

TITLE: A PARABLE OF CONTENTMENT

TEXT: MATTHEW 20:1-16

THESIS: The purpose of this sermon is to teach the importance of being content as Christians...not contentment with where the church is, or where we are spiritually, but with where we are in terms of money, possessions, wealth, etc., as well as with in terms of not competing with brethren for recognition in the church.

INTRO: My favorite comic strip was *The Far Side!* One of the things Gary Larson would do in these comics was put animals in human situations. One I recall had two affluent cows dressed very nicely...the “husband” cow is sitting on a nice sofa while the “wife” cow stands at the beautiful bay window gazing outside and saying, “Harold, I’m just not content!” Contentment is a goal many never reach, regardless of their wealth & possessions. The “pursuit of happiness” is a disease that has no permanent cure...only temporary pacifying. This morning we’re going to look at a parable about contentment...contentment in the kingdom and also in life.

I. THE WORKERS HIRED (v. 1-7):

- A. Initial workers and wages (v. 1-2)
 - 1. The kingdom of Heaven – the church – is like this:
 - 2. The householder goes out *early!* This shows priority...early - and often (as we will see)!
 - 3. The householder looks for *laborers!* He doesn’t look for *sitters*, or *watchers*, or “*supervisors!*”
 - 4. Wages agreed upon: 1 penny per day (one “denarius” – one day’s labor)
- B. Additional workers (v. 3-7)
 - 1. The householder finds more workers at **9am, 12pm, 3pm, and 5pm.**
 - 2. He clearly is looking for *as many workers as possible!*
 - 3. Wages? “I’ll give you what is right (just, righteous).” His previous wages (a day’s wage for a day’s work) was “*right.*” So their expectation should’ve been a prorata – work 75% of the day and get 75% of a day’s wages.
 - 4. The latecomers - how much work are they really going to accomplish in the last hour of the day? *Won’t know until they try! As long as you are alive...keep working! Keep trying! Keep evangelizing!*

II. THE WORKERS PAID (v. 8-10):

- A. The last paid first – (v. 16 – last shall be first and first last)
- B. Give them their hire – the reward is the same (1 day’s wage). This may seem unfair, but it is not.
- C. The reward is Heaven, not different levels of reward based on seniority.

III. THE WORKERS TAUGHT (v. 11-16):

- A. The complaint (v. 11-12)
 - 1. You’ve made them **equal to us** (they clearly do *not* believe that these others are equal). We are obviously worth more!
 - 2. Their reasoning (good reasoning in the world’s eyes, but not God’s): We’ve done all the work (in the heat of the day).
- B. The correction (v. 13-16)
 - 1. (v. 13) You’re getting what you agreed to (which is fair)
 - 2. (v. 14) They’re getting more than what *you* think they’re worth (which is *more* than fair)
 - 3. (v. 15) I have the right to pay them more than I paid you; I’m still paying you what you agreed to.
 - 4. (v. 16) The last shall be first, first shall be last
- C. Two applications – parable means to place along side – we learn the truth of a story, then make the application.
 - 1. The parable (“story”) truth:
 - a. The 1st workers agreed to a certain wage. They got paid that wage. Why get upset about what the others got paid? The employer has the right to pay them what he wants.
**We can easily relate to this...even though we took a job agreeing to work for \$X per year, we get dissatisfied when we find out our coworker is getting paid more! (e.g., NFL!)
 - b. Be thankful you have a job! This jealous attitude will make you bitter. **James 3:14-18** – bitter envying & strife in your heart – this is not from above. From this comes every evil work! **What sin does *not* start with selfishness?**
 - 2. The parable (“story”) application:
 - a. Date of arrival into the kingdom – it doesn’t matter if you’ve been a Christian since you were 12 years old, and your friend was a wild man all his life until becoming a Christian on his death bed. He is still a Christian. You should be happy for him!
 - b. The last shall be first, first shall be last – although in this life there are firsts and lasts in everything we do, in the kingdom, this is not so. Jesus saying that the first shall be last and the last first is to say that if you’re one, then you’re the other. If you’re last, you’re also first, and if you’re first, you’re also last. This is because there are no levels of superiority in the church. One Christian is not more valuable to God than another.

CONCLUSION: It doesn’t matter *when* you become a member/worker in the kingdom. The real question is, are you in this kingdom? Are you a worker?