



Life of Christ

A study of the life and teachings of Jesus

Do You Trust Him?

by Kevin Little

Jesus, the Master Storyteller, slowly weaves this yarn, creating emotional tension that serves to connect with both our head and our heart. He begins with a simple picture, one that His listeners would have seen played out almost daily in their lives. A landowner goes to the city square to hire able-bodied workers who agree to work for a denarius, a coin equal to a day's wages—which seems fair. As the first crew begins laboring and sweating under the hot sun, the landowner decides that he needs more workers. So, he returns to the city square to hire more hands.

The emotional tension begins to build as the landowner begins to settle accounts at the end of the day, bringing those who were hired last to receive their pay first. To everyone's surprise, the landowner gives these workers an entire denarius even though they only worked for one hour. What generosity! Everyone is highly impressed. Those who were hired first begin to imagine what such a generous landowner will give them who have toiled all day under the hot sun. They must have begun dreaming about how they will spend it, how they will come home as the conquering hero with this "bonus" they have received. You and I would have thought the same thing.

The landowner works his way through paying each worker, moving from those who worked fewer hours to those who worked all day. Once again, to everyone's surprise, he gives a denarius to each. Those who had worked less than a whole day say nothing, because they realize the grace they have just received. But not the ADLs (the all-day laborers). The ADLs clearly inform the landowner of their displeasure; but this loving, kind, faithful man (after all, he gave them exactly what he promised) explains what just happened by saying:

"Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?"—*Matthew 20:13-15*

Jesus paints a clear and telling picture about God as He describes the landowner. We discover that God's generosity is amazing and abundant but unpredictable.

I have an engineer's slide rule at the center of my heart, which can be dangerous, because I always look for the formula, the predictable ways that things work. This means that if God doesn't outperform my predictions, I can grow cantankerous towards the Almighty in the same way that the ADLs did.

But here's the flip-side of that unpredictability, of the whimsy of God's grace. No one is ever beyond His grace. What were those men thinking who were still hanging out in the town square as the work day grew to a close? They had refused to go home, maybe because they were trying to delay that moment they would have to walk ashamed into their homes and tell their wives they made nothing that day, and have to figure out how to survive on what was left. But the landowner steps into that picture, lavishing his grace on them by hiring them for one hour but paying them for all day.

We can get frustrated with God's wildness, or we can get excited that anything could happen! Perhaps we are a prayer away from a miraculous healing, a financial windfall, a broken addiction, the restoration of a wayward child, or a renewed outpouring of God's Spirit in our church. The question that separates frustration from expectation is, "Do you trust Him?"

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So, where have you experienced the joy of God's unpredictable grace? And for whose good can you call upon it once again? Who knows? Maybe the landowner will come by the town square once again, and we will see a fresh outpouring of His grace all around us.

Question Do you serve God out of your love for Him, or do you serve Him hoping for a reward or recognition?

Family Chat As you think about your relationship with God, do you think He wants you to spend more or less time with Him?

Take Action Set aside your doing for a time and simply spend time being with God, in His presence. Get alone with Him and worship Him. Turn on some worship music and sing songs to Him that are about Him. Spend time talking to Him about what He means to you, focusing on His greatness over yours. Thank Him for everything you can think of to thank Him for.

If this is hard for you, ask God to bring you back to a place where your greatest desire is to submit to Him, love Him, and trust Him.