



Table Talk II

By Rev. Timothy J. Swenson • I.L.T. Dean of Chapel

Septuagesima Sunday | January 28, 2024



MATTHEW 20:1-16

"...they thought they would receive more..." Vs. 10

These workers presumed much, didn't they? They presumed, based on the wages paid to the last workers hired, that they would receive some multiple of what the last hired received. Their presumption grew. This inference instilled coveting. By that coveting, they estimated that those increased wages were already their possession. So, when the owner of the vineyard paid them a mere denarius, they felt robbed. The vineyard owner had stolen from them what their covetous hearts had already considered as theirs. No wonder they grumbled!

The savvy vineyard owner confronts their disgruntled and grumbling state. Those grumblers have voiced the complaint, "These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat" (vs. 12). Their suffering... their unequal burden... their labor and discipline far exceeded the last hired. Surely, they should receive more. That master of the household... the vineyard owner... punctures their inflated balloon of self-centered coveting, saying to them, "Take what belongs to you and go." Those workers had agreed to work the day for one denarius. That is what they received regardless of how much more they had coveted.

How about you? Has your labor in the Lord's vineyard... perhaps over the course of years... perhaps over decades of devoted stewardship... perhaps with countless acts of self-denial... have these works given you a presumption of increased reward? ...of coveting more than mere salvation? ...of some reward greater than that of the newly baptized reprobate? We of the church... you and I who have supported it... sweated over it... sacrificed for it... don't you and I often react with a selfishness when it comes to sharing or permitting the use of church facilities to those who have been outside the church for years and years? Thanks be to God that he does not begrudge his generosity!

Table Talk: Discuss the inequality of the reward of eternal life.

Pray: Heavenly Father, keep me satisfied with what I have and content to receive what you give me. Amen



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For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. 2 After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3 And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, 4 and to them he said, You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you. 5 So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. 6 And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, Why do you stand here idle all day? 7 They said to him, Because no one has hired us. He said to them, You go into the vineyard too. 8 And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first. 9 And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. 10 Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. 11 And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, 12 saying, These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat. 13 But he replied to one of them, Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? 14 Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. 15 Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity? 16 So the last will be first, and the first last.



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