

Word One Bible Study

Laborers in the Vineyard

Text: Matthew 20:1-16 the Seventeenth Sunday After Pentecost, Lectionary Series A

Objective

Participants will:

1. Understand that the saving Gospel message of Jesus Christ is available to all people.
2. Understand the love of Jesus is just as strong for those who follow later in life as His love for those who have followed Him since they were young.
3. Appreciate with gratitude the grace of Jesus for all people and desire to share the love of Jesus with others.

Materials Needed

Bible
Paper
Pencil
Pen

Group Guidelines

Divide class into groups of four to six. Have each group select as leaders the person whose last name has the fewest vowels. The leader's purpose is to keep the group moving through the Bible study and to encourage the participation of all members.

Building Community

1. There are a variety of jobs that students might have. Discuss in your group what jobs you have had including jobs around the house as a part of your family. What did you enjoy and what did you struggle with?
2. How does the promise of reward impact the work that you do either at home or at any of the jobs you may have had?
3. Finally, share with one another a job that you would love to have in the future.

Looking at God's Word

1. Have a volunteer from the class read Matthew 20:1-16. Ask a couple of students to explain in their own words the tension that developed between some of the laborers hired the master of the vineyard.
2. Those hired early had no issue with what they were offered as compensation when they were hired. Why did they later struggle with what they received at the end of their day of labor?

It can be difficult to live as a Christian in our world. As the Holy Spirit helps us to live out

our faith, we may start to mistakenly feel like we have earned our forgiveness. Jesus reminds us that God's forgiveness and grace are for all, since we are all in need of saving.

3. Why does the way the master of the vineyard handle hiring, and compensation cause a certain amount of uncomfortableness even in modern readers?

Our sinful self wants to be rewarded according to what we perceive as fair or in accordance with how hard we worked. God's grace is so vast and forgiveness without any of our own merit can seem almost absurd and hard for us to understand.

4. What was Jesus' point in telling this parable? What way He trying to explain to us about the nature of His offer of salvation? And finally, how does that Impact the tensions noted in #3 Above.

Reinforcing What Has Been Learned

1. From an early age, we all tend to have a finely tuned sense of fairness. We want to make sure that we receive what is rightfully due to us. In the parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard, Jesus introduces a tension that exists when we consider the possibility of some great sinner being saved and being welcomed to heaven alongside the saintliest people of history. This may strike us as less than fair, yet least we get ahead of ourselves and start complaining about not getting what we deserve, let's make sure to pause and consider just what it is that we deserve.
2. Just like in the parable, Jesus offers salvation to people at all stages of their lives, just as the master of the vineyard offers a job to people at multiple times throughout the day. Those who have sinned in ways that we may see as unfit for God's Kingdom are granted the same mercy and forgiveness. Our heavenly reward is the same, whether we are welcomed into God's family through the waters of baptism as a child or just prior to our death.
3. Hand out the paper and pens/pencils. Have students brainstorm ways in which they can remain grateful for the blessings that God showers upon them as well as grateful that God shares these blessings even with the most unlikely and unlikable of people.

Closing

Have a volunteer from the class pray on behalf of the class. Instruct students to take their list of gratitude ideas home to pray throughout the week that God may make gratitude for His blessings a tangible part of their lives.