

The Life and Ministry of Christ, Part 40

As the Lord approached the last week of His life and ministry before His crucifixion, He journeyed toward Jerusalem. While traveling, He prepared His disciples for the events that would end with His sufferings, crucifixion and death. Throughout this process, He encouraged them to persevere in their faith, confident that their efforts would not be in vain. After speaking to the rich young ruler, the Lord told them they would be rewarded for their sacrifice both in this world and in the age to come, (Luke 18:29-30).

Matthew 19:29-30 NKJV And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

Christ continued speaking about rewards for true and faithful service with a parable about laborers in the vineyard, (Matthew 20:1-16).

Jesus said at various times of the day a landowner hired laborers to work in his vineyard. The landowner represents God and the various times of the day indicate the various periods of time during the ages. Abraham's descendants were the first to receive the promise and commission by God. At the end of the "day" the Gentiles were brought into the grace of God through Christ.

There are two key phrases in this parable.

First, "*whatever is right I will give you.*" Second, "*is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things.*" These phrases refer to the sovereignty of God.

Matthew 20:1-2 NKJV For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

Matthew 20:3-4 NKJV And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went.

Matthew 20:5-6 NKJV Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?'

Matthew 20:7 NKJV They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will

receive.’

This is a demonstration of the grace and mercy that God gives to those He calls. We should trust God’s grace and mercy that is freely given to us because He always does the right thing. All of the laborers in God’s vineyard share the same kingdom, blessing and reward. Look at the term “*whatever is right I will give you,*” (Matthew 20:4, 7).

Matthew 20:8-9 NKJV “So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, ‘Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.’ And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius.

Matthew 20:10-12 NKJV But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, saying, ‘These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.’

Matthew 20:13-14 NKJV But he answered one of them and said, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you.

Matthew 20:15-16 NKJV Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?’ So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.”

The question that Jesus raised asks if God can do as He pleases. It is God’s nature to always do what is right, just, and fair. This should also be applied to every good and perfect gift that God gives. God is able to do whatever is right in His eyes. If He rewards others equally that have served Him for less time and have not suffered as much, He is still just and fair, (Matthew 20:13-15). God has the right to offer the same reward to everyone who works in His vineyard. In the parable, the farmer paid the labors according to need rather than greed. No one received less than he deserved. Our final reward in heaven will be just and according to God’s loving-kindness and tender mercy.

After this parable, Jesus took the twelve disciples aside and reminded them about His impending sufferings and death, Matthew 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34

Mark gives more detail about this event. This is the third time Jesus spoke with them about His death and resurrection. Notice the clarity of detail that He shares with them about the upcoming events.

Mark 8:31 NKJV And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

Mark 9:31 NKJV For He taught His disciples and said to them, “The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.”

Mark 10:32 NKJV Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him:

The disciples were amazed and afraid because of the way that Jesus was going before them. He was not deterred by the knowledge that His time with them and on earth was limited and that He was headed to Jerusalem to suffer and die. Watch Him lead the way before them with purpose and determination to accomplish the Father’s will. They were amazed at His resolve and urgency to go into the things that were before Him.

Mark 10:33–34 NKJV “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.”

Jesus was completely aware of the impending danger He faced by going to Jerusalem. His actions and demeanor demonstrate complete surrender to the Father’s will and the purpose for His coming into this world. Isaiah foretold what Jesus was telling the twelve.

Isaiah 50:6–7 NKJV I gave My back to those who struck Me, And My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting. “For the Lord GOD will help Me; Therefore I will not be disgraced; Therefore I have set My face like a flint, And I know that I will not be ashamed.

After Jesus spoke these words to them, James and John came to the Lord with an ambition that demonstrated the popular belief that the Messiah came to establish an earthly kingdom at that time. Watch both accounts of this story.

Matthew 20:20–21 NKJV Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, “What do you wish?” She said to Him, “Grant that these two sons of

mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.”

Mark 10:35–37 NKJV Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.” And He said to them, “What do you want Me to do for you?” They said to Him, “Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.”

James and John were thinking of personal honor, gain and position in the kingdom. Their understanding of what was about to happen was limited to the immediate and earthly events. Most of His followers thought Jesus was going to Jerusalem to rule on the throne of David. *Many people are short sighted and only see what brings temporary gain and blessings.*

If Jesus’ kingdom was only earthly and political, the eternal realities of Christ’s coming could not be realized. The path to the glories of the kingdom are provided through Christ’s suffering and the cross.

Mark 10:38 NKJV But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?”

They thought they were asking for a place of honor at the LORD’s right and left hand. Jesus said they would indeed suffer because of their loyalty to Him. The “baptism” that Jesus referred to was His suffering and death.

Luke 12:50 NKJV But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!

Jesus was under extreme constraint and passion to be immersed into the baptism of God’s judgment that was on the cross. He was distressed, constrained, and under pressure to accomplish the victory that was awaiting. The LORD knew that He must endure the cross and shame in order to achieve the victory that was before Him.

Mark 10:39–40 NKJV They said to Him, “We are able.” So Jesus said to them, “You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared.”

Notice that Jesus was surrendered and subject to the authority and direction of the Father. The phrase *“is not mine to give,”* defers the authority to His heavenly Father. The ultimate authority of all things lies within the Father’s will and power. Throughout His life and ministry,

Jesus submitted to the Father's authority and will. He constantly said and did what His Father desired Him to do and say, and refused to do anything that was contrary to the Father's will. After Jesus spoke to James and John about this, the remaining ten disciples were displeased with them.

Mark 10:42 NKJV But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them."

Mark 10:43–44 NKJV "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all."

Jesus wanted them to have a servant attitude. The guiding principle of the servant attitude is love for one another.

Mark 10:45 NKJV "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Jesus modeled the servant attitude by the way He ministered to others and gave freely of Himself.

The healing of the blind man was the last healing miracle Jesus performed before the Passion week – Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43.

Matthew 20:29-30 NKJV Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!"

Matthew 20:31-32 NKJV Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!" So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

Matthew 20:33-34 NKJV They said to Him, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened." So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.

The three gospels give somewhat different accounts of this event. Matthew says there were two blind men. Mark said blind Bartimaeus was sitting by the road begging. Luke said a blind man was sitting by the road begging. In all three accounts, the blind said, "*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!*" In all three records, the multitude rebuked the blind for crying out, but they cried out all the more. Jesus responded with, "*What do you want Me to do for you?*" The blind said, "*Lord,*

Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.” Matthew says, He touched their eyes and they received sight. Mark and Luke said, “Receive your sight, your faith has made you well.”

Mark 10:46 NKJV Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging.

Mark 10:47-48 NKJV And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Mark 10:49 NKJV So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, “Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you.”

Mark 10:50-51 NKJV And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus. So Jesus answered and said to him, “What do you want Me to do for you?” The blind man said to Him, “Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.”

Take note of the faith that the blind man had. He was determined that the one opportunity to be healed would not pass him by. “Son of David, have mercy on me!” “Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.” Rabboni was a respectful address meaning, “my Lord” or “my master.”

Mark 10:52 NKJV Then Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.

After this event, Jesus continued on His way to Jerusalem.

This was the last time Jesus passed through Jericho and was the last opportunity for Bartimaeus to receive mercy and healing from Jesus’ hands.

Why did the landowner pay all the laborers the same wage? What does the “wage” refer to?

How can we face suffering with hope like Jesus?

What part did persistence play in Bartimaeus being healed?