

# But Where's the Vineyard

by Richard E. Bieber

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*The Vineyard is the Kingdom of God, a place of continuous commitment to Jesus, a walk of faith, the Body of Christ, and the Harvest.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 20:1, Mark 1:17, Luke 10:2, Ephesians 4:16, Hebrews 12:1

**Topics:** "Kingdom Of God", "Faith And Service"

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## Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches on the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, emphasizing the concept that in the kingdom of God, the last shall be first and the first shall be last. He highlights the importance of finding our calling and working in the vineyard, which represents a foretaste of heaven where our spirits find rest. The sermon focuses on the continuous commitment required in the vineyard: to Jesus, to a walk of faith, to the body of Christ, and to the harvest, stressing the need for unwavering dedication and service.

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## Transcript

Read Matthew 20: 1 -16

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them out into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place; and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour, and the ninth hour, he did the same. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing; and he said to them, 'Why do you stand there idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.' And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.' And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. And on receiving it they grumbled at the householder, 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.' But he replied to one of them, '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 the last 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?' So the last will be first, and the first last."

And so the ones hired at the end of the day get exactly the same as the ones hired early in the morning and worked all day long in the scorching heat. Not only that, but the ones who worked only one hour got

their pay first, while these other people had to wait. Because that's how it is in the kingdom of God - the last are first and the first are last. And we had better get used to it; it's really not so bad because we are near the last whether we realize it or not.

But the foundation of this parable is that there are really only two conditions that we can be in as human beings: we're either standing out in the marketplace or we are working in the vineyard.

To be standing idle in the marketplace is to experience a foretaste of hell - you don't know where you fit in, you're at loose ends, time drags, you have this underlying consciousness that your life is going to waste, and even though you are not working there in the marketplace, there is no rest ... you are never at rest inside.

On the other hand, to be working in the vineyard is to be experiencing a foretaste of heaven - you've heard and responded to your calling, you've found it, you know where you fit in, life makes sense, you're doing something worthwhile, and even though you are working, your inmost spirit is at rest...at rest with a rest you never had when you were in the marketplace waiting.

Of course, you are going to get your denarius at the end of the day, but the real blessing is not that you are going to get paid, but that you have found your calling and the real blessing is that your spirit has found rest.

The most blessed moment of our life is when the Messiah of God breaks into our darkness and calls us by name and says, "You! Come, and go work in my vineyard."

Now Jesus does not go into any detail explaining how these laborers found their way from the marketplace into the vineyard because it was simple: you walked down the road, turned left at the sycamore tree, and there sloping up on your right is this marvelous vineyard as far as the eye can see laden with grapes, ripe to be picked.

But for most of us this journey from the marketplace to the vineyard is a difficult transition. It's like one of those dreams when you're trying to find your way home and you're always getting side-tracked, something is always going wrong, you're always getting lost.

"I know the Lord has called me into His vineyard, but I can't seem to find it. I just don't know where I fit in. I'm not quite certain what I'm supposed to be doing. I don't know where I belong."

"Mother Theresa has found her place. Billy Graham has put in a full day already. And here it is five o'clock and I can't even find the vineyard!"

"Is it really this factory where I work? Could it really be on West Grand Boulevard? Could it really be this hard-hearted neighborhood where I live?"

"Lord, I'm willing to serve you, I want to serve you, but You're going to have to show me what you want me to do! Show me where this vineyard is!"

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

The vineyard is not a place, it's not a certain kind of ministry, it's not something you have to spend half your life trying to locate - the vineyard is the kingdom.

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

The minute we respond to the householder, we are in His vineyard, and as long as we keep our eyes on him and listen to what he says, he guides us exactly to where he wants us to be and to what he wants us to do.

The issue is not, where do I belong; the issue is where is my commitment?

For the vineyard really boils down to a fourfold commitment, which can be made anywhere at all:

the vineyard is continuous commitment to the person of Jesus,

the vineyard is a continuous commitment to a walk of faith,

the vineyard is a continuous commitment to the body of Christ,

the vineyard is a continuous commitment to the harvest.

Commitment to Jesus, to a walk of faith, to the body of Christ, and to the harvest that is never interrupted, never broken, never stopped.

"And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing; and he said to them, 'Why do you stand there idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.'"

And they went.

THE VINEYARD IS A CONTINUOUS COMMITMENT TO THE PERSON OF JESUS, JUST JESUS.

And when they brought their boats to land they forsook everything and followed him.

Why did they forsake everything? They forsook everything so that they would not be distracted from what they knew they had to concentrate on, so they wouldn't go back and forth from Jesus and their hobby, Jesus and their ego, or even Jesus and their "ministry."

As the gospel of Jesus began to spread out into the Greek and Roman world after the resurrection, and after Pentecost, it was exactly the same thing: people followed Jesus by forsaking everything.

They didn't quite their jobs, didn't leave their wife or husband or child, they didn't move out of their house and put themselves up in a tent, but they did, in fact, so commit themselves to Jesus that it was as if they had done all those things.

"Jesus is my life," they would say. And then they would back that up by drawing their life from him. They worshipped him, they loved him, they served him, they took his word and converted that into living, they translated his word into flesh and blood living day after day in their lives.

When he is absolutely number one in our lives, and we look to him, and draw our life from him, and take what he tells us and convert that into living, we are committed. We are in the Vineyard.

If we want something specific, take the Sermon on the Mount-- Matthew 5, 6, and 7--and translate that every day into flesh and blood living. When we're doing that, we're in the vineyard.

And someone will say, "Who can take the Sermon on the Mount, and turn that into living. Who can live like that?"

Jesus says, "Any man or woman, who will trust me, and follow me, I will absolutely transform you into a new creature on this side of the grave."

WHICH BRINGS US TO THE SECOND COMMITMENT: A COMMITMENT TO A WALK OF FAITH.

Which means instead of forever hugging the shore, we launch out into the deep because Jesus said to launch out into the deep.

We are always playing it safe, and Jesus says, "Come on."

Instead of forever staying inside the boundaries of the possible, we press on into the wilderness of the impossible toward the Promised Land because Jesus, up ahead, beckons us to come with him.

"Come on. Follow me."

It's a walk of faith in which I say, "Lord, I trust you to be able to give what I need to please God." That it is absolutely possible for me to live in this body, of flesh and blood, a life that pleases God.

"And I will draw my life from you, so that I can live a God-pleasing life, a life of truth, and a life that is merciful"

And day after day we draw strength from him so that we can walk in truth, and we can walk in mercy, and walk in love, and receive whatever we need (even the material things we need ), the guidance we need, trusting him for, and in, all things..

Faith is being sure of things hoped for, certain of things not seen.

We're certain of the kingdom, and we're certain of the King, and so now we press on behind him, pushing everything aside, we keep going. "You're able to do it, Lord. I trust you!"

The Sermon on the Mount is apostolic Christianity, the model of it, and anything less than this is a compromise, and we end up as little clubs for nice people who play it safe and worry about what will happen next.

THE VINEYARD IS A COMMITMENT TO THE BODY OF CHRIST.

Nobody works in the vineyard alone. We work together in the vineyard. So that, in the vineyard, in the body, everyone helps carry the weight of its ministry. Everybody!

He puts us together in this body so that we are members one of another. And we draw strength from each other. And we are linked together. And usually, in his mercy -and you could say, in his humor - God links us together, the knee bone with the thigh bone, and maybe you don't like the thigh bone you're being linked to, but that is just what you need, just what I need.

And he puts us together in the body, so that each Sunday when we come together and we break bread, it's not like a spiritual supermarket where we draw just what we want, fill up our little bag and take off, but we are a body, a household, members one of another and together we carry the weight of the kingdom of God - as a body, as members of the same household--- always together. That doesn't mean that we are always physically together. We're not. We're going to go out from here. When the service ends, we go out as members of the body. As members one of another, so that we carry the body with us as we touch other lives in his name.

So when you touch the world, we touch the world through you. Our prayers support you. And there are specific people in the body who are praying for you by name so that the power of the Lord will be freed through you to accomplish his purpose. And you are doing the same thing for people in this body by name so that they can fulfill their function.

And as we do, the life of God flows.

The Apostle Paul's commitment to the Lord, always manifested itself as commitment to the body. Read the opening verses of any one of his letters in the New Testament, and you will see a man that was committed to these people. He loved these people. He cared about them. He wept for them. He carried them around in his heart. He stewed over them. They were his because he was really committed to them.

May God help us to think like that, and act like that toward each other!

#### THE VINEYARD IS A COMMITMENT TO THE HARVEST

When you become a follower of Jesus it's to make disciples of others: you become a fisher of men. Every follower of Jesus is a fisher of people - when the scriptures say man or men it always means women too.

The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the harvest. Go your way; behold I send you out as lambs in the midst of the wolves Luke 10: 2,3

And so we see in these two verses: pray for laborers, go yourself. Pray for laborers and go yourself into the harvest which is right where you are!

It's the house where you live. It's the block where you live. It's the place where you work. Bring them to the banquet table. Invite them into the feast. Drag them if you have to. Bring them to the banquet of the Lord. Bring them. Draw them.

When we see the world beyond us as the harvest field, and care about that harvest field, and pray for laborers for that harvest field, and commit ourselves to it, our eyes open and we begin to see the hand of God moving through us, and in us, turning hearts, opening blind eyes, opening deaf ears, setting free the captives. Bringing the prisoners out of their cells of misery.

And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing; and he said to them, 'Why do you stand there idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.'

It's the eleventh hour. At last the householder has found his way to us, and has said, is saying right now to every one of us, "You, go into the vineyard too."

And if we take that seriously, we'll know what to do. Our problem - if we're having trouble finding the vineyard, it's not a map that we need - all we have to do is trust the householder - commit ourselves to him, place ourselves in his hands, and before we leave the fellowship we'll find ourselves in the outer courts of heaven, maybe even further in than that.

"You, go into the vineyard too."

The vineyard begins right here with commitment to Jesus, commitment to a walk of faith, commitment to the body, commitment to the harvest. As we make that commitment and move with it, the Spirit of the living God moves with us, drives away our doubts, clarifies our vision, anoints us with the powers of the world to come, beginning right here right now.

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