

# I Want to Tell You a Story

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Charles Wall, Guest Speaker

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In most cases when someone my age starts to tell a story we will usually start with, in my day and time or maybe, once upon a time. That way everyone knows I am getting ready to tell a story, not necessarily a true story but a story none the less. This story is not like the story I am going to tell you, it is one you have heard or read many times yourselves. What is important about this story is the way that I came to a better understanding of the story in question.

Many times story tellers take great pleasure in leading us down many twists and turns just to throw us a curve or a dead end. So we wind up not knowing what is real in the story or made up, so there can be many meanings in the story as it is being told. I think this is what had happen to me

with this story. The meaning of this story in question had changed depending upon where I was in my life. When I first heard the story I was a very young boy, and I took the meaning of the story just as it was told. The person telling the story was someone that had told many stories, and unless he told us what the meaning of the story was, we took it as just another story.

As I got older and found out that this story teller had more than one meaning in his stories, the meanings were not always that easy to pull out. Sometimes it took a lot of study and work to find what I felt was the true meaning of the story, only to find out there could be a different meaning to the story.

This story came to light while I was preparing for bible class. As I prepared to facilitate bible study, I read the story the first time and the meaning of the story was what I had always believed the meaning to be. At that time the number of people attending

Bible study varied from none to 6 or 7. The first Sunday after restudying the story was one of those none Sundays. That was ok. Over the next 4 or 5 Sundays the same thing happened. I would prepare for Bible study and no one would show-up. The last time I did this something amazing happened. A completely different understanding of the story came to me. I could not wait to get to Church and share this eye opening revelation. I was really revved up. Sunday could not come fast enough. Wouldn't you know, no one came to bible study? What a bummer. It was several Sundays before the Bible study group came together and it was decided that we would change the format of the study material.

What was I to do? I had this revelation, this fire I needed to share with everyone. God works in mysterious ways. Laura was going to be out of town and she needed someone to fill in for her...my opportunity to share my revelation.

Most of you probably have already have come to this understanding, of how this story teller goes about telling his stories. You will probably walk out of here thinking to yourself, you mean that guy just got it? If that is true just being glad I finally got it.

The story I am talking about comes from the Bible, the writer is believed to have been Matthew. The story is in chapter 20 verses 1 thru 16. The story starts out that a landowner went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He and the worker agreed to the standard wage of the time. He sent them into his vineyard.

A few hours later he again went to the village and found some workers standing around he said to them “go into the vineyard too and I will give you whatever is right”. So they went. About noon and three o’clock, he did the same thing. And about five o’clock that afternoon he went out and found others standing around, and he said to them, “Why are you standing here all day without work? They

said to him, "Because no one has hired us." He said to them, "You go and work in the vineyard too."

When it was evening, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, "Call the workers and give the pay starting with the last hired until the first." When those hired about five o'clock came, each received a full day's pay. And when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more. But each one also received the standard wage. When they received it, they began to complain against the landowner, saying, "These last fellows worked one hour, and you have made them equal to us who bore the hardship and burning heat of the day."

And the landowner replied to one of them, "Friend, I am not treating you unfairly. Didn't you agree with me to work for the standard wage? Take what is yours and go. I want to give this last man the same as I gave to you. Am I not permitted to do what I want with what belongs to me? Or are you envious

because I am generous? So the last will be first and the first will be last.

I at first felt the same way the first worker did. I felt either I should have been paid more for working longer, or maybe the landowner was telling me I didn't do a very good job. I wish I had been one of the last be hired. Reason behind this thinking was because of the amount paid to each group. I too felt that it was unfair, because of where my mind and heart was at the time. It wasn't until my revelation occurred that another thought came to mind.

What if the landowner was the Lord and the vineyard was His kingdom. This makes the story totally different. As the story unfolds the landowner needs some workers in his vineyard. He goes to the place where local laborers stand during the day. To get the workers he needs, he goes four different times during the day. We are not told why, one might believe the work was more than the first

groups could handle, or the work had to be completed that day.

Then comes the real shake up. The landowner tells his manager to pay all the workers the same even the ones that had only worked an hour or two. The workers had worked all day thinking they would get more but, when they didn't this caused them to complain to the landowner. But the landowner simply reminded them of the facts, and that ended the discussion. He reminded them he paid the early worker exactly what he promised, and what they had agreed to. So they had no reason to complain. And since He was the landowner, he was free to offer the other workers what He thought was fair if they would come and work as well.

So what are the lessons to be taken from this story?

1. The Lord is sovereign over His kingdom. Because He is the landowner. He can pay people whatever He wants to pay them, as long as He is just.

2. Everyone who serves the Lord will be treated fairly. In the story the workers got what they agreed to, or they got more. In fact the last workers came to work without an exact agreement, so they actually were trusting the landowner that they would receive a fair wage.
3. How the Lord treats all of His servants is by grace. Until the workers were approached by the landowner, they had no work. If He had not found them and arranged for them to enter his vineyard, they would have remained with nothing. Everyone should be thankful that God opened up the opportunity for service.
4. The fact that God chose any one of us for His vineyard is amazing. We should rejoice in that, and rejoice in the fact that He is still inviting otherwise “unemployed” folks to join.

The bottom line is that we should be ready to respond to the opportunity for service, and rejoice in what He gives us as a reward for our

service. He alone knows the value of each of our service for His kingdom. But we can all rest assured that when the opportunity and the rewards come from the gracious Lord, they will be just and generous.

Amen