



SERMON GROUP LINK

BRADY HERBERT | "PARABLE OF THE GENEROUS EMPLOYER"

Harris Creek Baptist Church

July 20, 2014

LIFE GROUP LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

In preparation for group discussion, take a few minutes to read through the instructions to the right.

PASSAGES TO STUDY

SERMON TEXT:

Matthew 20:1-16

BEFORE LIFE GROUP

1. Spend time in prayer and studying the passage.
2. Listen to the sermon and take notes. Write down questions you had while listening to the sermon.
3. Read through all of the material.
4. Write down two or three ways to apply the passage to your daily life.

DURING LIFE GROUP

1. Summarize the sermon in your own words. Ask other group members to do the same.
2. Ask someone to read the text for the group.
3. Lead your group through the discussion questions, asking the ones that are relevant to your group. Supplement some of the discussion with your own thoughts and follow-up questions.
4. Share how you might be able to apply the sermon to your everyday life.
5. Close with a time of prayer, asking God to increase the depth of our relationship with Him and our obedience to what we learned.

SERMON RECAP

In Matthew 20:1-16, Jesus tells a parable describing what the Kingdom of God is like. Often times, the "Kingdom of God," or the "Kingdom of Heaven," comes across as a lofty and abstract idea to modern-day readers. This is because we rarely use the word "kingdom" any longer in everyday language. Add on top of that the idea of talking about a heavenly kingdom, it can make this phrase seem less real than any earthly kingdom we think of. Despite our misconceptions of it, the Kingdom of God is, in fact, a real kingdom where there is real citizenship; and, as we see in Matthew 20, God's Kingdom openly challenges our present world in ways that tend to make us uncomfortable. "The Parable of the Generous Employer" is a story describing how the economy of grace works. The economy of grace confronts the ideals we carry around of what is fair, what is right, and what we think we deserve based on our efforts. In his book *What's So Amazing About Grace?*, Philip Yancey says, "Grace cannot be reduced to generally accepted accounting principles. In the bottom-line realm of ungrace, some workers deserve more than others; in the realm of grace the word *deserve* does not even apply." That is one reason why this parable in Matthew 20 forces us to decide whether we want to be citizens in God's Kingdom, or if we actually prefer to keep our citizenship in the kingdoms of this world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think of when you hear the phrase "Kingdom of God" or "Kingdom of Heaven"? Do you think most people consider the Kingdom of God to be a real kingdom with real citizenship? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think Jesus chooses to describe the Kingdom of God in parables rather than giving us a straightforward, clear definition of the Kingdom?
3. If Jesus were running for a political office based on the "economy of grace" presented in this parable, do you think you would vote for him? Why or why not?
4. Most often, the parable in Matthew 20:1-16 causes frustration for us over what is "right" and "fair." Why do you think this story challenges our human nature so deeply? Jesus declares that the actions of the landowner are fair in verse 13. What makes the landowner's actions fair even though the workers obviously did not work equally hard?
5. When you read this story, do you tend to read yourself into the group of workers who were chosen first or some other group? What could that indicate about you?
6. In *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis says, "Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind...It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. Once the element of competition has gone, pride has gone." Based on this description of pride, where does pride show up in the story?
7. The context surrounding this parable clarifies, in many ways, what Jesus is actually saying and who he is primarily addressing (see Matt. 19:22-30 and Matt. 20:20-28). Why is it significant that Jesus is addressing questions of competition and infighting over *who* deserves *what* amongst his inner circle of disciples (Peter, James, and John)?
8. What did you take away from this weekend's message? How do you feel led to respond?