

Sermon Summary: Pastor Robert Madu used Jesus’ Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard from Matthew 20 to teach us how clinging to the wrong expectations can lead to disappointment. When life feels unfair, it’s easy to compare your story to someone else’s and wonder why things worked out differently. But peace comes when you stop measuring your life against other people and start trusting the character of God.

Sermon Highlights

- Most of the pain and the frustration in our lives is not from what happened, it’s from what we expected.
- What do you do when you feel like God is not being fair?
- The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard:
- The Landowner → God
- The 6:00AM group → those who trust in compensation and contracts
- The 5:00PM group → those who trust in the consistent character of God
- God is not looking for spectators; He’s looking for workers.
- God wants you to see other people get blessed. He wants to know, “Can you still trust me when you see somebody get something that you don’t think they deserve?”
- **Who are you in the story? You may be a 6:00AM worker if you:**
 - Always have a grumble
 - Expect what was never promised
 - Struggle to celebrate other people
 - Think God owes you
- Are your complaints louder than your praise?
- Don’t let your faithfulness become entitlement.
- God doesn’t owe you anything because He already gave you everything.
- Turn your entitlement into gratitude.
- Gratitude is the antidote for complaining, for bitterness, and for being stuck.
- Grace is not fair. Thank God we don’t get what we deserve!

Scripture: Matthew 20:1-16: 20 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. 2 He agreed to pay them a denarius[a] for the day and sent them into his vineyard. 3 “About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. 4 He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ 5 So they went. “He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. 6 About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’ 7 “‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered. “He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’ 8 “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.’ 9 “The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. 10 So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. 11 When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. 12 ‘These 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.’ 13 “But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? 14 Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. 15 Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ 16 “So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

Sermon Discussion

- “Most of the pain and frustration in our lives is not from what happened, it’s from what we expected.” What’s an expectation you’ve been carrying that you need to surrender to God in this season?
- **“God wants to know, ‘Can you still trust me when you see somebody get something that you don’t think they deserve?’” Where are you most tempted to compare your life to someone else’s right now, and what would it look like to trust God’s timing in that area?**
- “You know you’re a 6:00AM worker when you always have a grumble, expect what was never promised, struggle to celebrate other people, or think God owes you.” Which of these four mindsets do you struggle with most often, and what’s one way you can replace that mindset with trust and gratitude this week?
- **“Turn your entitlement into gratitude.” What’s something you’ve taken for granted lately that you want to intentionally thank God for again?**



- **“Grace is not fair. Thank God we don’t get what we deserve!” How can remembering God’s grace help you extend grace to someone else this week?**

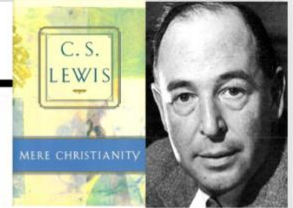
Jesus > Religion by Jefferson Bethke - Pg 90-“And so let’s be done with the comparison game. Let’s be done with constantly fighting for the higher moral ground to stand on and look down on everything else. Let’s be done with thinking we can actually earn something that is impossible to earn. Let’s stop trying to be perfect and righteous because those are not the people God is looking for. God is looking for people who can admit their needs and surrender to a Savior, because if the Bible is any indication, it doesn’t matter how messed up you are. If you love him, he can and will use you.”

"We have completely neutered grace (my good works save me, but we still call it grace), made God a math equation (God will like me if I am good), and turned Jesus into Mr. Rogers (Well, howdy, neighbor). But Jesus isn't a rocking a cardigan, and he doesn't talk softly through his nose. He is a roaring lion. (See C.S. Lewis's classic book *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*). . . . His grace is dangerous, ferocious, violent, and uncontrollable. It can't be tamed."

Jefferson Bethke

Jesus > Religion by Jefferson Bethke: If you only wanted fairness, you would be in hell.

Kev's eGroup study notes on Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis
(Book 1: Law of Human Nature and Reality of the Law) – Mon, Jan. 22, 2018



Mere Christianity by C. S. Lewis (as quoted in the forward by Kathleen Norris:)

Background
info for eGroup

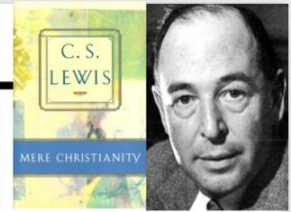
- Text from a three part BBC radio broadcast from 1942 to 1944 while Britain was being bombarded by 400 planes per night by the German Luftwaffe.
- Quote from Kathleen Norris: ***"A bold act of storytelling and healing in a world gone mad"***
- As a young man, C.S. Lewis served in the trenches of WW1. When the German bombing of Britain began in 1940, he took up duties as an air raid warden and gave talks to men in the Royal Air Force – **who after an average of thirteen bombing missions – most likely would be dead or missing.**
- This situation prompted Lewis to speak about the problems of suffering, pain, evil – where he delivered a series of wartime broadcasts on Christian faith.



St. Paul's Cathedral in London –
The Nazis not successful in
their attempt to destroy



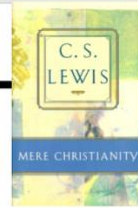
Aldwych tube station being used as a bomb shelter in 1940.



Background
info for eGroup

C. S. Lewis (as quoted in Wikipedia)

- Born Clive Staples Lewis in Nov. 29, 1898 in Belfast, Ireland
- Died Nov. 22, 1963 a the age of aged 64 (BTW: the same day as the JFK assassination)
- Held academic positions at both Oxford University and Cambridge University
- His best known works:
 - **The Screwtape Letters**
 - The Chronicles of Narnia
 - The Space Trilogy
 - **Mere Christianity**
 - The Problem of Pain.
- Lewis and fellow novelist J. R. R. Tolkien were close friends.
- Fell away from his faith during his youth and rejoined the Church at the age of 32
- In 1956, married the American writer Joy Davidman, who died four years later of cancer at the age of 45.
- His works have been translated into more than 30 languages.



1 Peter 3:15 talking points from Monday, Jan. 8, 2018:

Background
info for eGroup

- Per Kathleen Norris: "Mere Christianity helps us see the religion with fresh eyes, as a radical faith whose adherents might be likened to an underground group gathering in a war zone, a place where evil seems to have the upper hand, to hear messages of hope from the other side."
- A person's first move to God occurs when he or she says: That's not fair!!!!
- Per C.S. Lewis: "We conclude that the "Being" behind the universe is intensely interested in right conduct – in fair play, unselfishness, courage, good faith, honesty and truthfulness. . . . And if there are no answers and no creator, there is nothing that is really true. . . . This is the terrible fix we are in. If the universe is not governed by an absolute goodness, than all of our efforts in the long run are hopeless. . . **It is after you have realized that there is real Moral Law, and a Power behind the law, and that you have broken that law and put yourself on the wrong side of this Power – it is after all of this, and not a moment sooner, that Christianity begins to speak.**"
- Per Dr. Timothy Keller, there are four Reasons why a life without God really bothers us: a. By what universal standard can one tell right from wrong?, b. Relative to the oceans of time that precede us and then come after us, what is the meaning of life (absent of the presence of a living God)?, c. If one is brutally honest, absolute freedom = total meaninglessness. This lack of meaning bothers us – and only us., and d. When we understand the logos (reason for living), we can then realize our full potential (See John 1:1 to 1:12).

Prayer Prompt: Lord, thank You for Your undeserved grace that consistently loves us, saves us, and redeems us. When we struggle with unmet expectations, please help us prioritize Your trustworthiness over any outcome and gratitude over grumbling. Teach us not to lean on our own understanding but on Your truth. In Jesus' name, amen.

AI Generated sermon recap:

Grace, Entitlement, and the Parable of the Vineyard Workers

Jun 7, 2026 • 7:54 AM • 57 minutes, 17 seconds

Overview

- A worship service at Elevation Church featured an opening prayer and welcome, followed by a guest sermon from Robert Madu centered on Matthew 20:1–16 (the workers in the vineyard). The message, titled “It’s not fair,” contrasted entitlement with grace, urging listeners to become “5 p.m. people” marked by trust and gratitude rather than “6 a.m. people” marked by contracts, complaint, and comparison.
- Service Opening and Welcome
- Opening prayer declaring the power of the name of Jesus over death, sin, shame, cancer, loss, sorrow, and depression; gratitude for God’s presence and the Holy Spirit; and a plea for God to touch people across campuses, screens, and watch parties, affirming “anything can happen.”
- Brief community moment: encouragement to greet others with multiple hugs and “spread a little love around the church.”
- Host references celebrating an anniversary with Holly, welcomes the Elevation online family (eFam, online family), and invites an introduction for the guest preacher.
- Elijah introduces guest: Robert Madu, described as family to the house, “one of the best-dressed pastors,” from Dallas, Texas, father of three, husband to Taylor Badu, and pastor of Social Dallas.
- Sermon Scripture and Theme
- Text: Matthew 20:1–16, read in full to capture the narrative arc and its implications.
- Title and thesis: “It’s not fair”—a confrontation with the tension between perceived fairness and the reality of grace.
- Why Jesus Told This Parable (Matthew 19 Context)
- Rich young ruler asks, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”; Jesus challenges him to sell all, give to the poor, and follow Him; he leaves sorrowful because his possessions possessed him.
- Peter reacts: “We have left everything... what then will we get?” Jesus responds with a story—this parable—to reframe reward, grace, and expectations.
- The Parable Unpacked: Landowner, Workers, and Harvest
- Seasonal clue: The landowner urgently seeks workers multiple times (6 a.m., 9 a.m., noon, 3 p.m., 5 p.m.)—a signal that the harvest is on, not the planting or waiting season.
- Emphasis: Harvest requires workers, not spectators. “The harvest is plentiful”; more hands are needed.
- Application: Gratitude for Elevation volunteers (e.g., eKids, parking) and a call to active service rather than passive consumption.
- The landowner personally selects workers despite having a foreman to pay them—underscoring the joy and dignity of being chosen.
- Two Categories of Workers: Contract vs. Trust
- The 6 a.m. crew negotiates a contract: “He agreed [symphoneo] to pay them a denarius.” They insist on defined compensation before work.
- All later crews accept, “I will pay you whatever is right,” and simply go—placing trust in the landowner’s character rather than exact terms.
- Key contrast:

- 6 a.m.: contract, entitlement risk, “get what I deserve.”
- Later crews (notably 5 p.m.): trust, humility, “whatever is right.”
- The 5 p.m. Workers: Overlooked Yet Chosen
- They wait all day, overlooked and idle because “no one has hired us,” yet the landowner goes out even at 5 p.m. to bring them in.
- Practical tension: With orientation and transit, they could barely pick any grapes before the whistle—heightening the shock of equal pay.
- Payment Reversal, Expectations, and Offense
- Landowner pays last hired first; each receives a denarius. The 6 a.m. workers “expected” more and grumbled when they received the same.
- Core insight: Much pain stems not from what happened but from unmet, often unexpressed expectations.
- Landowner’s defense: “I am not being unfair to you, friend... Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius?... Are you envious because I am generous?”
- Spiritual diagnostic: God sometimes blesses others “in front of us” to refine our hearts—can we rejoice when grace reaches those we deem unworthy?
- Modern Parallels: Our Fairness Detectors and Faith
- Children’s innate “that’s not fair” instinct illustrates how all humans carry strong equity sensitivities.
- Adult versions of “must be nice” can turn toward God: job loss despite faithfulness and tithing; prolonged singleness vs. others getting engaged; faithful loved ones suffering illness; prayers seemingly unanswered.
- Challenge: What do we do when it feels like God is not being fair?

Four Signs of 6 a.m. Entitlement

- **Persistent grumbling: low-grade bitterness under the breath; complaints louder than praise.**
- **Expecting what God never promised: anger born from self-invented expectations rather than God’s stated word.**
- **Inability to celebrate others: resenting others’ blessings as undeserved.**
- **Belief that God owes you: the casualty of long faithfulness turning into entitlement.**
- **Becoming 5 p.m. People: Hands Up, Not Hands Out**

5 p.m. posture: trust in the landowner’s character; gratitude for being chosen; hands lifted in worship rather than extended in comparison.

- **Grace, by definition, “is not fair”—and that is our hope: fair would be judgment; the cross shows God gave everything already.**
- **Illustrations and Asides**
- **Robert Madu references his three children (11, 10, 8) and frequent “that’s not fair” moments to expose adult entitlement.**
- **Ministry update: Social Dallas turned five years old; met in 14 different venues; still setting up pipe and drape—serving because “the harvest is here.”**
- **Honor: Appreciation expressed for Pastor Stephen Furtick and Holly, highlighting decades of faithfulness.**

Ministry Response and Prayer

- Call to repentance from entitlement to gratitude; many raised hands acknowledging “6 a.m.” attitudes creeping in.
- Salvation invitation: for those trying to earn salvation, an appeal to receive what Jesus already accomplished; prayer of surrender to Jesus and forgiveness of sins.
- Corporate worship response with thanksgiving and lifted hands.

Next Steps / Actions

- Practice gratitude daily: replace grumbling with praise and thanksgiving.
- Choose trust over contracts with God: release unpromised expectations; affirm “whatever is right.”
- Celebrate others’ blessings: intentionally rejoice when others are favored.
- Serve in the harvest: move from spectating to working in the “vineyard” (church and community service).
- For new believers: continue following Jesus after the prayer—seek community, scripture, and ongoing discipleship.

AI generated sermon transcript

- We thank you for your incredible presence promised to us. We thank you for your Holy Spirit that lives inside of us. The same spirit that raised Jesus from the dead living on us now. We thank you for allowing us to gather today and celebrate. That name that is above death. That name that is above sin. That name that is above shame. That name that is above cancer. That name that is above loss. That name that is above sorrow. That name that is above depression. The name of Jesus. The mighty, matchless, infinite name of Jesus. The name that makes somebody able to walk on water. The name that makes somebody to roll a stone away. The name that makes somebody able to lift up their head.
- We came today. praise your name. There is no other name. There is no other name that can break chains like yours. There is no other name that can set free like yours. God, today I pray for the person who's here today who desperately needs a touch of your hand. I pray today, God, that you would walk up and down the aisles of all of our campuses and that you would touch the individuals who have been praying. God, they've been asking for you to show up. And today is the day. Today is the day for them to be reminded. that your compassions fail not, they are new every morning. I ask God that you would send your anointing to everyone who has this sermon today on a screen, on their phone, or on a computer, or somewhere gathered in a watch party. God, there is no distance when your presence is involved.
- You said if two or three were gathered in your name, you would be there in the midst. We declare that you're here and anything can happen. You are the God of the broken chain. You are the God of the second chance. And you are the God of the empty grave. We love you. We celebrate you. We give you all of the praise in Jesus' name. Somebody shout amen. Shout amen again. Make some noise if you're grateful for Jesus, if you love the Lord. It's so good to see you today. Don't sit down yet, but would you get five, six, seven, eight, or nine hugs, depending on how generous you're feeling with your affection today. I'm gonna let you budget it out. Hug on the level that you feel is appropriate. Spread a little love around the church. You see somebody who looks like they need a hug, go over and give them a hug. Doing nothing.
- Yeah, get away from y'all for a little while. Be with Holly. We celebrated our anniversary this last week, and we had a good time. You know, but if you spend a few weeks away from church, you ever notice something doesn't feel right? At least for me. Some of you haven't got that memo yet. Y'all just, yeah. But I wanted to be here today in the presence of God with you. I welcome our eFam all around the world. Would you help me welcome them? Put your hands together. And when you're a preacher, but you come to church, but you don't preach, you want to make sure that you've got a great preacher, somebody you want to listen to. So I do today. My oldest son Elijah is going to come tell you who we've got preaching today. He's not preaching today. That would be a plot twist. Man, it's a... What would you do if I said, and our preacher for today? I'm gonna have to tag in my boy PGF over here, my boy Graham. I think he'd have sex with her. I love it. Man, it's a special day today because we've got a very special guest, Robert Madu in the house.
- And yeah, come on, give it up. And honestly, it's not really accurate. I know we always say this, but it's not really accurate to call him a guest because he's family. Mr. Chunks actually told me that second to my parents, he's actually preached the second most times out of anyone in this pulpit. Can we give it up for that? But come on, y'all, we got one of the best-dressed pastors in the game coming all the way from Dallas, Texas. He's a father of three, a husband

to Taylor Badu, and the pastor of Social Dallas. Elevation, if y'all are not standing up, I need y'all to stand on y'all's feet and help me give a warm welcome to Pastor Robert Badu! Somebody give Jesus just the best shout of praise that you have. Oh, come on, don't give a little cute golf clap. Across every location, if you love Jesus and you're not ashamed about it, come on, would you just take about 10 more seconds and give him the praise that he's worthy of? Oh, come on, somebody.

- Praise him like you know dead beings can come alive today. Come on, praise him like you know chains can break today. Anything can happen in this place. How you feeling, Elevation? Anybody come with some expectancy for what God's going to do today? Tell you what, I didn't wait to get here to get ready for church. I got ready before I got here, got my faith level up, and I said, God's going to do something incredible in this house today. Just in case your neighbor didn't have their coffee, would you just elbow them across every location and say, something's going to happen today. Something's going to happen today. I remain standing because... Elijah took the words out of my mouth. I don't consider myself a guest here. I do consider myself family. And I've been coming here for years, but I don't take it lightly, the honor, the privilege to stand on this stage in this house. This is not ordinary. This is holy. One of the worst things you could do is to treat something holy ordinary. Just get used to it. Just get used to, Pastor Steve and my pastor, he preached, get used to that.
- Oh, that would be crazy. And every time I walk in here, I'm reminded of the faithfulness of God and that this did not happen overnight. This is decades of faithfulness. Decades of saying yes when it was tough. Decades of showing up where you didn't feel like. Two to be specific. Two decades. Anybody can be faithful for a day, but be faithful for decades. That's a big deal. And so many times we celebrate what God does through people, but we don't pause to go, what did it cost them to do that? And before I say anything, especially because he's here, I want to thank God for the gift that is in Pastor Stephen Furtick and his wife, Holly. for the sacrifice, for what it cost you to do this. Come on across every location. I need you to clap till your hands hurt. I want them to know how much we love them, the whole Furtick family, how much we appreciate them.
- Come on, y'all can do better than that. We are grateful. We don't take you for granted. That's the thing. He can call anybody, literally anybody to preach. And so I'm so honored to be here. My wife sends her love. Again, I bring you greetings from the great country of Texas. We pastor a church there, Social Dallas, turned five years old this year. Seeing God do awesome things, but I always get an excused absence to pull up to Elevation. So we're going to have fun. Are y'all tired of standing? Yeah. When you wore those shoes, that's on you. Stay standing. I want to jump straight to the word of God because I do have a word to preach today. There is a story told by the greatest storyteller ever that is stuck in my head. This is stuck in my head. I want to just preach out what's been in my mind. Can we thank God for this worship?
- Come on, love y'all. Set the atmosphere. Go with me to the gospel of Matthew, chapter number 20. Matthew 20. And I want to look at verses 1 through 16. Matthew chapter 20. We'll start at verse 1 and we'll land at verse 16. Now some of y'all are like, oh, that's a lot of scriptures. We need all of it for you to really feel this story. Matthew chapter 20. Once you got it, say yeah. If you need some time to find it, say, I'm long. I heard you. I'ma wait for you. Thank you so much. Declares, for the kingdom of heaven is like a land owner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. About nine in the morning, he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, you also go and work in my vineyard and I will pay you whatever is right.
- So they went. He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. About five in the afternoon, he went out and found still others standing around. And he asked them, why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing? "'Cause no one has hired us,' they answered. He said to them, "'You also go and work in my vineyard.'" Now that's wild to me, because the workday ends at six o'clock. How are you hiring people at five o'clock to go work for one hour? But the landowner felt that was necessary. When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said, No, no, no, go up, go up. No one hired him. It says, when evening came, the only thing he said to his foreman, call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.

The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. Huh. Full day's pay for an hour of work. So when those who were hired first, they, they, See what happened?

- You expected me to say expected. And I expected you to say expected. Most of the pain and the frustration in our lives is not from what happened, it's from what we expected. Anybody ever dealt with the pain of unmet, sometimes unexpressed, Expectation, they expected to receive more, but each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the land owner. These 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. But he answered one of them, I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give to the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? What I say to my wife sometimes, but it don't always work out. Or are you envious because I am generous? So the last will be first and the first will be last. I wanna preach today just using this as a thought. It's not fair. It's not fair. Look at your neighbor one more time, whichever one you like the best, and just say neighbor. Don't be afraid to talk to him, say neighbor.
- It's not fair. It is not fair. Father, have your way. Speak to us today. Amen. You may be seated in the presence of the Lord. It's not fair. Elevation fam. I started preaching before I had kids. I started preaching before I had offspring. And when I was preaching before I had kids, I would listen to other preachers. who would always use their kids as an illustration in their messages, and I would secretly and quietly judge them on the inside, thinking to myself, come on, bruh, where is the creativity? Surely you can find another way to illustrate the text besides talking about your kids all the time. That's what I said. Then I had kids. three of them and I realized that if you don't talk about your kids while you're preaching you ain't doing it right you ain't doing it right because from the moment these little humans are conceived you will be inundated with all kinds of illustrations and and moments that just make you pause and go oh I hear you Lord I hear you Lord help me you know God will use your kids to speak to you Yes, he will. He will use your kids to speak to you. As a matter of fact, he will use your kids to show you you.
- That part. I mean, that moment where they are overreacting, the smallest thing, and they just go off and they're having just this crazy reaction. I'm like, what in the world is wrong with you? And God's like, wrong question. What's wrong with you? She's eight, you're 42. What is wrong with you? Oh, he'll use your kids to speak to you. So my wife and I, we have three kids, three kids, 11, 10, and eight. Two girls and one boy. They are distinctly different. unique in their personalities, yet they are unified in their vision for us as parents. Oh, they got unity in their vision. And here is their vision. Here is their vision statement for us. Here it is. Keep it fair. That is the vision statement, not just of my kids, of every single child around the world. Keep it fair. Keep it fair. Hey, that's not fair. You better keep it fair. Y'all, before there was a laborers union, before there was an HR department, there were kids talking about, wait a minute, you can't do that. That's not fair. I'm not exaggerating. There is not a week. in the Madu household that I don't hear that phrase right there. That's not fair. Dad, that's not fair. He got to go to Legoland, we didn't get to go to Lululemon. That's not fair. Dad, how come she got to stay up late? How come I didn't get to stay up late? That's not fair. Dad, he got to stay home from school. That's not fair. I'm like, he was sick, he had the flu. You want the flu? Yes. All right, come on, let me lay hands on you before you get the flu there. That's not fair. How do you know kids are born with this innate sensitivity to inequity and disparity? They are looking for it. They have fairness detectors on the inside of them. It's funny, researchers even did some research and found out that even as early as infants, they're already able to recognize inequity. As early as 12 months old before they can even have the words to articulate it. There's something in them that's going, this, this, this ain't right. If you don't believe me, do the test after service, just pass out some cake to some kids. And not one of them would just take the cake like this. No, they're going to take it and go. And look, that's not fair. And I share that with you today. Who can I be honest? Because I don't think we outgrow that. I just think we get more subtle and sophisticated in the way we express it.
- But those statements like, must be nice. It gets more problematic when you feel like the person who's not being fair is God. Elevation family, what do you do when you feel like God is not being fair. I know you can't say anything because you want to make everybody think that you walked in here very spiritual and you just pray all the time and

just lift up your hands. But what do you do when you feel like God, this is not fair? God, I've been coming to church faithfully. Like I've been doing good this year. Like I've showed up faithfully and I've been serving any chance that I get. And God, I've been tithing. I've been tithing this year and I've been doing good. Lord, I gave him the year end offering. My word of the year was promotion. And I lost my job. That's not fair. God, I've been doing my best. I'm single and I've been trusting you for my spouse.

- And I've been doing it right. And I've been living holy. And I've been being pure. And I've been doing the best I can. And I've been really believing that you would bless me with somebody to spend the rest of my life with. And it's not happening. Meanwhile, my coworker, who ain't living holy, who's been with Ronnie, Donnie, and everybody. She gonna walk in talking about guess what? That that's not fair. God, my mom, all she does is pray. All she does is read the word. All she does is help people. And she's gonna get breast cancer. And I'm gonna pray and fast and cry out to you and she doesn't get healed. God, that's not fair. If you've ever felt like God hasn't been fair, come with me to this story in Matthew chapter 20. This story that you will only find in Matthew's gospel. Oh yes, Marky Mark don't talk about this. Dr. Luke don't talk about this. Lil John don't talk about this. Only Matthew. Leave it to the tax collector. To find the one story. Where he said hold on. The math ain't math then.
- In this story right here. Only Matthew gives us this story. In Matthew chapter 20. Where Jesus begins to teach. As he often did. By giving parables. Jesus would often tell. parables, stories. It was one of his greatest mediums for articulating how his kingdom works. He would tell these stories, these parables. In fact, he would lock in the parable, the logic of how his kingdom works. Because you understand that your God is a king, and he has a kingdom, and there's a system, the way his kingdom works. He didn't get voted in. He didn't get elected in. Your God is sovereign, and he's a king. Often his kingdom is completely antithetical to how the system of this world works. So he would hide the logic of his kingdom in the language of these parables. I love parables because one of the principles of the parables is you hold on to truth that you discover better than the truth that's just delivered. So often he would give you the parable and wouldn't even give you the explanation. He'd tell the story and then walk on the stage. He who has an ear, let him hear. He just give you the story because he wanted you to meditate on that story. He wanted you to savor the story. He wanted to hit you later. He wanted to hit you later. He wants you to be eating hummus and pita one day and go, oh my God, I'm the lost sheep. He left the 99 for me.
- I didn't even know. He would do that on purpose. That's the power of the story. And so he tells the story in Matthew chapter 20. But anytime you're looking at a Jesus story, you got to ask yourself, what made him tell the story? In order to find out what made him tell this story, we got to back that thing up biblically. To Matthew chapter 19. Matthew chapter 19. Something interesting happens. Jesus is chillaxing. And this rich young ruler, this rich young ruler comes up to Jesus. He's a baller. He's a shot caller. He's doing a well. He's an influencer. He's got money. And he walks up to Jesus and he says, hey, good teacher. What must I do to inherit eternal life? What must I do? See, this is a business dude. So he thinks transactionally. That's his logic. He's, hey, I got to do something to get something. So what must I do to inherit eternal life? And I love it because Jesus goes, all right, you want to play this game? What must I do to get? Never mind. It has to be given. It's just grace. You get, but never mind. Okay, you want to play this game? He goes, all right, well, just keep all the commandments. Keep the commandments. He says, well, I've done that. Oh, wow. Okay, you've done all that. He goes, all right. One thing you lack. Sell everything you got. Give it to the poor. And then you'll have treasure in heaven. And I want you to come follow me. Can you imagine that? That's a big invitation right there. The fact that Jesus even gave him the opportunity. y'all could have been the 13th disciple. Jesus didn't give everybody the opportunity. He did not. Remember one dude was possessed by a demon. Jesus cast it out and the guy was like, can I go with y'all? And Jesus was like, nah fam. No, we good. Let's just go back and tell everybody what I did for you. But this rich young ruler, he gets the invitation of a lifetime. You're going to get the greatest apprenticeship of a lifetime. You get to roll with Jesus, just sell everything you have. And the Bible says that he walked away bitterly because he had a lot of possessions. But the real thing is his possessions had him. Oh, I don't want to go there because it's not my sermon.

- But it's scary when idols form in your heart. Because sometimes you don't even know it's an idol until God goes, can I have it? This man didn't know that his possessions had him until God said, can I have it? And he walked away. Meanwhile, Peter is watching the whole thing. Oh, you need a Peter. You need a Peter to say the thing that nobody else will say. They think of that. And Peter watches this guy walk away. Peter goes, hold up. In his ear. We gave, we left everything to follow you, Jesus. Hold on. We did what this brother could not do. So, since we left everything, what did we get? And Jesus goes, oh, Peter, you get a story. You get a story. There was a landowner. that had a vineyard and had workers in his vineyard. And this landowner started looking for workers in his vineyard. I like this landowner. He's got a big vineyard and he's looking for workers you often would go to the marketplace and you would hire people for the day.
- So the very fact that this landowner is going out and is looking for workers is letting us know what season it is. It's letting us know the season because you didn't need a lot of workers for the planting season. You certainly didn't need no workers for the waiting season. But when the harvest hit, You needed all the help you could get. Y'all, when the harvest hit, you needed as many hands as you could get. Because how many know, you didn't have all day to get the harvest. There was a season. There was a window that you had to get the harvest. about landowners would be like, hey, come on, you can work. You can work. Wait, you got two hands?
- Come on. Oh, you only got one? Well, that's cool. Come on. You can work too. Because when the harvest hit, you needed as many workers, as many hands as you could get. The landowner was not looking for spectators. He was looking for workers. He was looking for somebody that would roll up their sleeves and say, I realize that there's a harvest that is ripe and we got to get this harvest in. And how many know the bigger the harvest, the more hands you need to pull in the harvest. Let me tell you why some of y'all ain't shouted. Because you think God called you to just come to church and sit on your blessed assurance and hear a cute little message and go home. No, no, no, no. We need workers in the kingdom of God because there is a harvest. that is plentiful. There is a harvest that is ready. And we need people to say, I'll do whatever it takes to get the harvest in.
- Can I just stop right here and thank God for the workers at Elevation Church that helped bring in the harvest. And E-Kids right now saying, I gotta be here, cause the harvest is here in the parking lot. Saying, come on this way. You know what some of y'all are like in the parking lot. Come on this way. It's okay. Why? Cause the harvest. the harvest hits you need all the help you can get ask me how I know our church has been in 14 different venues since we started setting up and tearing down God's blessed us with a building or believe in God to raise the money to renovate the building oh but let me tell you we still set up piping train every single Sunday and why are we doing it because the heart is it when the harvest hits you need all the help you can get I wonder if God is waiting for you to put your hand to the plow.
- Or have you gotten so used to just coming to church and receiving like it's a buffet? Say, hey, I was good this week. Bless God. Come back next week for some more. No, no, no, no. He wasn't looking for spectators. He was looking for workers. It's interesting because I like this landowner because later we will find out in the text that he has somebody that can pay these workers. He's got a foreman that can pay them. I'm thinking if you got somebody that can pay them, surely you got somebody that can pick them. But the landowner doesn't like that. The landowner is so obsessed with going out and picking them. He wants to. Because I can get anybody to pay you. You can get reward from other people, but when it comes to calling, When it comes to picking, I want to do that because you will never forget the day that you were standing in the marketplace, desperate, knowing that you wouldn't be able to eat that day if you didn't find work. And I don't want you to forget the moment when I came out to the marketplace and said, you, you, right here, you, I want you to feel the joy of being chosen, of being picked. Ooh, I like this landowner. He likes to pick his people.
- Elbow the person next to you just in case they fall asleep and say, he chose me. He chose me. He chose me. He goes out and he picks each and every one of them. The text says he goes out at 6 a.m. He goes out again at 9. He goes out again at noon. He goes out again at 3. And goes out again at 5. Five times he goes out to pick. Now that confused me, because I'm like landowner, are you confused? Why do you keep going out to pick people? Seems like to me, if you

know your land, you should just go out once at 6 a.m. and say, hey, I'm hiring. Y'all come on. Why does the landowner keep going out? Five times he goes out to pick people. First of all, it lets us know he's got land big enough that it needs a lot of workers. But he keeps going out because maybe the text is letting us know that's exactly what grace does.

- How many are thankful for God's grace that will keep going out and keep reaching out for you? Come on, even when you think that grace should have just said, that's enough, I already went out once. No, I'm going to go out again and I'm going to pick you and I'm going to choose you. I don't know about you, but I'm thankful for the grace of God that keeps pursuing me, that keeps chasing after me. He says, I'm going to keep going out. And he goes out five times. Which made me think, since he went out five times, do we have five categories of workers? He went out of six, nine, noon, three, and five. So we got five categories of workers, right? Wrong. We don't have five categories of workers. Because you'll notice that there's something distinctly different about the 6 a.m. crew. that got picked first, they had a different arrangement than the rest of the workers.
- So really, we got different times, but it's really only two categories of workers. The 6 a.m. crew is distinctly different from the rest. Before I tell you how they're different, let's just talk about these 6 a.m. people. Ooh, that got picked first. Doesn't it feel good to get picked first? Ooh, 6 a.m. people. You know they weren't there at six o'clock. You know, they were there like 5:40. Those 6 a.m. people. They're like, you know, to be on time is to be late. To be early is to be on time. And to be late is unacceptable. I'm going to be here at 5:45. And I've already got my resume. Yes, I have how many vineyards I've worked in. Yes, I've. I'm very good, I'm very talented. And they were there and they were prepared. They had their resumes.
- Can you see them? You know those 6 a.m. people. They're here in the room today. The 6 a.m. people are the people back in school when you wanted to cheat on their test. And they see you trying to cheat and they be like, oh, come on, 6 a.m. people, 6 a.m. people. Oh, you got it together. You got your resume. So you know the 6 a.m. people were there and they were looking to get hired. It's a landowner. And in my mind, the landowner pulls up in his F-150. And he says, hey, y'all looking for some work? They're like, of course. Been here early. You saw our resume on LinkedIn, right? Yeah, OK. So the landowner's like, I'm hiring. Get in the truck. They're like, yeah, OK, we will. But one second. One second? Hey, come on. Get in the truck. No, no, we want to. But just we need to discuss this. Compensation? Compensation? Come on, man. Don't you want to work? Look, I'll pay you whatever's right. Whatever's right? Yeah, right. We need to know what are we going to get before we go to work. And then I was like, all right. How about a denarius? Full day's work, full day's pay. Denarius? Bet. Now. Let's get in the truck. Some of you are like, I didn't see that in the text. It's in verse number two. In verse number two, it says, Matthew chapter 20, it says that he agreed to pay them a denarius for the day. and sent them into his vineyard.
- He agreed. That word agreed in the original language is the word *symphoneo*. It's where we get this word symphony. It means that they had to go back and forth until they got to an agreement. There was a bargaining. And then finally, they said, good, all right, we'll go. Now that we know what we're going to get. The rest of the crew had a different setup. Let me show you their setup. It's in verse four and five. It says, he told them, that's the rest of the workers, you also go work in my vineyard and I will pay you whatever's right. So they went. No going back and forth, no negotiation. Whatever you think is right, cool. We just wanna work. Do you see the difference? So one group has a contract. The other group has trust. One group, is trusting the compensation. The other group says, I just trust the consistent character of the landowner and whatever the landowner thinks is right, I'm cool with that right there. One group is walking by agreement. The other group says, I'm walking by faith. I just trust that the landowner is gonna do whatever is right and he will determine what the pay is. Do you see the difference between the 6 a.m. people and the rest? One said, I wanna make sure I get what I deserve.
- And the other group said, I'm just gonna trust the consistent character of the landowner and whatever you think is right, I'll go with that. I love this 5 p.m. crew. When I get to heaven, I wanna talk to them. I do, because I wanna ask them, What made you stay at the marketplace all day when you weren't picked? What made you sit there watching people pass you by, watching other people get noticed before you? Why would you stay there till five o'clock when

you know there was only going to be an hour left to work? What would make you say that's my question for them? And then I want to thank God for the landowner who says that even at five o'clock, I'll still go out just in case there's some people who have been overlooked. Just in case there's some people that. Didn't look like they were going to be the best. I'm going to keep going out for them.

- I don't know about you. Maybe you have the best resume. Maybe you were one of the ones that were picked first. But I want to thank God that he still goes out for the 5 p.m. people. I want to thank God that even when I've been overlooked, that even when nobody said, oh, he don't look like he got what it takes, there's a God who says, no, you don't know what I can do with him. You don't know how I can change her life. Give me her. And he picked the 5 p.m. people. Now, these 5 p.m. people, we got to talk about them. Because that's why the text wants us to talk about them. The ones in the middle are just filling in the story. He wants us to look at the 6 a.m. and the 5 p.m. How do you know? Because he says the last shall be first. And the first. Shabby like, he's pointing us to the extremes. That's why he had them go.
- So these 5 p.m. people, they're funny because if there's only a workday that ends at 6 o'clock and I got hired at 5. Okay, here's my question. How far is the vineyard from the marketplace? 15 minutes? Okay. You get to work at 5.15. Workday ends at 6. You got orientation. Now we have 535. You got to get your badge, take your picture, get your bag, and go down to the vineyard. By the time you get down to the vineyard, y'all, it's 550. How many grapes you picking up? In 10 minutes. Can you imagine? You picked up three grapes. The whistle's blown. And your shift is over. And now it's time for everybody to get paid. landowner calls his foreman over and says, hey, come here real quick. He's like, what's up? He said, hey, man, I know you're about to pay him, but I want to do something different this time. He's like, something different? You always want to do something different? Oh, Lord. And he goes, okay, here's what I want to do. Let's pay the 5 p.m. workers first, and then let's pay the 6 a.m. workers. last and pay them all the same. The four four minutes like you're trying to get me shot.
- OK, so can you see him? You got to see it. Can you see them lined up? Can you see the 5 p.m. people there down here? Can you see the 6 a.m. people? They've been working since 6 a.m.. Their hands have blood and calluses on it. They're sweaty. time of the can you see that they smell like outside meanwhile the 5 p.m. people smell like Le Labo and look so fresh and so clean and here comes the foreman to the 5 p.m. people first Denarius No, no, no. Are you serious? I'm a full day's pay. I didn't do anything. Look, I've got three grapes in my bag. No, no, no. No, I can't take this. I can't take this. No, I didn't do anything. Let me go pick some more grapes. No, this is the will of the landowner to take it. This is too much. I can't take it. Let me go try to earn it and do something. No, this is what he wants. They are standing there with gratitude, knowing they shouldn't even have been picked in the first place. They only got five breaks, and yet they got paid a full day's work.
- Meanwhile, the 6 a.m. people are watching the whole thing. Must be nice. Are you serious? Did you see what I see? They just paid them for a whole day's work. You think I saw they paid five raves? Oh, I cannot believe it. But then they hit some, oh, wait a minute. If they got, if they got a full day's pay for only an hour, we about, ooh! We about to get paid! Oh, can you see I'm getting excited? Let's just imagine that it nears like \$200. You know how you start doing, you start doing that, and they go, Oh, we're about to get \$2,400! The Amazon cart is full! Oh, they're planning a trip to the Bahamas! They are so excited! And then the foreman comes up and goes, Daenerys, what? And all hell breaks loose. And they can't stand it. And they crumbled against it. What's wild is the landowner kept his word. You negotiated. He didn't cheat you. You said you wanted the nary's. That's what you got. Why would the landowner do that? Why would the landowner make them watch everybody else get paid? Because there's something God will always do in you. He wants you to see other people get blessed. He wants you to see other people that you don't think deserve the grace of God. He will bless them right in front of you because that's actually good for your little soul. He wants to know, can you still trust me?
- When you see somebody get something that you don't think they deserve, this is their issue. It's not what they got paid. It's what somebody they thought didn't deserve it, got paid and they grumbled against them. Okay, all of that was my intro. To get you to this point, In every Jesus parable, you gotta ask yourself this. Who are you in the story?

Who are you in this story? Why are you thinking about it? The landowner is taken. I know, I know. Because you're like, well, I do have some properties. And I just said, landowner's taken. Landowner's gone. So are you the 5 p.m. worker, just grateful that he called you, just thankful to be in the vineyard? Or are you the 6 a.m. worker, always got your hand down, calling, Scottie, who are you? And before you say you're a 5 p.m. person, Let's be honest, we all got some 6 a.m. in us.

- Woo! In fact, as I land the plane, I wanna give you some blues clues of how you can know you got some 6 a.m. in you. You know you're a 6 a.m. worker, hear me, you know you're a 6 a.m. worker when you always have a grumble, a grumble. They grumbled against the landowner. Grumble, see, that word grumble is interesting because it's not like a loud defiant fist saying, I can't believe this. It's actually just under your breath. It's bitterness under your breath. I can't believe this. I've been coming to this church for a long time. I still haven't done anything to bless me. I always honor other people. I've been here 20 years. You know, I didn't do nothing for me. It's a grumble. Are your complaints louder than your praise? You do know that God does not inhabit the complaints of his people. He inhabits the praises of his people.
- And one of the ways you know you got some 6 a.m. in you is when you always got a grumble. Always complaining. He said the average person complains 15 to 20 times a day. Let's be honest, there's rookie numbers for some of us. You always have a grumble. Number two, you know you got some 6 a.m. in your system. when you expect what was never promised. Why do you have an expectation for more? You negotiated the contract. Many of us are mad at God because we're expecting something from him that he actually never promised you at all. That was something that you came up with. That was something that was in your own mind. Are you mad at God? Because you're expecting something from him that he never promised you? You know you got some 6 a.m. in your system when you struggle to celebrate other people.
- When God blesses somebody else, your immediate reaction is, them, Lord? Are you for real? They don't deserve that. I've been saved way longer than them. Do you celebrate other people? That's one of the signs you got some 6 a.m. in you. Last one. You know you got some 6 a.m. in your system when you think God owes you. Hear me. This is often one of the casualties of faithfulness. It's entitlement. Is you think, well, because I have been serving, because I have been doing this. God, you must perform this way. God, because I did show up, you must heal. And God, because I did give in the offering, you better open up the window of heaven. What is going on? God, have you been shaking your face? fist at God thinking that he owes you something. This text is a warning to all of us that don't let your faithfulness become entitlement to where you start looking up to God thinking he owes you something.
- Can I tell you something? God doesn't owe you anything because he already gave you everything. If he never gave you another dollar, if he never opened up another door, if he didn't do anything but send his only son to die on a cross for your sins, wouldn't that be enough? And I'm looking for some 5 p.m. people who say, I'm not going to have my hands out. Going, God, you owe me more. I'm going to have my hands up. Going, God, I thank you for what you've done. God, thank you for saving me. God, thank you. I could have been stuck in my sins, but thanks be unto God for your faithfulness, for your kindness, for your goodness.
- Oh, God, you don't owe me anything. I owe you everything. You want to know if you're a 6 a.m. person or a 5 p.m. person? Watch this. Check your hands. Check your hands. 6 a.m. people, always have their hands out. Look into the right and the left. I can't believe I didn't get that. I can't believe they got blessed. I can't believe they got more opportunity. They always have their hands out looking to the left and the right, but 5 p.m. people always have their hands up. They just can't believe. that God called them. They just can't believe that God chose them. I don't know about you, but I'm gonna spend all of my life being a 5 p.m. person. I know where I could be. I know where I should be. If it had not been for the grace of God, I'm gonna lift, here it is, both of my hands. Who am I that you would think about me? Who am I that you would choose me? Come on, I want all the 5 p.m. people. Would you open up your mouth and give God some praise and just thank him? Thank him for his salvation.
- Thank him for his mercy. Thank him for his goodness. Thank him for blessing you when you didn't deserve it. Matter of fact, I don't deserve anything. I'm lifting bones from my head. I'm telling you. casualty of faithfulness sometimes is

entitlement. Thinking that because I've been showing up, because I've been doing this, God, you owe me. When God doesn't owe you anything. Look at his grace, even to the 6am people. I'm not being unfair to you, friend. Friend. kept my word. You wanted a contract instead of just trusting my character. But it's not fair. Yeah. Thank God it's not fair. Because grace is not fair. Fair? Because I spent an eternity in hell. Fair? Because it should have been me on the cross. That's fair. Thank God. It ain't fair. Grace is not fair. I'm going to ask every head be bowed and eyes be closed today. I really felt like this message was for today.

- Somebody who's been maybe shaking your fist at God. And I'm begging you to turn your entitlement into gratitude. Gratitude is the antidote for complaining, for bitterness, for being stuck just to say, God, I thank you. Thank you. If you're here today and you'd be so honest and say, you know what, there's a lot of 6 a.m. that's been creeping in. My complaints have outweighed my praise and my thanksgiving. And today you need to turn. from being a 5 p.m. person to a 6 a.m. person, if that's you and you know this word was for you, would you just lift up your hand just as a sign and say, Lord, I hear you. I hear you. You don't owe me anything. I'm going to start with gratitude. I see those hands. Anybody else across every location? Thank you, God. Thank you, Jesus. Grace is not there. Thank God we don't get what we deserve. Heads to bow. Eyes still closed.
- Across every location in this room, if you've never taken that first step. Just to say, Jesus, my life is yours. Some of you, maybe you've been trying to earn salvation, thinking, well, I'll come to God when I get my life together. I'll come to God when I do more. It's not about doing. It's about receiving what was already done for you. He's a good landowner. He loves you. He's a landowner that keeps going out. He'll wait till five o'clock if he has to. Looking for you. So if you're here today, I don't care if it's one person, you're worth it. To say today's the day I need to give Jesus my life. Would you just lift up your hand as a sign to say, I'm coming home. I'm giving him my heart today. Thank you, Jesus.
- Thank you, God. Thank you, God. Yeah. See those hands? Yeah. Somebody lifting up both of their hands. Absolutely. That's what 5 p.m. people do. They lift up both of their hands. Anybody else?
- Come on, I want to lead you in this prayer just before pastor comes. I'm going to give you the words, but you just say it from your heart.
- Say, Jesus, I believe that you are the son of God. Jesus, I believe that you lived the life that I was supposed to live. You died the death that I was supposed to die. You took my place. So my response is to give you everything. Come into my life. Forgive me of my sins. Make me brand new. From this moment forward, I'm walking with you. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
- Come on, give God one more hand clap of praise. Elevation. Come on, can we just worship a little bit? Oh, we're grateful people, God. We're grateful people, God. Oh, what more can we say but thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus. Come on, every voice. I'm giving all that I am Cause you gave me chance I have to change I have to change And I Yeah, yeah I'm giving all that I am Cause you gave me chance I have to change I have to change And I I can do it with my hands She gave me a chance I can change I can change Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus. Cause you gave me just not the chance Not the chance to survive I'm not gonna let you go I'll give it all that I have Cause you gave me just not the chance Not the chance To live on Now you keep me So I can fight for you