

Interactive lesson



pictures from MMS collection

Oh dear, can I have a volunteer to help pick these up? I will give you chocolate!

How is the stack coming along?

Do you have it done?

Nice work! Now I can rebox it. Would you like your reward now?

Okay, you came up later, so here is one chocolate bar for you.

You came up when I first asked and had to stack a lot more than Here is your chocolate bar

Was the way I rewarded them fair?

Did I give them what I said I would?

Do either of them lack chocolate?

What do you think about the way God blesses us?

As I read the Gospel lesson, I want you to consider what peoples' needs are relative to what they did, what they received, and our expectations.

Gospel lesson

We skip forward this week from where we left off last week in Matthew. Jesus went from Galilee to Judea. A

rich young man asked Him about getting into heaven; Jesus told him to give up all the wealth that tied him down and then come follow Jesus.

Peter then said to Jesus that the disciples had already done that, and wanted to know what they would receive. Jesus confirmed that they would be rewarded, and then told this parable.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/Lumo-workers-vineyard/>

Matthew 20:1-16

NRSV

¹ "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.

² After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard.

³ When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace;

⁴ and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went.

⁵ When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same.

⁶ And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why are

you standing here idle all day?'

⁷ They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.'
He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.'

⁸ When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.'

⁹ When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage.

¹⁰ Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage.

¹¹ And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner,

¹² saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.'

¹³ But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage?

¹⁴ Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you.

¹⁵ Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?'

¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

The word of God for the people of God

<Hymn "God Will Take Care of You"

UMH #130>

Message: The Burden of the Day



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/for-the-long-haul/seventeenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/seventeenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-graphics>

Please pray with me?

God of bounty and grace,

as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may learn to accept all the ways You show Your love to us and to others, giving thanks instead of burdening ourselves with resentment due to unfounded expectations. Amen.

We prepare ourselves "For the Long Haul" series by dealing with "The Burden of the Day."

"God provides. It seems clear that this is one of the messages from our texts this week. But it would also be clear that God provides for our needs in unusual and sometimes confusing ways."



pictures from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/selective-focus-photo-of-a-farmer-holding-a-brown-hen-7782051/>; photo credit RDNE Stock project and <https://www.pexels.com/photo/a-pair-of-women-having-a-drink-in-a-fine-dining-restaurant-8921580/>; photo credit: Ron Lach

You may have seen this story on the internet. A person stopped at a roadside stand where a poor farmer was selling eggs for \$3/dozen. Looking for a bargain, the person said, “I’ll give you \$2.50 per dozen for your eggs.”

“Okay,” said the farmer, “take all you want at that price. I’ve been here all day and have not sold any yet, and I need some cash.”

Proud to have gotten a good deal from the farmer, the person took the eggs home and then went out to eat at a fancy restaurant. When they got the bill, they gave a nice tip to impress the well-dressed workers there.

Who needed the money more? That poor farmer or the well-dressed workers? I would guess the farmer needed the cash more, though we cannot know for sure. Yet it is typical in this culture to throw money at those who do not really need it and to judge badly those who do, without knowing their full circumstances.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/moses-food-water/>

In the Old Testament reading, the people who had

escaped Egypt needed food. Did they trust the God who had just performed all those plagues and saved them from the Egyptian army to provide what they needed?

Apparently not. They complained at Moses, since he was in front of them and they did not understand that God was with each of them too. Did you notice that Moses did not have to ask the Lord about it before God had Moses tell the people how the people would get food? God was in their midst, and is in ours today. We can trust God to provide for our needs – though like the Israelites, we may not understand what the blessing is when we first see it.

Note that they did not get plates full of food to just dig into. They had to gather it each day that they wanted to eat, except the Sabbath. God blesses us but does not enable laziness – we are to live and grow and do beyond ourselves, not stagnate and decay.



picture from

<https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/bt-paul-lydia/>

Paul in his letter to the Philippians talked about how he wanted to be with Christ, which would mean dying, but stayed alive for the sake of the churches. Paul looked beyond himself, working on behalf of others, teaching others about Jesus through the relationships that he had established. Because of this, he found life worth living, such that when he

finally did go to Christ, he could be called a “good and faithful servant.”

When we start to work for others, I think we tend to look around and see how much others are doing and compare their efforts to ours. We have a sense that equal output should mean equal reward, regardless of our abilities or needs. I think God looks at us, sees that we are trying, and meets our needs – perhaps so that we can do better in the future.



picture from

<https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/Lumo-workers-vineyard/>

Jesus told a story today about people needing work. The vineyard owner only hired some of them each time – he asked the last ones why they had been “standing here idle all day,” so he must have seen them available earlier.

Experts have estimated that in Jesus’s day, about a third of people were food insufficient – they did not know where their next meal would come from – and another third were on the brink of food insufficiency – they were managing OK day-to-day, but any misfortune would tip them over the edge.

Those looking for work in the marketplace probably did not have steady income day-to-day. If they had families to support, they really needed to earn the

full day's wages to get by.

Jesus does not say why the manager did not hire more workers earlier, or why he hired others throughout the day. I also do not know why some people are introduced to the love of Jesus early in their lives and some do not get saved until later in life.

I do understand that God knows our needs, that Jesus came to save all of us just as the vineyard owner went to the market to hire all of those workers. We all need God's grace to live eternally, just as all of those vineyard workers needed a full day's wages to survive.

Our Lord is not looking for a transactional relationship with us, where we earn grace allotments. Jesus gives us what we need, the blessing of life, because we respond to God's call.



picture from

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Before we complain that we have worked hard through the burden of the day as Christians and are not getting the recognition that we deserve, perhaps we should consider how much God loves us and has already provided for us. Or that just as the Israelites had to collect manna on a daily basis, we have work to do for God's kingdom on a daily basis too.

This week, each day:

- † Consciously trust God's love and mercy to work in your life.
- † Reach out to others.
- † Work in our Master's vineyard, even if it means bearing the burden of the day, because you can make a difference for others in God's kingdom.
- † Seek to understand the work God would have you do, whether it is physical labor such as helping a neighbor with a building project or non-physical such as calling a beloved relative or friend to brighten their day.
- † Build God's community on earth by providing toward need, not merely based on what this world deems fair or expected.
- † And give God thanks that we are included in the kingdom, for the blessings give us that we can never earn.