

# MATTHEW

## Chapter 20

### *The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard*

**“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. <sup>2</sup> He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. <sup>3</sup> “About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. <sup>4</sup> He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ <sup>5</sup> So they went. “He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing. <sup>6</sup> About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’ <sup>7</sup> “‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered. “He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’ <sup>8</sup> “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’ <sup>9</sup> “The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. <sup>10</sup> So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. <sup>11</sup> When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. <sup>12</sup> ‘These men who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’ <sup>13</sup> “But he answered one of them, ‘Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? <sup>14</sup> Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. <sup>15</sup> Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ <sup>16</sup> “So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”**

**20:1–16** Wording of 19:30 and 20:16 surround this parable. This bracketing structure (an *inclusio*) suggests that God’s mysterious way of reversing things is the parable’s point. (TLSB)

Jesus’ story will explain or ground why there are many first ones who will be last and last ones who will be first (19:30; also 20:16). This parable, the second longest one in the Gospel of Matthew, is a wonderful and suspenseful story, carefully crafted to reveal that in the most important way, all disciples are equal in the present and future reign of God in Jesus. The story exhibits a simple overall structure of two parts. In 20:1-7, Jesus tells of a householder who goes out five times during the day to hire laborers to work in his vineyard. In 20:8-15, the laborers come at the end of the day to receive their wages. The ensuing conversation between the vineyard lord and the group hired first provides both a corrective warning and a blessed promise to all Jesus’ disciples, then and now, as we wait for the final day of reckoning. The parable closes (20:16) when Jesus reverses the aphorism of 19:30. The parable’s message is simple but profound:

God treat all those who are workers in the reign of heaven the same; owing to God's grace, there is no distinction on the Last Day. (CC)

**20:1-7** The first half of the story, a householder goes out into the marketplace and hires groups of day laborers at different times of the day. Although there are five different occasions when workers are hired, the middle three groups hired at the third, sixth, and ninth hours do not readily fit either set in the concluding proverb about "last one" and "first ones" (20:16; cf. 19:30). That conclusion explicitly refer only to the two contrasting extremes to express the message of the parable. (CC)

**20:1 KINGDOM OF HEAVEN** – Here it is the Kingdom of grace, the visible church on earth, which will be consummated in the Kingdom of glory, v 8. Jesus is not speaking of the kingdom of power. All ideas of labor and management or of capital and labor must be laid aside. Jesus is plainly speaking of how he deals with members of the church, among whom are hypocrites.

*master of a house.* Owner and manager of the household. (TLSB)

**HIRE** – Day laborers would be delighted for any work, because they had no other steady income. (TLSB)

**20:2 AGREED** – This is merely stressing the fact that the workers clearly understood the arrangement. They did not complain at this point.

*a denarius.* The usual daily wage. A Roman soldier also received one denarius a day. (CSB)

**20:3-5** The three intermediate groups of workers recruited by the householder (at the third, sixth, and ninth hours) are entirely absent in the second half of the parable (20:8-15). Their chief function is to create and build suspense about the wages that will be paid, for the householder promises this third middle group: "Whatever may be just I will give you." (CC)

**20:3** *third hour.* 9:00 A.M. (CSB)

**WENT OUT** – The point here is that the landowner alone takes the initiative.

**STANDING** – ESV has "idle." They desperately need work. (TLSB)

**MARKETPALCE** – The city gates were the places in which public business was conducted, contracts executed, legal judgments handed down, and government administered (Gn 23; Dt 22:15). (TLSB note from Job 29:7)

**20:4 HE TOLD THEM** – This again shows that the landowner took the initiative.

WHATEVER IS RIGHT – Household master sets no specific wage for this and the subsequent groups hired. He merely promises to pay fairly. (TLSB)

**20:5 HE WENT OUT AGAIN** – Then the landowner again takes the initiative and hires idle people at noon and at three.

*sixth hour ... ninth hour.* Noon and 3:00 P.M. respectively. (CSB)

**20:6 eleventh hour.** 5:00 P.M. (CSB)

An hour before quitting time. (TLSB)

The landowner takes the initiative and hires men at about five P.M., unheard of, and purposely so, for Jesus is speaking about the Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom of grace on earth.

WHY HAVE YOU STOOD AROUND – In marked contrast, the lord of the vineyard asks the last group, “Why have you stood here for the whole day idle? (CC)

**20:7 NO ONE HIRED US** – The answer does not denote irreverence but simply brings out their helplessness. But the landowner, in his utter generosity, takes the initiative, and engages their services.

YOU ALSO GO AND WORK – Hiring these men to work only an hour was an act of charity, ensuring they would eat that day. (TLSB)

Since the householder promises nothing to the eleventh-hour group, the parable’s first half ends with an unanswered question: What in the world will the lord of the vineyard pay these men whom he has hired to work in his vineyard for just one hour? (CC)

**20:8 EVENING CAME** – A prophetic allusion to the Last Judgment. The evening of each individual’s life resembles the evening of the world.

*foreman.* Supervisor who oversaw the laborers. (TLSB)

BEGINNING WITH THE LAST – In the kingdom of power, under the ordinary circumstances of labor and management, this would be unheard of and unfair. This order is in harmony with the rule laid down in (19:30 and 20:16).

**20:9 CAME** – They did not come forward until they were called.

RECEIVED A DENARIUS – This is a surprise, to be sure, but at this point, the parable has only revealed that the householder must be regarded as strikingly generous, for he has paid an entire day’s wage to men who worked only one hour after spending the whole day standing idle (20:6). (CC)

Supervisor paid each worker the same, regardless of the number of hours worked. (TLSB)

**20:10-12** The expectation that those hired first would receive more seems reasonable. Recall, however, that they agreed to their denarius wage beforehand. (TLSB)

**20:10** ALSO RRECEIVED A DENARIUS – No distinction is made.

This employer is munificent, or so he must have seemed at first to the only group mentioned, namely, those who had been first. The lavishness of the vineyard's owner, wedded with the inevitable calculation of how much more they had accomplished in comparison with the little work done by the last group, led them to think that they would receive more than their agreement with the owner had stipulated (20:2). Against all conventional wisdom and expectation, however, they also received a denarius – the same as the last group hired! (CC)

**20:11** BEGAN TO GRUMBLE – goggudzo – It is used of the envious, the self-righteous, the rejecters, and those who lose their souls. It is also found in Lk 5:30; Jn 6:41,43,61; 7:32 and I Cor 10:10. What Jesus intends is for us to examine ourselves now, lest we lose our souls in the Great Judgment.

**20:12** BOURNE THE BURDEN OF THE WORK – Among those who have worked the longest we may find many proud and conceited persons, who rely on their long hours of work in the church and despise those who have worked but little, who insist on their rights, and are offended at the grace and goodness of God.

**20:13** *Friend*. Implies association, not necessarily personal affection. (TLSB)

YOU AGREE – There can be no agreement unless it be mutual.

**20:14** TAKE YOUR PAY – This has the meaning of a gift, based on grace, not merit.

*I choose*. Or, "I will." Emphasizes that the master's decision regarding the pay of those hired later lies completely within his discretion. (TLSB)

**20:15** DON'T I HAVE A RIGHT – This question implies that the murmurer arrogated to himself the position of owning and disbursing the money.

The master's decision to be generous with those hired last does not mean he has shortchanged those hired first, On the contrary, those hired first receive the wage mutually agreed upon. Being part of God's kingdom is not based on earning or deserving anything but rather on grace. (TLSB)

A problem only emerges when the employees start comparing themselves to their fellows. In this little story, however, all comparisons are odious, and such comparing reveals the danger of an envious and evil spirit. (CC)

The parable's primary message, then, is one that takes a community and its members and places them all on the same level. There is no room for self-promotion, no occasion for competition, no basis on which one disciple can say to another, "I have no need of you" or "I am more important than you are." Even the unique apostles, who on the Last Day will sit on thrones as they judge the twelve tribes (19:28), are, in final and ultimate terms, simply laborers in the vineyard like every other baptized believer in Jesus. (CC)

**20:16** LAST, FIRST...FIRST LAST – In a time and culture in which relative social status played an extremely prominent role, this parable was as revolutionary and transformational as the way that Jesus practiced table fellowship. In our modern time and culture, in which sinful disciples still want to (or think that they must) compare and evaluate so that someone comes out on top and someone else falls to the bottom, Jesus' concluding aphorism undercuts all prideful superiority and assuages all fearful inferiority: "in this way, the last ones will be first ones, and the first one (will be) last ones."

The parable of the Workers in the Vineyard, then, exhibits a primarily horizontal message and is not directed against an overt form of legalism or "reward by merit thinking." By implication, however, there is also a message of profound grace here, expressed in the master's words "but I wish to give to this last man as also to you" (20:14). It may, in fact, be the case that the parable illustrates the difference between mere generosity and genuine grace. Grace by its very nature gives without regard to any merit or worthiness in the one who receives it. The wages are awarded to the workers, but the amount of the wage has nothing to do with the effort expended or the time spent, and all in the vineyard receive the same. (CC)

The master's actions are stunningly unexpected. However, they are only insulting or hard to swallow if one takes one's eyes off of the owner. One can imagine the scene as the parable sets it up. Wages are paid out, beginning with the last group and ending with the first. As the first group stands in line and waits their turn, their gaze falters, leaving the master who has hired them, given them meaningful work, and promised them a fair wage. They stop looking at the master, and they start looking at their fellow workers. That's when they get into trouble. Their eye actually becomes evil because the master is good to others. (CC)

**20:1–16** Serving the Lord's kingdom is a privilege and labor of love, not something undertaken to gain a reward. When we begin to think that God's kingdom needs or depends on us, we get it completely backward. We need and depend on it! Through forgiveness and the renewing work of God's Spirit, we can indeed be used by God for vital service in His kingdom. • Keep me ever mindful, Lord, that it is only by grace that I have been included in Your kingdom and am privileged to serve in it. Amen. (TLSB)

*Jesus Again Predicts His Death*

<sup>17</sup> Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, <sup>18</sup> “We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death <sup>19</sup> and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!”

**20:17–19** See Mk 10:32–34; Lk 18:31–33 and notes. (CSB)

This passion prediction is by far the longest of the three. It both recalls earlier details and adds important new information about what awaits Jesus in the capital. (CC)

The specific techniques that the Gentiles will use to torture and kill the Son of Man are detailed here for the first time in Matthew: mocking, scourging, and crucifixion. In this way, the Jewish religious leaders and pagan Roman authorities will cooperate, and both will bear their responsibility for carrying out the necessary divine plan by which Jesus’ ministry will reach its goal. (CC)

As in the other earlier predictions, Jesus concludes with the promise that He will “be raised” (20:19, as in 16:21’ 17:23). Once again, this promise seems not to have registered with the disciples in any real way. Indeed, how could it? Such a thing as true eschatological resurrection already in the present time of earthly history was completely beyond the expectation of anyone in first-century Judaism. (CC)

We cannot know more than the evangelist reveals. What we can know is that up to this point in the earthly ministry of Jesus, His thrice-stated goal has had insufficient – or perhaps no – impact on the working theology in the brains of His apostles, as the incident involving James, John and their mother will now reveal (20:20-28). (CC)

**20:17** GOING UP TO JERUSALEM - Matthew describes Jesus as “going up” to Jerusalem. While geographically this makes sense, Jerusalem is indeed “up,” this is also a phrase with worship overtones. To “go up” is a cultic term, much like the phrase “lift up your hearts” in our Communion liturgy. Consider the Psalms of Ascent in the OT, for example Ps. 122:3-4, “Jerusalem is... where the tribes go up ...to praise the name of the Lord according to the statute given to Israel.” By going up to Jerusalem, Jesus is conforming Himself to His Father’s will and remaining on the way set out by Him for the redemption of the world. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 2)

**20:18-19** Matthew records Jesus’ words that reemphasize the point he has just made in his narrative: Jesus is “going up” to the holy city. The end results of this “going up” will not be enthronement in the earthly sense, but a judgment of death. The passive of “deliverance” implies that the Lord Himself will permit Jesus to be handed over. Both of these verses reflect the OT reading of Hosea. The Lord “has torn us to pieces,” but He will revive us on the third day. The plural of Hosea fits beautifully with Paul’s words in the Epistle. We were “torn to pieces” and “injured” in Christ, and therefore we, too, are revived with Him on the third day. “If Christ is in you, your body is dead... yet your spirit is alive” (Rom. 8:10). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 2)

**20:18** *delivered. Betrayed.* (TLSB)

*chief priests and scribes.* In the end, the religious establishment will push hardest for Jesus to be crucified (27:1). (TLSB)

**20:19** *and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified.* An additional statement in this third prediction of the passion. Jesus would not be killed by the Jews, which would have been by stoning, but would be crucified by the Romans. All three predictions include his resurrection on the third day (16:21; 17:23). (CSB)

Pontius Pilate, the highest Roman authority in Jerusalem, would write Jesus' death sentence. (TLSB)

**20:17–19** For a third and final time, Jesus predicts His Passion. Ironically, Jesus' three predictions match the number of Peter's denials. The depth of humanity's sin is such that only the death of God's Son can atone for it. No one took Jesus' life from Him, as His Passion predictions make clear. Rather, He willingly laid down His life in order to save us. • "Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast Save in the death of Christ, my God.... Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all!" Amen. (LSB 426:2, 4) (TLSB)

### *A Mother's Request*

<sup>20</sup> Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. <sup>21</sup> **"What is it you want?"** he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom." <sup>22</sup> **"You don't know what you are asking,"** Jesus said to them. **"Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?"** "We can," they answered. <sup>23</sup> Jesus said to them, **"You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."** <sup>24</sup> When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. <sup>25</sup> Jesus called them together and said, **"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>26</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—<sup>28</sup> just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."**

**20:20-21** Sitting is always the position of authority. The right is normally the favored, or honored, side. The left is the side of disgrace, or dishonor, but it does not seem to be so in this case. It is worth noting that v. 21 uses the same grammatical construction found in Matthew 27:38 in reference to the placement of the two thieves on the cross. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 2)

**20:20** *mother of Zebedee's sons.* Mark has “James and John, the sons of Zebedee,” asking the question (Mk 10:35–37), yet there is no contradiction. The three joined in making the petition. (CSB)

*kneeling.* Posture seems ironic, for the request being made has little to do with humility. (TLSB)

After paying homage and being invited by the Christ to state her request, the mother reveals her purpose. Although we cannot be sure what has led her to this request, it seems likely that there is a connection between her petition and Jesus' own striking promise earlier in 19:28 that the apostles will sit on twelve thrones in the regeneration when the Son of Man Himself is enthroned. The mother of the sons of Zebedee has heard about that promise (probably through her sons), and she believed it. Now on behalf of her sons, she seeks a special favor, namely, the places of honor on Jesus' right and his left when He is reigning as God's Son and Christ. (CC)

**20:21** *right hand ... left.* Positions of highest authority. (TLSB)

*in Your kingdom.* Refers to the time when Jesus will exercise the fullness of His messianic authority. Jesus had already promised that all 12 apostles would share in this rule (19:28). (TLSB)

**20:22** YOU DO NOT KNOW - Jesus' response is pointed, perhaps more so that the NIV conveys. The verb translated as “know,” *oidate*, includes the sense of “understanding,” “apprehension,” and “recognition.” The mother of James and John (commonly believed to be Salome, the sister of Mary) does not understand what she is asking. Jesus, then, is not denigrating her request, but pointing out that she does not understand what kind of kingdom He will rule and what kind of throne He will have to offer His disciples. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 2)

*drink the cup.* A figure of speech meaning to “undergo” or “experience.” Here the reference is to suffering (cf. 26:39). The same figure of speech is used in Jer 25:15; Eze 23:32; Hab 2:16; Rev 14:10; 16:19; 18:6 for divine wrath or judgment. (CSB)

The image of drinking from a cup or more simply a cup itself is a metaphor that OT authors use to express more than one truth. Occasionally the image is a positive one, referring to Yahweh Himself as “my apportioned share and my cup” (Ps 16:5; cf. Ps 23:5), or the salvation that Israel's God has accomplished (Ps. 116:12-14). Very often, however, the metaphor of the cup (or of drinking from a cup) is a symbol that communicates a specific negative message, namely, the image of the enemies of the God of Israel being forced to experience His wrath. In this metaphor, the components of the image “include the following: a drinking cup that can be passed from hand to hand, much of the wine terminology, drink as a figure for suffering, and effects of drunkenness such as staggering, confusion, sleep, helplessness and disgrace.” (CC)



WE CAN – They show no signs of understanding what it means for Jesus to drink the cup of God’s wrath – that it entails His death. Neither would they be able to drink it and survive. Jesus alone is able to drink this cup of its dregs – and on the third day be raised. (CC)

**20:23 YOU WILL DRINK** – Although no Christian can foresee how the pattern will play out in the days of his or her life, what we know about James and John reminds us that the experience of the Christian life will be different for each baptized believer. As far as we know from Acts, James the Son of Zebedee was the first of the apostles to be martyred, drinking the cup of suffering unto death in close imitation of his Lord (Acts 12:2). By contrast, John his brother lived to be an old man and did not die a martyr’s death, although he too suffered for the sake of Jesus. (CC)

MY RIGHT AND LEFT – These words are fulfilled ironically at Calvary. The Father has prepared places there for two thieves, the men who will be crucified on Jesus right and His left when the placard stands over Him in ironic proclamation of the truth: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. (CC)

*not Mine to grant.* Jesus once again defers to His Father’s authority. (TLSB)

PREPARED - The verb *atoimastai*, “made ready,” is related to God’s work of creation and preservation in nature and history, relative to heaven and earth (TDNT, 266). The seats to the left and right of Christ’s throne have already been prepared. The connection between verse, vv. 20-21, and Mt. 27:38 must at least be considered. Christ’s throne is that place where His atoning sacrifice occurs, and those on His left and right will not be rulers, or even apostles, but criminals. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 2)

**20:24 WERE INDIGNANT** - The verb the NIV translates as “indignant,” *aganaktasan*, implies being offended or angry concerning what is judged to be a wrong action. The disciples were offended at what they believed to be the “wrongheadedness” of Salome’s request. Their offense, taking into account Jesus’ response, seems to be due to the implication that James and John will rule over the other 10. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 2)

They, too, hoped to sit in the seats of the highest honor. (TLSB)

**20:25 THE GENTILES** – All of the twelve are skewing the truth by following the thinking of “the Gentiles,” that is, unbelievers who do not know the ways of the reign of God in Jesus. To them, being first means having control so that other do your bidding, even if they must be forced to obey. Greatness and eminence in this frame of reference are reflected in power and influence. That is just the way it is among fallen humanity. (CC)

LORD IT OVER - The two verbs translated “lord it over” and “exercise authority” in the NIV are verbs prefaced by *kata*. This preface, when added to the verbs *kurieuo* (to be lord) and *exousizo* (to exercise power), implies using one’s lordship or power for

one own's advantage or gain (TDNT, 239, 486). Jesus is speaking of lordship and power used to gain an advantage over others, exactly what the 10 feared Salome was hoping to gain for her two sons. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 2)

Abuse their power by exploiting those less powerful. (TLSB)

AUTHORITY – Raw power

**20:26-27** Jesus' continued response implies there is no way of doing things: Jesus says it will not be so with you. Neither does Jesus imply that striving for "greatness" is an inappropriate goal. Jesus merely redefines what being first and great look like. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 2)

**20:26** GREAT – (megas) – Great large in size, important. This means to hold a higher position.

Greatness in God's kingdom is characterized by willingness to serve others rather than insistence on being served. (TLSB)

SERVANT – (diakonos) One who renders service to another; an attendant, servant.

If someone wants to be great, then he will show spiritual greatness by willingly serving and meeting the needs of others. (CC)

**20:27** FIRST – (PROTOS) One stationed in the first rank. Most prominent.

SLAVE – (doulos) Enslaved, bondage, servile condition. Only non-Jewish slaves – John 13:1-17

The higher we would ascend, the lower must we be willing to descend in our labor of love. We shall disregard our own will and honor and consecrate ourselves to the relief of others. (Ylvisaker)

**20:28** *to serve*. Jesus' service is complete. He gave His very life for the salvation of the world. (TLSB)

*ransom*. The Greek word was used most commonly for the price paid to redeem a slave. Similarly, Christ paid the ransom price of his own life to free us from the slavery of sin. (CSB)

The key word in this verse is *luton*, ransom. The noun comes from the same family as the verb *luo* and seems to have retained a semantic connection. A ransom destroys or loosens something that was previously held in bondage. The one who is greatest in the kingdom, the Son of Man, God incarnate, makes the ultimate sacrifice to atone for the sins of His people. Only one who is without guilt Himself can offer to clear the

community of its sin. Just as the Lord imputed David's guilt to the whole nation (2 Sam. 24), "God 'imputes' to the Christian... a verdict which properly belongs only to Jesus" (W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, *Matthew* [New York: Doubleday, 1971], 247). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 2)

*for.* Here the Greek for this preposition emphasizes the substitutionary nature of Christ's death. (CSB)

*many.*† Christ "gave himself as a ransom for all men" (1Ti 2:5–6; 1Pe 1:18–19)—"many" is used here in the inclusive Semitic sense of "all." (CSB)

Hbr idiom meaning "all." (TLSB)

Because Jesus has laid claim to our lives by paying His own life in exchange for ours to set us free, His claim also changes the way that relate to one another as disciples. To be sure, the call to servanthood and to reflect Christ's strange "reverse greatness" will also characterize our relationship with those who are not yet disciples as well as with the world around us. However, the primary application of the call to servanthood is the community of the disciples: It shall not be like this among you." The rulers of the nations will continue to operate in their normal ways of power and subjugation until the day when all are placed in submission to the One who comes humbly no longer. (CC)

**20:20–28** Jesus continues to convince His disciples that in His kingdom, humility and service, not acclaim and power, are most highly valued. Just as it was among the Twelve, so also today the lust for power and control over others continues to be a problem in the Christian community. Though many things make Jesus great—among them His role in creating and preserving all things—it is His sacrificial death that is most wonderful for us. • We thank You, Lord Jesus, for though You were unspeakably rich, You willingly became poor, that by Your great poverty we might become rich. Amen (TLSB)

### *Two Blind Men Receive Sight*

**<sup>29</sup> As Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him. <sup>30</sup> Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" <sup>31</sup> The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" <sup>32</sup> Jesus stopped and called them. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. <sup>33</sup> "Lord," they answered, "we want our sight." <sup>34</sup> Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.**

**20:29-34** In a brief, straightforward scene, Matthew recounts that Jesus heals two blind men near Jericho. He sets the scene in 20:29. The evangelist's comment "and as they were journeying out from Jericho" reminds the hearer/readers (who are supposed to know the location of Jericho) that Jesus is very close to Jerusalem, the place where

He will drink the cup of God's wrath, giving His life as the ransom payment in exchange for the many. (CC)

The basic theology of the text, in itself, is straightforward. Jesus, again shows both His compassion for those in need and His reigning authority to remove (albeit temporarily) the effects of sin and the traces of death in a fallen world. As with all His miracles during His earthly ministry, the Lord here gives only a foretaste of the final, everlasting healing and restoration of human creatures and all things on the Last Day. (CC)

**20:29** *Jericho*. See note on Mk 10:46. (CSB)

C 15 mi from Jesus' destination, Jerusalem. (TLSB)

There must have been a lot of traffic along the road, because Jesus and his disciples were not the only pilgrims going up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Passover. (PBC)

**20:30** *Two blind men*. The other Synoptics mention only one (see note on 8:28). (CSB)

Luke 18:35-43 mentions only one blind man. Mark 10:46-52 likewise mentions only one blind man and tells us that his name was Bartimaeus. This does not mean there is a contradiction between Matthew and Mark and Luke. It is similar to the varying accounts of Easter. (PBC)

*Son of David*. A Messianic title (see note on 9:27). (CSB)

*Lord, have mercy*. Echoing others in great need (15:22; 17:15), these blind men do not waste words. (TLSB)

**20:32** Jesus' question emphasizes His willingness to serve them. (TLSB)

**20:34** *touched their eyes*. Cf 8:3, 15; 9:29; 19:15. His touch would have been esp important to the blind men. (TLSB)

**20:29–34** Though the nearness of the crowd and His own impending death weigh heavily on Him, Jesus is not too preoccupied to help two men in desperate need. Like the people in Jericho who tried to silence the two blind men, we also may tend to treat persons in need as nuisances. Yet Jesus painstakingly extended His ministry to all in need, showing care and concern for them. We, too, have received His grace. • “Amazing grace—how sweet the sound—That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost but now am found, Was blind but now I see!” Amen. (*LSB* 744:1) (TLSB)