

[Matthew](#) 20:1-16

If I were to take one of my children and give them a nice big scoop of vanilla icecream. Would their day be improved? I think so. Quite improved, big smile, thanks so much dad!

If I were to take one of my other children, sit them right next to the first, and give them two nice big scoops of vanilla icecream – we should think their day likewise would be improved, obviously.

But what about the first child? What has happened to their day?

It just got a whole lot worse, didn't it?

But why should it have? Isn't one scoop of ice cream better than no scoops? They were thanking me earlier! And yet, I guarantee you they will be cross for the rest of the day – ruined even, by their mean, unfair, father.

And that might be true, their father might be unfair in this scenario – but that doesn't change the gift they got. It didn't make the icecream any different, it didn't suddenly sour in the bowl.

What caused them to sour, not the icecream, was their comparison to someone else. And, as we know, comparison breeds greed. “I want what they have! How come I didn't get that!?”

And if we are honest, we know these are not just things children say. We say it [them](#) too. “Why me, Lord?” When we get that pain or illness. “Why can't I catch a break!?” “They've got it so easy. I deserve a vacation too! No one ever gives me any thanks. It must be nice to get to do that...”

And so we go about saying how things are out of our control and that life isn't fair. Which is true in a broken world. But, at the same time, is God not still over all things, providing and directing for the good of his people?

And we might say, well he has a funny way of showing that!

But you wouldn't be the first to accuse him of that. Ask the Romans who were being killed, "Are we just sheep to be slaughtered?" No you are more than conquerors through him who loved you and nothing will separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." That's the chapter, Romans 8, where we hear that God works all things (good and bad) for the sake of those who love him." [Verse 28](#). That's in the persecution chapter.

Paul is inviting [reminding](#) the Romans, who may think God has a funny way of showing his love to them, that God will keep his Word to them and it will be more than worth it in the end.

Our parable from our Lord is, again, brilliantly laid out and structured to have the conclusion jump out at us. "Ohh, the 12 hour workers are getting paid now and everyone got a denarius, certainly they will get more!" These we expect to be the most faithful and hardest workers, they will certainly be [rewarded](#) more than the rest... But no, and they end the parable not gloriously rewarded more than others, but worst off than all, grumbling against the Master. They saw someone else get more ice cream.

The Master replied, [replies to one of these grumblers](#): "Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with that belongs to me? Or is your eye evil because I am good?"

Any accusations that this master is a cheat are immediately pushed aside. He has not deceived or cheated anyone. Never gone back on his word. It is our expectations and our evil eyes that are greedy that produce the problem here.

Furthermore, the first workers agreed to this! And what does the Master do here but keep his Word to them?

The Master is not the bad guy in this parable. This parable teaches us that, even in the worst case scenario- the hardest workers- the Master will keep his word to you. Not more, not less.

The questions to ask then are: 1. what has his word promised you? 2. Is that promise satisfactory to you? Or is there something else out there better? 3. Is what he promised to you in his word *good*? Or is it evil? 4. Is what he promised to you *fair*? Careful, here now.

1. What has he promised you? A denarius, a days wage? Or a bit more than that? This parable is about the Kingdom of Heaven. God's overarching eternal Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is wherever, whenever, and however God is working to save. And so his promise, his denarius that he chooses to give to you, and we know he has because he has called you in water and word and even right now... is forgiveness and eternal life.
2. Is that promise satisfactory to you? Or does it need some perks? here and now? Where in the scriptures is the promise of a cushy life here? Which, by the way, we kind of have – yes, don't be so sure that just because you've been a believer a long time that this is just about time... Or is it possible the Christians in Rome that I mentioned or Nigeria might look at us and say, They get the denarius too? They go to Church if they feel like it and then watch football on their couch. We dodge patrols to get to church.....” Is God's

promise satisfactory to them? To Paul in prison, perhaps to be executed? And he says “ah, to die is gain.” The denarius is well worth it! And we complain about what again?

3. Is what the Master promises you in his Word good? Or is it evil? “Oh he’s God he should figure out a way to make this more fair! If I was up there, I’d make sure it was more uniform for everyone, maybe even just wipe out all the bad stuff entirely...”
4. Oh, but our last question, is what he offers fair? What is fair? What is deserved? For people like us, with evil eyes, that give into comparison and greed? What if God wiped out all the bad, would you still be standing at the end of that?

And maybe we feel guilty now, “this is a guilt guilt trip sermon saying you need to do more and you should feel bad about your blessings.”

OR OR, First of all: what in this parable tells you working harder gets you more? Isn’t it just the opposite? Secondly, rather than a guilt trip sermon, can we find contentment and even undeserved joy, in that the Master has made us a promise, and he will keep it. Is Jesus keeping his promises “merely” keeping his promise? some little thing to be traded for some bread at the marketplace? Or is that it more than enough? More than we could imagine! It is. !

Especially as we know this Master is not one who earned his inheritance, that he shares, through lazing around. *He* has done the Work, He has created the Vineyard, he has suffered, bled, and died, to win this inheritance for sinners like us. And he could have looked at us from the Cross at us and said, just like the grumblers in the parable, “Father, you made THEM equal to me? Them? A denarius for them? A priceless drop of my innocent blood for them? That they might be your children?” But he does not grumble in this.

He keeps his Word. “I will die and on the third day rise, that we^{they} might have life and life abundant.”

Is that merely good enough? Or more than we could ever need?

May the Lord guard our hearts against comparison and greed. May we guard our hearts against looking at others and saying “they aren’t worth it.” May we, instead, rejoice in his promise of life and salvation that he owns and chooses to give so generously. And he has given it to us, we don’t deserve it, we aren’t worth it - - except for in Christ, who’s love is so great that he looks at you and says, “yeah you are. I give my life for you.” And since he is risen we can have confidence in the midst of persecution, suffering, and death, that all of that, is gain. We will be with the Lord, the Master, in his Kingdom, because we are so good? No, because he is so good, he has promised it, and he will keep his Word., and it will be more than worth it. Amen.