

Matthew

A Careful Study of Matthew

June 29, 2025

I. Introduction

A. **Matthew 19:27-30, 20:1-16**, Then Peter said to Him, “Behold, **we** have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for **us**?” [28] And Jesus said to **them**, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. [29] And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name’s sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life. [30] But many who are first will be last; and the last, first. [20:1] For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who **went out early** in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. [2] When he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard. [3] And he **went out** about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market place; [4] and to those he said, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.’ And so they went. [5] Again he **went out** about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did the same thing. [6] And about the eleventh hour he **went out** (*seek / save the lost*) and found others standing around; and he said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day long?’ [7] They said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’ [8] When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last group to the first.’ [9] When those hired about the eleventh hour came, each one received a denarius. [10] When those hired first came, they thought that they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. [11] When they received it, they grumbled at the landowner, [12] saying, ‘These last men have worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the scorching heat of the day (*we deserve more*).’ [13] But he answered and said to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? [14] Take what is yours and go, but I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. [15] Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?’ [16] So the last shall be first, and the first last.”

B. Pray

II. Reward for serving the Lord

A. [27] Then Peter said to Him, “Behold, **we** have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for **us**?”

1. As always, context is important, and in this case, the context for Peter’s question reaches back to Jesus’ dealings with the rich young ruler, and includes the disciples’ astonishment over Jesus saying it is hard for the rich to be saved.
 - a. It is within this context that Peter, in essence, asks: “If poverty is required to be spiritually complete, and since we have already left everything to follow you, how will we be rewarded?”
 - b. There is a way in which this is a reasonable question for someone facing a path of life they have not traveled before. However, this question is more self-focused than God-focused.
 - c. When a Christian asks, or even quietly wonders, “What is in it for me?” it implies a give-to-get mindset – which is a mindset that is more concerned with what we are going to get out of godly living and Christian service than what God and others are going to get out of it. It is a perspective that makes me and what I think I deserve more important than God and what He deserves.
2. I suspect most, if not all of us have thought this way. Why do I say this? Because I have been this way – even in relation to God. I have lived the give-to-get mentality – in my service to God, in my service to the church, in my helping others, and in my pursuit of a godly life.
 - a. And what did I hope to gain? Recognition – recognition that I was important, that I was needed, that I was someone to look up to.
 - b. The sad reality is, when living the give-to-get mindset, I was using God and my service to others to get what I wanted for myself.
 - c. Even sadder, my give-to-get mindset made me and what I wanted more important than God, His glory, His honor, His kingdom, and His will.
 - d. Sadder still, I was doing this to the One who gave His life for me without a guarantee that I would give back anything of value.
3. What about you? Do you have a give-to-get mindset – even just a little? Do you expect God to do good things for you because of what you have done or are doing for Him? If you have this mindset, it will reveal itself. For example:
 - a. If you think you are not getting from God, or those around you, as good as you are giving, then you are likely to feel disappointed, or hurt, or even angry at the lack of appreciation or gratitude or reward for what you have done.

- b. If what I just described is you, you might not direct your disappointment or anger at God or the person failing to repay you, but you will take it out on someone.
 - c. As I hope you can see from my example, this is not only true when giving to get with God, it is true when giving to get with your spouse or your children or your extended family or a friend or a co-worker or your employer. And an easy way to discern if you have the give-to-get mindset is to observe how you feel when you do not receive what you were hoping to get. Obvious disappointment, hurt, or anger, are common signs you were giving to get.
 - 4. My reason for going into this much detail is to help you see how pervasive the give-to-get mindset is. It can creep into your service to God, into your love of those nearest and dearest, and into relationships with those outside the home.
 - a. The evil of this mindset is that it feeds selfishness and pride. It turns love into a business transaction, service to God and others into a debt that you expect to be repaid, and humility into self-importance.
 - b. To give for the good of God and others, to give expecting nothing in return, to give because you care like God cares for you does not come naturally. To give like this, you must die to self, pursue loving God more than anyone or anything else, and persevere in putting off your old sinful nature and putting on Christ-likeness.
 - c. Jesus described the mindset needed to give and serve as He gives and serves in **Luke 17:10**, “When you do all the things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.’”
 - 5. Therefore, as followers of Jesus Christ, let us give and serve and love and help and show kindness for God’s sake, for God’s glory, for the advancement of God’s purposes in our world, and for the good of others – expecting nothing in return. May we not ask, “What is in this for us?” but rather, “What will come of this for God?” Let us follow the example Jesus gave, who though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor that through His poverty we might become rich.
- B. [28] And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration (*re-birth of the heavens and earth*) when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones (*Note: 20:20-21*), judging the twelve tribes of Israel. [29] And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or

mother or children or farms for **My name's sake** (*doing such things for His sake is what qualifies us for the following rewards*) will receive **many** times as much (*in this life*), and will inherit eternal life.

1. Jesus makes it clear that all is not giving on our part. True, God is a father who wants His children to obey, be responsible, and do their part. True, there is the need to die to self, become a servant, and submit to God's will. Yet in all of our giving and serving, our loving Father gives what we need – often liberally and always abundantly. There are even times when He gives what we want.
2. For example, Jesus says the disciples will be exalted and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Though this reward is for them, it makes the point that what God gives in return will exceed what we leave behind or give up in order to selflessly love and serve Him and those around us.
3. In saying that we will receive many times more than what we have given up, Jesus affirms that He will give to us more in this life than what we have left to follow and serve Him.
4. Yet more than that, Jesus promises the greatest reward of all, eternal life – which as **2 Peter 3:13** says, will include a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.
5. Surely, these rewards exceed whatever we give up or leave behind.
6. Yet there is more. Becoming a person who trusts God enough to give away or leave behind what you have in order to love, and in order to care for the good of others, and in order to honor God and advance His purposes in our world, is a personally transforming process that changes you into the kind of person who is able to enter into mutually loving, mutually trusting, and deeply satisfying relationships – not only with God, but with anyone around you who will pursue such a relationship with you.
 - a. This transformation from being primarily self-centered to being God and others centered, and from having shallow, uncertain relationships to experiencing deep, meaningful relationships **is part of the reward** that far exceeds whatever you give up or leave behind for God's sake.
 - b. Yet it is only part of the reward, for the other part are the deeply satisfying relationships (*themselves*) of mutual love and trust – with God and those around you. The reality is, shared love fills and satisfies your heart, soul, and mind beyond what you can imagine and in ways selfishness can't – which makes what you have given up, worth it.

7. The point is, what appears as loss – from the human perspective – turns out to be great gain. Consider – you are losing what is temporary to gain what is eternal. You are forgoing tenuous earthly security for the unfailing security that comes from God. You are turning away from a distant and unsatisfying relationship with God into which you bring mixed motives and gaining an intimate and deeply satisfying relationship of mutual love and trust. Or as Jesus said, you are losing your life in order to save it.
 8. The problem with the rich young ruler is that he valued his wealth more than God, the good of others, and his own soul. May we not make the same mistake.
 9. The reality is, God gives back far more generously than we deserve, and far more than what we have given up. May we be wise enough to forsake our earth-bound eyes and look at God, love, the good of others, and the good of our soul through transformed, heaven-bound eyes, for in so doing, we will clearly see what is truly valuable. And may we be content with what God gives and allows in this life, knowing that the rewards to come are invaluable and eternal.
- C. Jesus concludes His response to Peter with these words, [30] But many (*notice, not everyone, but many*) who are first will be last; and the last, first.” Jesus then proceeds to illustrate this statement with the parable about the laborers in the vineyard – which He concludes with “So the last shall be first, and the first last.”
1. God’s people have used different descriptive analogies to talk about God’s kingdom.
 - a. It is said that the kingdom of God is an upside-down kingdom, a counter-cultural kingdom, and a radical kingdom with those in it living radical lives.
 - b. Jesus gives credence to some of these descriptions when He said that the greatest in His kingdom are those who serve, and those who become like children in relation to faith and expectation.
 2. The point is, what is common among the earthly minded is not common in God’s kingdom. In fact, what is common in the human realm is often the opposite with God and His realm. We see the truth of this in God’s Word. For example:
 - a. The world values pride. God values humility. The world hates their enemies. God calls us to love them. The world fights back against those more powerful and more evil than them. God tells us not only to submit, but to go the extra mile and turn the other cheek.

- b. The world exalts the worldly wise, the powerful, the rich, the popular, and the beautiful. God exalts the spiritually wise, the weak, the unknowns, the poor, and those whose beauty is first and foremost inward.
- c. Many in the church praise and follow the gifted, the well-educated, those who have achieved worldly success, and those who can draw a crowd. Yet God's list of requirements for leadership puts godliness and spiritual maturity at the top.
- d. **1 Corinthians 1:27-29** puts it this way, "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, [28] and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, [29] so that no man may boast before God."

III. Conclusion

- A. The religious leaders of Jesus' day believed they were the spiritual ones who were held in high esteem by God, and who would be greatly rewarded in Heaven. Yet Jesus said that the tax collectors and prostitutes would get into the kingdom of God before them, because they neither believed nor received John's teaching and Jesus' teaching about righteousness, whereas the tax collectors and prostitutes did (**Matthew 21:31-32**).
- B. Be forewarned – what the world, and what the immature, weak, and self-serving Christian community puts first, God puts last. And what the world and the weak, immature church puts last, God puts first. This is one of the ways that the first shall be last and the last first.
- C. Rather than calling God's kingdom an upside-down kingdom, or a radical kingdom, or a counter-cultural kingdom, let's call it a kingdom where righteousness rules and righteous people dwell with our righteous God. Let us not focus on being the opposite of the world or majoring in what is radical. Rather, let us focus on being like Christ, and majoring on following Jesus and living a life that honors and pleases God.