seem worth it to you?

DAY 2

Jesus encourages: the present prize is worth the cost •
Matthew 19:29

READ

Matthew 19:27–20:16

EXPLAIN

The truth of Matthew 19:29

The reward is so massive it makes the greatest sacrifice look like no sacrifice at all. That is what is meant by “a hundredfold.” This does not mean you will get exactly 100 times what you gave up. It means that the prize will go far beyond what anyone deserves. This prize begins even now (Mark 10:30). As believers join the family of God, they gain countless brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, and children, united by a common devotion to Christ. As they voluntarily share their possessions, they gain houses and lands to use for the goal they all have in common—“for my name’s sake.” In fact, as they die to themselves and are united with Christ (Gal 2:20), they begin eternal life even now (John 17:3). But even though the reward begins now, all this is still just a tiny part of the prize that just keeps getting better: eternal life. *Eternal life* is *being with Jesus forever*. Jesus is saying to Peter and the others, “Is it worth it? Of course it’s worth it! The prize of being with Me forever is far better than you can ever imagine.”

ASK

1. Will the reward be worth everything the disciples gave up?
Yes. It will be worth far, far more.
2. What is meant by “a hundredfold”?
It means that the prize will go far beyond what anyone deserves.
3. When does the reward begin?
Now! In this life.
4. What is the prize believers get?
Eternal life—living forever with Jesus.

DISCUSS

1. Our sin deserves death (Rom 6:23), but God gives believers a reward instead! How is this possible (3:24–26)?
2. Have you ever paid your own money to buy candy or a toy? Was the cost worth it? What are some costs of being a Christian? Is it worth it?

DAY 3

Jesus corrects: the disciples were not owed a greater reward •
Matthew 19:30

READ

Matthew 19:27–20:16

EXPLAIN

The truth of Matthew 19:30

There is a problem with Peter’s question. To the disciples, it seemed that the trouble was mostly past and the kingdom was about to come. So they wondered: if that rich man could have gotten heavenly treasure for following Jesus now, right at the end, won’t we get even better treasure for following Him through thick and thin these last three years? They

were calculating their reward as if God owed them something. But a disciple who serves Christ while calculating what God supposedly owes him is looking at the whole thing the wrong way. He should not want what is fair (Rom 6:23a). God is fair, for He keeps His promises. But God is generous on top of being fair—He is more than fair. He rewards all who follow Jesus, not according to what we deserve, but according to the riches of His grace (Eph 1:7). So there will be no difference between first and last, for the reward is not really a reward at all. It is *grace*. It is a *gift*. It is *unearned*.

DAY 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

ASK 

1. What does it mean for the first to be last and the last to be first?
It means that all finish the same. There is no difference between one who comes to Jesus sooner and serves longer and one who comes later and serves shorter.
2. What was wrong with Peter's question?
He and the other disciples were calculating their reward as if God owed them something.
3. Does God reward believers according to what they deserve?
No. God rewards believers according to the riches of His grace (Eph 1:7).

DISCUSS 

1. Does anyone deserve to be rewarded by God (Isa 64:6)?
2. How is Jesus more than fair?

DAY 4

Jesus corrects: the prize is not something earned • Matthew 20:1–16

READ 

Matthew 19:27–20:16

EXPLAIN **The truth of Matthew 20:1–16**

Jesus used a simple story to explain what reward in the kingdom is like. It is like a landowner hiring workers for his vineyard. There was a short period of time to harvest the grapes before the winter rains, so landowners would hire day-laborers. But harvesting vineyards was hard work. The weather was hot and the work day was long, from 6 AM to 6 PM. Even so, the landowner found workers ready. They agreed to work all day for a denarius. The owner hired more workers at 9 AM, at noon, at 3 PM, and finally at 5 PM. These workers were in no position to discuss their wages, since they had no other work. So imagine their surprise when they received a whole denarius! When the first workers saw this, they began calculating how much they would receive. How disappointed they were when they also received exactly one denarius! Yet in addition to being fair, the owner's wages were also equal and generous. He chose to pay not just what the workers had earned, but more according to His own generosity.

ASK 

1. What is the parable of the vineyard owner about?
It is about the kingdom of heaven. It is about how God (the vineyard owner) rewards His workers (followers of Jesus) in the new world.
2. Why were the workers in the first group upset?
They worked more than the others, but they got paid the same.
3. Did they have a right to be upset?
No. They got what the owner promised. Also, the owner came and found them when they had nothing.
4. So how will God reward everyone who follows Jesus?
He will reward them fairly (as promised), equally, and generously—eternal life is more valuable than anyone deserves.

DISCUSS 

1. Was the landowner unfair? Why not? If you were one the laborers who worked all day, would you have been upset?
2. What does this parable teach us about God's reward? Are you happy or jealous that everyone gets the same reward?

DAY 5

The penitent thief • Luke 23:39–43

READ

Luke 23:39–43

EXPLAIN

The truth of Luke 23:39–43

Every Christian enjoys the full blessings of salvation. This includes even the penitent thief who spent his final hours alive on earth mocking the Messiah crucified alongside him (Matt 27:44; Mark 15:32). But something happened as he mocked. As the hours passed, this hardened criminal had a change of heart. He stopped mocking Christ and began rebuking the other criminal. He knew he was a sinner. He knew he deserved the punishment he was suffering. But he also knew that this earthly punishment was only the beginning. Soon he would pass from this life to the next. There he would endure God's anger over his sins for all eternity. Was it too late? Was he out of time? He cried out to Jesus in faith, throwing himself at the mercy of Jesus. He said, "Remember me," for he believed that nothing but divine grace could save him. Jesus' response is amazing. The thief would join Jesus that very day in Paradise! This was far beyond what the thief had asked, and much more than he deserved. But so is every act of salvation.

ASK

1. What happened to the thief as the hours wore on?
He had a change of heart. He realized he was a sinner and called out to Jesus for salvation.
2. What did he ask Jesus to do?
"Remember me."
3. What did Jesus tell the thief?
"Today you will be with me in Paradise."
4. Will the penitent thief enjoy the full blessings of salvation?
Yes. Every Christian will equally possess eternal life.

DISCUSS

1. In the parable of equal wages (Matt 19:27–20:16), which workers are like the penitent thief?
2. Is it ever too late to call out to God for salvation?

NEXT WEEK

Jesus enters Jerusalem

Luke 19:28–44

