

“What about Me Makes Me Worthy?” (Growth in Grace III)
(Study 5 of “Spiritual Processing Group: Sonship B” Series)

Scripture Passage (Parable of the Vineyard Workers)

English Standard Version Translation (ESV)~ Matthew 20:1-16

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

New Living Translation (NLT)~ Matthew 20:1-16

“For the Kingdom of Heaven is like the landowner who went out early one morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ² He agreed to pay the normal daily wage and sent them out to work. ³ “At nine o’clock in the morning he was passing through the marketplace and saw some people standing around doing nothing. ⁴ So he hired them, telling them he would pay them whatever was right at the end of the day. ⁵ So they went to work in the vineyard. At noon and again at three o’clock he did the same thing. ⁶ “At five o’clock that afternoon he was in town again and saw some more people standing around. He asked them, ‘Why haven’t you been working today?’ ⁷ “They replied, ‘Because no one hired us.’ “The landowner told them, ‘Then go out and join the others in my vineyard.’ ⁸ “That evening he told the foreman to call the workers in and pay them, beginning with the last workers first. ⁹ When those hired at five o’clock were paid, each received a full day’s wage. ¹⁰ When those hired first came to get their pay, they assumed they would receive more. But they, too, were paid a day’s wage. ¹¹ When they received their pay, they protested to the owner, ¹² ‘Those people worked only one hour, and yet you’ve paid them just as much as you paid us who worked all day in the scorching heat.’ ¹³ “He answered one of them, ‘Friend, I haven’t been unfair! Didn’t you agree to work all day for the usual wage?’ ¹⁴ Take your money and go. I wanted to pay this last worker the same as you. ¹⁵ Is it against the law for me to do what I want with my money? Should you be jealous because I am kind to others?’ ¹⁶ “So those who are last now will be first then, and those who are first will be last.”

Spiritual Exercise: “Forms of Self-Righteousness Versus Jesus’ Righteousness”

Noticing and Naming: “Figuring Out Where and Why You Get Judgmental”

The following forms of self-righteousness are common ways people pretend and perform. They tend to be good things or things we are good at that we use to compare ourselves favorably to others. This results in us thinking, “At the end of the day, I’m better than them (because of _____); and they are worse than me.” These “righteousnesses” are some of the areas in our lives we typically turn to in moments of self-doubt or self-assurance. They answer the question we are all always asking ourselves- often below the level of self-awareness: “What gives me personal credibility- or validity, acceptance, good standing?” To pull our guard down slightly, the following examples are worded in ways that might feel extreme or not accurately reflect how you would say it out loud.

To make this personal, silently read through the following forms of self-righteousness. Feel free to underline any words or phrases you recognize in yourself (or have been told about yourself). Then put a check mark next to any types of righteousness that sound familiar or you’ve seen working more than once in your heart or head. Often, these will have words or phrases you’ve underlined. Finally, read again through the kinds of righteousness you just made a check mark next to, and circle the check mark or check marks of the self-righteousness thoughts you identify with the most.

_____ CAREER RIGHTEOUSNESS: “I prepare a lot or I’ve got great social skills, and I am a hard worker. So, I am better at my job, or God will reward me more- than those slackers or awkward souls.”

_____ FAMILY RIGHTEOUSNESS: “I come from a good home, I am better adjusted, more mature- than those who come from a ‘bad’ or ‘wrong kind of’ home. Or I come from a hard family situation, I ‘get it’ or understand life more- than those kids who grew up in privilege- with parents that are rich or just help them a lot.”

_____ THEOLOGICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS: “I know the Bible, and rarely don’t have the answers. I know better about what really counts in this life, and I am more worth God’s spiritual investment- than those ‘superficial’ or ‘simple’ Christians.”

_____ INTELLECTUAL RIGHTEOUSNESS: “I am better read, more articulate, or more culturally sensitive- than those ‘insensitive’ or ‘uneducated’ Americans.”

_____ SCHEDULE RIGHTEOUSNESS: “I am self-disciplined, and in control of my time. I am productive, efficient, and I don’t waste time- like those immature “procrastinators” or Type-B irresponsible folks.”

_____ FLEXIBILITY RIGHTEOUSNESS: “In a world that’s busy and way too Type-A, I’m flexible and relaxed. I always have time for others, and time to hang out- unlike the uptight, color-coded schedule people I know.”

_____ MERCY RIGHTEOUSNESS: “I care about fairness and the poor and disadvantaged. I’m open-minded, accepting, and loving- unlike those bigots or judgmental people. I am actively

doing something about social conditions now (or at least I plan to in the future)- unlike the ‘selfish’ or ‘powerful.’ ”

_____ POPULARITY RIGHTEOUSNESS: “I’m fun or funny. I know how to have a good time. I have cool hobbies that people envy, or I can lighten up a room or control a conversation. People like me so much I’m not like those serious or boring people.”

_____ LEGALISTIC RIGHTEOUSNESS: “I don’t drink, smoke, party, binge, or casually ‘flirt.’ I just care about holiness and purity- unlike *so* many ‘Christians’ I know.”

_____ HEALTH/ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTEOUSNESS: “I only eat food that is good for you (organic or low-calorie). I work out religiously, and/or I care about sustainability and our planet. I’m not like those who are irresponsible about their bodies, food sources, animals, and the ozone).”

_____ POLITICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS: “I know the issues. I read, watch, or listen to the actual news. I vote for the right party and candidates- unlike those other people who don’t vote or who vote ‘uninformed’ about the real issues or what God wants for this country or world.”

_____ SOCIAL CLASS RIGHTEOUSNESS: “I can appreciate the finer things in life like food, alcohol, music- unlike those pop-music or fast-food people. Or I don’t come from money, and I get common people with real-life, real-world concerns- unlike those wealthy snobs.”

The Invitation to Rest: “How to Dismantle Self-Righteousness: Jesus’ Righteousness for You!”
“You don’t need to have impact; you don’t need to be a leader (I wish we could cancel every high school leadership conference in the country...useless!). You don’t need to transform society; you don’t need to change the world; you don’t need to fix [your city]; you don’t need to win; you don’t need to start a non-profit; you don’t need to be on top...But if you are united to [Jesus] Christ [by faith], you are beyond adequate, you cannot be more successful, more awesome, more amazing, than you already are right now, today! It is impossible for you to be more successful, accomplished, strong, and equipped by the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit than you are right now by your union with Christ. It is impossible to be better than that! Don’t worry! Today you are free to make it your ambition to live a quiet life and to work with your hands and mind your own business and to lose yourself in loving God and loving neighbor because you are beyond enough! You can let all that anxiety and perfectionism go, because it was nailed to the cross [of Christ] permanently, and it is over!” (Anthony Bradley)

Group Prayer

Ideas for Communal and Personal Prayer

1. Reflection Question: *What’s one thing you’re processing about how you relate to other people?*

- (Is there a related question or comment that is sticking with you?)
- Is there a praise, a confession, a word of thanks, or a request you’d like to make about what you’re processing?

2. Is there something else going on that what can we pray about for you?