

**Matthew 20: 1-16 – Workers in the Vineyard**  
Interactive sermon preached on Labour Day 2011

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- **It is Labour Day, so I'm going to put you to work**
- **remember your first pay-cheque**
- **my first job - \$11.00**
- **this parable --- allegorizing – typical interpretation:**
  - the Landowner becomes God
  - the workers at dawn a new converts
  - the ones that show up later are those who convert on their deathbeds
  - sometimes the late arrivals are the Jews
- **when we allegorize this parable it becomes a nice little story about grace**
- **beware of parables that become nice little stories**
- **parables by their very nature are designed to disturb**
  - *afflict the comfortable while comforting the afflicted*
  - *verbal hand-grenades*
- **so let's begin by not allegorizing this parable and see where that takes us**
- **first some information about context:**
  - **the afflicted:**
    - Jesus audience lived under the occupation of the Romans
    - landowners had a few choices
      - they could oppose the Romans and lose their land --- and become day-labourers
      - or they could collaborate with the Romans and participate in the abuse of their countrymen
- **as an occupied people, the Jews were waiting for a saviour other than Caesar**
- **when would things change**
- **when would the oppression end**
- **eschatology does not mean the end of the world....it simply means the end**
- **the Jews were longing for the end of oppression and they were looking for a saviour to help them get it**
- **apocalypse ...revelation**
- **the Jewish people were looking for some revelation about when and how this oppressive horrible system of occupation that sets neighbour against neighbour is going to end**
  - **when is God going to end this nonsense?**
  - **when is God going to end this injustice**
- **What hidden revelation lies in this parable?**
- **What's the aha of this parable?**
  - **Jesus spoke more about money than anything else**
  - **money lies at the core of who we are**
  - **so what if the Land-owner is just that -- a landowner**
  - **the workers are just that day-labourers**
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  - **what is Jesus trying to do with this story about the system**
  - **remember that the people were looking for a saviour**
  - **when is God going to end this nonsense?**
  - **when is God going to end this injustice**
  - **saviours had come and gone**

- saviours generally point to some far off day in the future and say “somewhere in the future God is going to put an end to the injustice
- any day now
- Jesus says: here, today, now,
- it’s not coming soon its here already
  - the reign of God is here already and let me tell you just what it looks like
  - so, back to our day-labourers

- current Minimum Wage:

\$10.25 x 40 hours = \$410. per week  
 = \$1,640 per month  
 = \$21,320 per year

Ontario Works = \$585. per month

Disability = \$1,555. per month

Housing: per month --

transportation

-- financing, gas, repairs

- we are the land-owners
- we want to pay less
- we want to pay the labourers less
- we are the landowners
- disturbed yet
- we want to pay less taxes
- we want to pay less for our groceries
- we want to pay less for our stuff
- my iPad I want to pay less, so Apple pays less....they find an oppressive system and they make their iPads in China
- and it’s not just Apple, its the whole economic system...it’s Walmart, it’s the oil industry, what else?
- we want to pay less
- But we also want more
- we want our investments to provide us with bigger dividends
- we want our land to increase in value
- we want more
- we want more for less
- we want to pay less taxes
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- the system is corrupt, and it abuses workers and we benefit directly from that system by paying less
- are you disturbed yet
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- God isn’t going to save us from the system
- God is going to work in with and through us to change the system
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- origins of Labour day?
- 1872 ...Toronto Trades Assembly organized Canada’s first significant demonstration for worker’s rights

- 24 leaders of the Toronto Typographical Union had been imprisoned for striking to win a 9 hour working day
- Unions were still illegal in Canada
- The public turned out in vast numbers and the powers that be began to see that something had to give
- a few months after that first parade, another was organized in Ottawa
- this parade passed by the home of our first prime minister Sir John A MacDonald
- later that day MacDonald appeared before the crowd and promised to repeal the laws against trade unions
- Labour Day was originally celebrated on May 1st ... as International Workers Day
- But was changed during the Cold War to September
- How many of you are going to march in a Labour Day parade tomorrow?
- Of course we're not going to be in a parade
- We are after all the Landowners
- We are the beneficiaries of the system
- When is God going to intervene and get rid of the injustice of it all?
- God already is intervening, right now
- the system changes when landowners like you and I pay more than what is fair.
- are you disturbed now!
- Are you annoyed yet!
- The system of injustice ends when you and I pay more and get less.
- The good news dear brothers and sisters is that there is more than enough to go around.
- Your kingdom come O God; your Kingdom Come.
- Oh Yeah, according to Jesus it's already here. The Kingdom of God happens in with and through you and me.
- Are you ready to pay more and receive less.
- Are you bothered now?