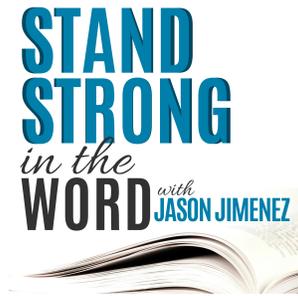


#85 “IT’S BETTER TO SERVE THAN BE SERVED”  
Matthew 20:1-34; Mark 10:32-52; Luke 18:31-43

PARABLE #1: THE PARABLE OF THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD  
MATTHEW 20:1-16

1. [Continuing the discussion from Matthew 19:16-30] **“For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning (early dawn; 6:00 AM) to hire laborers (daily workers) for his vineyard. <sup>2</sup> After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius (Roman silver coin) a day, he sent them into his vineyard.** Jesus transitions into a parable to describe the kingdom of heaven. He does so to convey to His disciples that each one of them will receive future rewards (see Matt. 19:27). He uses a master and his vineyard to portray God’s graciousness and generosity (see Matt. 19:30). **Laborers**—It was customary to go to the marketplace and hire workers throughout the day. The taxation and high debt made it hard for families to survive. Working in vineyards was a source of extra income.
2. **<sup>3</sup> And going out about the third hour (9:00 AM) he saw others standing idle (doing nothing) in the marketplace, <sup>4</sup> and to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.’ <sup>5</sup> So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour (noon) and the ninth hour (3:00 PM), he did the same.** The master needs more laborers, so he returns to the marketplace in the middle of the day. **Whatever is right**—The laborers assumed because they were hired later in the day that they would get less than a denarius.
3. **<sup>6</sup> And about the eleventh hour (5:00 PM) he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ <sup>7</sup> They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’**
4. **<sup>8</sup> And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.’** According to the law, laborers/hired workers were to be paid at the end of the day (see Lev. 19:13; Deut. 24:15). **Beginning with the last, up to the first**—This expression goes back to what Jesus said in Matthew 19:30, “But many who are first will be last, and the last first.
  - A. **<sup>9</sup> And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. <sup>10</sup> Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius.** This is understandable. If those who worked only an hour received a day’s wage; then the men who

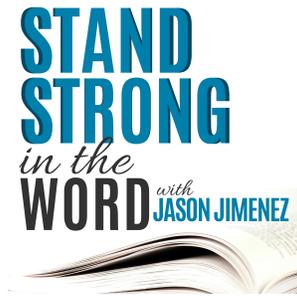


worked all day felt it only reasonable to receive more than that. Even though in the morning they agreed to a day's wage.

- B. **<sup>11</sup> And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, <sup>12</sup> 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.'** The laborer wasn't grateful because he lacked compassion and was too consumed with what he thought to be unfair.
- C. **<sup>13</sup> But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? <sup>14</sup> Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. <sup>15</sup> Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge (is your eye evil) my generosity?'** The master questions the man's complaints by challenging him based on what they agreed to. Furthermore, the master proceeds to challenge the worker on generosity and authority. The master had a right to judge based on the level of contribution—and give away what was rightfully his.
- D. **<sup>16</sup> So the last will be first, and the first last.**" The paradoxical values of the kingdom of heaven are often hard to reconcile on earth.
- 1) "In a society with no welfare provision or trade unions, where unemployment meant starvation, the action of the landowner in employing extra workers whom he did not really need so late in the day was an act of generosity. But even more extraordinary was the rate of pay, which made no economic sense, and understandably provoked grumbling among those who felt unfairly treated. It was not unfair, of course. No-one was underpaid; it was just that some were treated with 'unreasonable' generosity. That is what the kingdom of heaven is like."<sup>1</sup>
  - 2) ESV Commentary, "A disciple of Jesus should not measure his or her worth by comparing it with the accomplishments and sacrifices of others, but should focus on serving from a heart of gratitude in response to God's grace. Jesus is not denying degrees of reward in heaven (see note on 1 Cor. 3:14–15) but is affirming that God's generosity is more abundant than anyone would expect: all the laborers except the very first got more than they deserved. It is probably correct also to see here a warning that Jesus' early

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<sup>1</sup> Richard T. France, "[Matthew](#)," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 930.

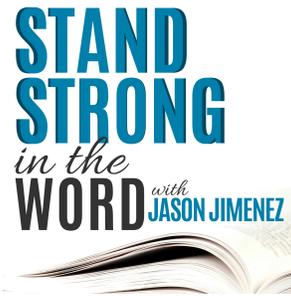


followers (such as the Twelve) should not despise those who would come later.”

**EVENT #2: JESUS PREDICTS HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION**

Matthew 20:17-19	Mark 10:32-34	Luke 18:31-34
<p><sup>17</sup> And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, <b>and on the way he said to them,</b> <sup>18</sup> “See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death <sup>19</sup> and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and <b>crucified</b>, and he will be raised on the third day.”</p>	<p><sup>32</sup> <b>And they were on the road,</b> going up to Jerusalem, <b>and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid.</b> And taking the twelve <b>again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him,</b> <sup>33</sup> saying, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. <sup>34</sup> And they will mock him and <b>spit on him</b>, and flog him and kill him. <b>And after three days he will rise.</b>”</p>	<p><sup>31</sup> And taking the twelve, he said to them, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, <b>and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.</b> <sup>32</sup> For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked <b>and shamefully treated and spit upon.</b> <sup>33</sup> And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise.” <sup>34</sup> <b>But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.</b></p>

1. [Mk. 10:32] **And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem** (high elevation), **and Jesus was walking ahead of them** (Jesus often walked ahead of His disciples/He was determined to arrive in Jerusalem). **And they were amazed** (astonished at an unusual event), **and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him,** <sup>33</sup> saying, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, [Lk. 18:31] **and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished** – [Mk. 10:33] **and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles.** <sup>34</sup> **And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill (crucify) him. And after three days he will rise.”** The picture given by the Synoptic Gospels is things have progressed. Jesus’ determination to get to Jerusalem has intensified; which, in turn, causes the disciples to become more afraid and sensitive to everything that was happening around them. **Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes**—This is the third recorded time Jesus mentions His death. But, this is the first time He mentions his perpetrators (see Mk. 8:31; 9:30-31). Jesus was

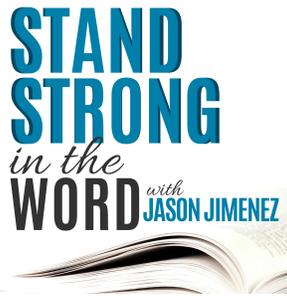


well-aware of what the Scriptures prophesied about His death (see Ps. 22:6-8; Isa. 50:6; 52:13-53:12).

2. [Lk. 18:34] **But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.** Although this is the third time Jesus predicts His suffering, death, and resurrection; the disciples still think the kingdom is coming in a matter of days. They saw Jesus victorious. That’s why talk about Him dying was the furthest thing from their mind (see Lk. 9:45).

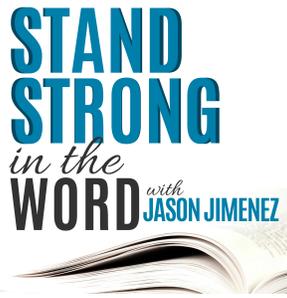
### EVENT #2: JAMES AND JOHN SEEK TO BE GREAT

Matthew 20:20-28	Mark 10:35-45
<p><sup>20</sup> Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something.</p> <p><sup>21</sup> And he said to her, “What do you want?” She said to him, “Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.”</p> <p><sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?” They said to him, “We are able.”</p> <p><sup>23</sup> He said to them, “You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.”</p> <p><sup>24</sup> And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers.</p> <p><sup>25</sup> But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. <sup>26</sup> It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup> and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, <sup>28</sup> even as the Son of Man came not to be</p>	<p><sup>35</sup> And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.”</p> <p><sup>36</sup> And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?”</p> <p><sup>37</sup> And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.”</p> <p><sup>38</sup> Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”</p> <p><sup>39</sup> And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, <sup>40</sup> but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”</p> <p><sup>41</sup> And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. <sup>42</sup> And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup> But it shall not be so</p>



<p>served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”</p>	<p>among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,<sup>44</sup> and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.<sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”</p>
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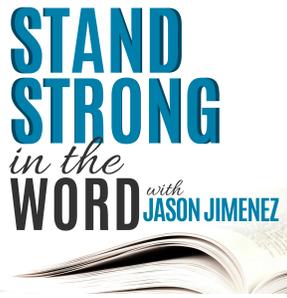
1. [Matt. 20:20-21] *Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something.*<sup>21</sup> *And he said to her, “What do you want?” She said to him, “Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.”* Their mother was there at the cross and days to follow (see Matt. 27:56; Mk. 15:40). [Mk. 10:35-36] *And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.”*<sup>36</sup> *And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?”*<sup>37</sup> *And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.”* Matthew records the mother (Salome—Mk. 16:1) of John and James coming to Jesus with this request. But here, in Mark, he mentions it was the brothers. Given the two accounts, it’s likely the three of them conspired together. **Grant us to sit**— They approached Jesus as a king and requested the two highest positions of honor and authority. This selfish request proves the disciples believed Jesus was determined to set up His political kingdom in Jerusalem (see Matt. 20:17; Mk. 10:32; Lk. 18:31).
2. [Mk. 10:38-45]<sup>38</sup> *Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking (acting in self-interest). Are you able to drink the cup that I drink [Matt. 20:23 – You (plural pronoun that speaks to mother and the sons) will drink my cup], or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”* Jesus adds a more graphic display of His suffering and death. **Drink my cup**—A symbolic reference to one’s determined destiny (see Ps. 16:5; Jer. 25:15). Jesus started off prophesying of His death; and now gives a prophecy of the future death of His disciples.
  - A. <sup>39</sup> *And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized*—At this stage, James and John believe they are willing to fight for Jesus’ cause. However, they were unable to grasp the level of suffrage Jesus predicted. The apostles would one day endure many afflictions and face martyrdom for their belief in Christ. James would soon be executed under Herod Agrippa I in AD 44 (see Acts 12:1) and John would be greatly persecuted, tried, and sentenced to exile on the island of Patmos (see Rev. 1).



- B. <sup>40</sup> *but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared [Matt. 20:23 – by My Father].*” Jesus demonstrates His Sonship by submitting to the will of the Father. Honor in God’s kingdom is not gained/achieved by selfish ambition. It is given by God’s mercy and grace. It is the Father who decides what privileges/honor is given to His children.
3. <sup>41</sup> *And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant* (greatly displeased; angry) *at James and John.* <sup>42</sup> *And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.* <sup>43</sup> *But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,* <sup>44</sup> *and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.* <sup>45</sup> *For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom (substitute) for many.”* Jesus uses the selfish-ambition of James and John, and the conflict it created among the others—as a reminder that true living is to remain a selfless servant. Humble service is what God rewards.

### EVENT #3: BLIND BARTIMAEUS IS HEALED

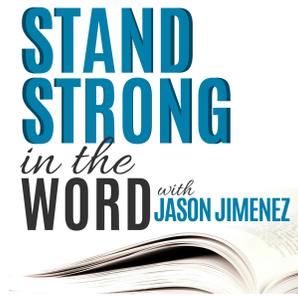
Matthew 20:29-34	Mark 10:46-52	Luke 18:35-43
<p><sup>29</sup> And as they went out of Jericho, a great crowd followed him. <sup>30</sup> And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!” <sup>31</sup> The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent, but they cried out all the more, “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!” <sup>32</sup> And stopping, Jesus called them and said, “What do you want me to do for you?” <sup>33</sup> They said to him, “Lord, let our eyes be opened.” <sup>34</sup> <b>And Jesus in pity touched their eyes,</b> and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him.</p>	<p><sup>46</sup> And they came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. <sup>47</sup> And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” <sup>48</sup> And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” <sup>49</sup> And Jesus stopped and said, <b>“Call him.” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart. Get up; he is calling you.”</b> <sup>50</sup> <b>And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.</b> <sup>51</sup> And Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” And the blind man said to him, <b>“Rabbi,</b> let me recover my</p>	<p><sup>35</sup> As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. <sup>36</sup> And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. <sup>37</sup> They told him, <b>“Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.”</b> <sup>38</sup> And he cried out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” <sup>39</sup> And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” <sup>40</sup> And Jesus stopped <b>and commanded him to be brought to him. And when he came near,</b> he asked him, <sup>41</sup> “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, let me recover my sight.” <sup>42</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Recover your sight; your faith has made you well.” <sup>43</sup> And immediately he recovered his sight and followed</p>



	sight.” <sup>52</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him <b>on the way</b> .	him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.
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1. [Mk. 10:46] **And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd** (Passover Pilgrims heading to Jerusalem), **Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside** (begging). [Matt. 20:30] **And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside**—There was an Old Jericho and a New Jericho several miles apart. Swete writes, “The new Jericho was “about five miles W. of the Jordan and fifteen E. of Jerusalem, near the mouth of the Wady Kelt, and more than a mile south of the site of the ancient town.”<sup>2</sup> So, it seems, the Gospels pinpoint this encounter of the two blindmen in between the cities.
  - A. Jericho was the only major city for travelers who were going up from the Jordan Valley to the holy city of Jerusalem.
  - B. At this point, Jesus was probably seven to eight days out from the crucifixion as He traveled from Galilee to Jerusalem. **Two blind men**—Matthew’s account mentions two blindmen (a common disease); while Mark and Luke stick to Bartimaeus (the most prominent/recognizable person; listed his father, Timaeus).
2. [Lk. 18:36-37] **And hearing a crowd going by, he (Bartimaeus) inquired** (sought information; demand answers) **what this meant**.<sup>37</sup> **They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.”**
3. [Mk. 10:47] **And when he** (they—Matt. 20:30) **heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he** (they—Matt. 20:30) **began to cry out** (loud; insistent shouting/crying) **and say, [Mk. 10:47-48] “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”** Bartimaeus acknowledges Jesus as the Messiah. 2 Samuel 7:12-13, “When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”
  - A. <sup>48</sup> **And many** (those who were in front—Lk. 18:39) **rebuked** (repeatedly ordered) **him, telling him to be silent. But he (they) cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”** Many in front of the crowd attempted to silence

<sup>2</sup> A.T. Robertson, [\*Word Pictures in the New Testament\*](#) (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Mk 10:46.



Bartimaeus so that he wouldn't distract/delay Jesus as He headed to Jerusalem.

4. [Mk. 10:49] **And Jesus stopped [Lk. 18:40] and commanded him to be brought to him [Mk. 10:50] and said, “Call him.” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart. Get up; he is calling you.”**
  - A. <sup>50</sup> **And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. [Lk. 18:40-41] And when he came near, Jesus asked him <sup>41</sup>“What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord (Rabbi; Master), let me recover my sight.”** The fact that Bartimaeus was blind, makes Jesus' question a bit unusual. However, the mob was yelling at him to be quiet and keep away from Jesus. Yet, Jesus stops to see how He can help the blindman. He asked this question publicly so that all could hear his request in faith—and witness the miracle right then and there.
5. [Matt. 20:34] **And Jesus in pity touched their eyes, [Lk. 18:42-43] And Jesus said to him, “Recover your sight; your faith has made you well (saved).” <sup>43</sup> And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him (on the way), glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.** Bartimaeus displays great faith in Jesus as the Messiah, and right there on the spot he is healed by Jesus in front of thousands. This last recorded healing of Jesus before the Passion Week is a beautiful picture of the Gospel.
  - A. **“Jesus acknowledged his faith: Go ... your faith has healed (sesōken, “saved”) you.** Faith was the necessary means, not the efficient cause of his healing (cf. comments on Mark 5:34). Bartimaeus' physical “salvation” (i.e., deliverance from darkness [blindness] to light [sight]) was an outward picture of his spiritual “salvation” (cf. Ps. 91:14–16; Luke 3:4–6).”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> John D. Grassmick, [“Mark.”](#) in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 155.