

The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard found in the Gospel according to Matthew is considered by many as another of those passages of Scripture difficult to understand.

However, most commentators agree the key to a correct explanation can only be found when interpreted in connection to events of the previous chapter.

Here a rich man approached Jesus and asked Him what good thing he must do to inherit eternal life. The Lord responded by quoting some of the Commandments in the Law, to which he claimed to have kept from his youth.

The man then asked what was still lacking, and the answer Jesus gave sent him away grieving. He told him to go sell everything he owned and give the money to the poor, and then he would have treasure in Heaven!

It is clear from the Lord's promise that followed, and other Bible passages elsewhere, that He did not expect all His followers to give everything away and live a life of poverty on Earth to make it into Heaven!

Jesus simply recognized it was this particular individual's attachment to money that was hindering him from following Christ and the unusual request was the only way of showing it to him!

The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard that immediately follows was an actual response to Peter's question, "*We have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?*"

One reputed commentator sees the whole parable as a warning against the bargaining spirit; those who follow Christ for the sake of the reward, and not for God Himself!

The problem with such a hireling spirit as this is that it will always resent kindness shown to another as a wrong done against himself, as revealed in this parable. Christ condemns it, as He condemned it in the elder brother in the story of the Prodigal Son!

To sum up, "*the last will be first, and the first last,*" not because of the hours they had put in, but because of the spirit in which they had performed their service!