

Unfair Treatment – 3 Lessons to Learn – The Organic Metaphysical Vineyard

A Metaphysical Article by Revs, Bil & Cher Holton

Have you ever noticed that so many stories from the Bible don't make sense, when you take them literally? That's why a deeper look is so important. For example, one controversial parable of Jesus is where a landowner's treatment of his laborers appears to be unfair and arbitrary. It comes from Matthew 20:1-16. Metaphysically, this whole vineyard story describes how Divine Order works! It is a three step process: Mind, Idea, and Expression. When we 'practice the Presence,' we acknowledge our oneness with our Christ Self at every level of our being.

There are a few curiosities I want to point out before I go from the literal to the metaphysical. The literal perspective leaves us a little inorganic when we explain the landowner's treatment of the laborers and his attitude toward them.

Verse 2: the usual daily wage - The denarius was the usual wage. Today's equivalent is \$25 cents.

v. 3: He went out about 9 o'clock. Generally work began at 6am, so 9am would have been the third hour. He went out again at noon and at three and then at five; 12 noon is the sixth hour, 3 is the ninth hour, and five is the eleventh hour (the commonly held belief is that the 11th hour means the last minute, with time running out, etc.)

v. 7: He hires the 'eleventh hour group' and mentions nothing about their wages. He simply tells them to "go and work in my vineyard."

v. 8: All of the laborers were paid at the end of the day. This would have been in accordance with Leviticus 19:13b, 'Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight.' The landowner paid the last workers first and then paid those who worked first. So those who worked all day witnessed how much those were paid who worked less hours than they did.

v. 10-11: Those who were hired first thought they would receive more, but they received the same wage as those who were hired at the end of the day. If this story is taken

literally, you can see the problem here. The laborers who worked all day didn't get any more pay than those who only worked one hour (from 5 to 6 p.m.). Doesn't seem fair does it? Some scholars speculate that those hired later were more experienced and deserved to be paid the same. Others reason that those hired later performed different work of a higher nature which justified their pay. Any way you look at it the literal interpretation is fraught with inequities.

v. 15: *When those who worked all day objected to the inequity in treatment the landowner simply replied, 'Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?'...The landowner explains that he has paid them according to his fairness and justice (v.17) and the last group according to his goodness and generosity (v.15). And then in verse 16 says, as a way of explanation, " So the last will be first, and the first will be last.*

What's interesting about this is if we go back to Matthew 19:30 (which is the end of the conversation Jesus has with His disciples regarding the rich young man), Jesus says, ". . . but many who are first will be last, and the last will be first." In Matthew 20:16, He uses the same tact but reverses the clauses, 'So the last will be first, and the first will be last.'

If we take this passage literally, it appears that Jesus is being a bit cavalier as He tells the story, and that He endorses the landowner's inequitable treatment of the laborers. But let's take a look at a more spiritual meaning of the story!

It should come as no surprise that, metaphysically, this entire scenario takes place in our consciousness. Without being too laborious -- excuse the pun -- let's discover what this story means at a higher level of interpretation.

- 20:1 - *For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.* The original wording says the, "kingdom of heaven is like this." It does not compare the kingdom to an anthropomorphic being. The metaphysical interpretation of the main characters and concepts follows:
- The kingdom of God is the Absoluteness, Is-ness, and Beingness of God. The 'kingdom of heaven' on the other hand, refers to our conscious awareness of our innate divinity.
- The vineyard represents the domain of well-organized truth principles of which we are invited to partake so we can enjoy the fruits of adding to our spiritual knowledge.
- The laborers stand for our thoughts, intentions, and beliefs.

- The landowner is our Christ Consciousness.
- The 'usual daily wage' represents the blessings we receive when we follow divine guidance. The payment is the same for everyone. It comes in the form of divine ideas, inner peace, radiant health, confidence, and so on.

Spirit encourages us to persevere instead of becoming lukewarm in our Truth walk, which is represented by those laborers who were idle at noon. If we're patient and trusting, even when outer appearances tell us otherwise, we will receive the "usual wage" (the manifested good we desire). The 11th hour signifies the point at which we let God and let go.

The Lessons to be Learned:

Since this story describes how Divine Order works, here is the significance of the 'last is first, first is last' misunderstanding:

1. **Be Patient!** Jesus instructs us to be patient and non-judgmental as we seek to manifest our good. Continue to do what is yours to do, regardless of outer appearance.
2. **Practice the Presence!** Truth principle promises that if we 'practice the Presence,' Divine Ideas will come. Know that wherever we are, God is, and all is well.
3. **Persevere!** Jesus is simply telling us to follow the invitation of our Christ Consciousness to harvest our divine ideas in accordance with Divine Order no matter when our ideas come (morning, noon, or night), and then rest in the assurance that we have the wherewithal to manifest whatever we desire. In the ideation process, it is a well-known fact that the useable ideas usually come last. So the first ideas we have become the catalysts which bring us the "Aha's" we need to manifest our good.