

lessons to us today? We should obey Christ when we are confident that we are sinful and that God will forgive our sins through faith, repentance and baptism. We should work righteousness as much as possible for as long as we live. And we should not try to game the system by hoping we can live as we want until very near the end of our time on earth, hoping we'll have a last moment or so to fully follow God's will. ~

“Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, open to us,’ then he will answer you, ‘I do not know where you come from.’

Luke 13:24-25

Morris Fraser

We meet on James M Harvell Rd next to the public library in Navarre. Call for directions and more information (850) 939-8109

Navarre church of Christ

8490 James M Harvell Rd
Navarre, FL 32566

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Assembly Schedule

Sunday

Bible Class for all ages_9:00 AM

Morning Worship Service_10:00 AM

Evening Worship Service_6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Class for all ages_7:00 PM

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VISITORS ARE WELCOME!

NAVARRE MESSENGER

April 29, 2018

Payment for Righteousness



“A laborer is worthy of his hire” (Luke 10:7). In this passage Jesus is describing how 70 disciples were to go to various cities and teach. Among other suggestions, Jesus told them to eat what they would be provided, not look around for the best meal.

Jesus presented a more detailed look at the value of labor in Matthew 20:1-16.

He relates the parable of the harvest, in which a man who owned a vineyard went out early in the morning to hire people to harvest his crop. He may have had a ready supply of workers who only

needed to be told to work, or he may have approached a group of men whom today we might call day laborers. He agreed that he would pay each a penny a day and the men went to work.

He returned at (in our time) 9 a.m., noon and 3 p.m. He found others idle and added

more to his work force. At 5 p.m., he found several others and put them on his payroll. If you read Matthew's account, in verses 4-7, his payment arrangement for those latter workers was "whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive."

When evening had come, probably about 6 p.m., and work stopped, the landowner had his foreman pay each worker – no withholding, no FICA, no waiting till the end of the pay period. Starting with the men hired at 5 p.m., each was paid a penny, or denarius. The workers who had worked longer saw that and figured they would get more, since they had put in more time. But they also each got a denarius.

This may not have been the first labor-management conflict, but certainly labor was upset and complained to the owner (verse 12): "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."

The owner replied to one man who probably had been there all day, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way, but I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. 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?"

What was the complaint about? The amount of pay. It was a denarius, called a penny in the King James Version and a shilling in the American Revised Version. The denarius was a silver coin, the smallest denomination in the Roman monetary system. Its silver content ranged from a gram to as much as 4 grams. At the time of Jesus, it probably was worth about 20 cents in our reckoning.

Today, if we estimate 3.5

grams as the silver content, and using the current value of silver as 54 cents, a denarius today would be worth \$17.90. On a per-hour basis, that works out to just over \$1.42 an hour.

Let's not complain about that figure compared even to minimum wage today. Remember, money was worth more per unit back then; workers didn't have to pay for a car or public transportation, cable TV, Internet access, several pairs of footwear, hours in a beauty salon or any number of other items that make our lives comfortable. \$17.90 may not have been a luxurious wage, even at that time, but people could live on it.

The workers' complaint was not about the agreed-upon wage but their perception that those who came to work later got a better deal from the boss.

The boss merely stated that it

was his right to pay according to the contract agreed upon with each worker. And no one could disagree with that position. The men who started early in the morning got the same pay as those who worked but an hour.

With that said, let's look at the point of Jesus' parable. It was not to discuss labor-management relations. It was not to set the groundwork for labor unions. It was not to show the need for a minimum wage. His precept aimed higher.

Jesus started his parable with these words: "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner..." and went on from there. Jesus wanted his listeners to relate what they knew about working in the fields to the kingdom that would await them and the reward they stood to receive if they attained that kingdom.

Jesus wanted to point out that it takes work to reach

the reward: a denarius in the vineyard, life eternal in the kingdom. He showed that those who would serve longest in the kingdom would receive the same blessing as those who would come later to the spiritual feast. The reward is the same for all.

Some today twist Jesus' parable to say, "If I wait until I am older before becoming a Christian, even though I believe Jesus is the son of God and even though I know I should express my willingness right now to follow him, I still will be able to go to heaven while enjoying earthly temptations for a while longer."

A famous man in history may have had that same idea. Constantine was emperor of Rome from 306-337 AD. At some point after he became emperor he embraced the Christian religion and was an influence in some of the church's historic events, such as the Edict of Milan in 313, which declared religious tolerance for Christianity; calling

the first Council of Nicea (325) that produced the historic statement of Christian belief known as the Nicene Creed; and he ordered the Church of the Holy Sepulcher to be built in Jerusalem at the place that was believed to be Jesus' tomb.

But Constantine was not baptized until he lay on his deathbed in 337 AD. (Yes, his "baptism" probably took the form of sprinkling or pouring water on his prone body, but here we are discussing what he thought he was doing, not what God wanted.)

It is probable that he decided not to be baptized earlier because there was a teaching prevalent in those times that if a baptized believer sinned, he had no more hope of salvation. The concept of praying for God's forgiveness for sins committed after that first remission of sins was not widely taught.

What is the value of these