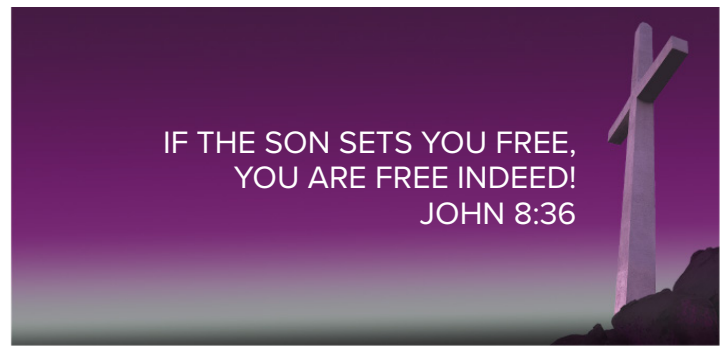


Jesus 101

“Grace Thoughts”



A short devotional to help get you excited about Jesus!

“When those hired about the eleventh hour came, each one received a denarius.” —Matthew 20:9

Many years ago, I got a new job. I clearly remember that I started working in the middle of the last quarter of the year. I was very thankful to have this new job, especially because it filled me with purpose and meaning. And I was extremely surprised when my boss announced that I would be getting paid from the beginning of the quarter. I was amazed at his generosity!

There is a surprising parable, found only in the Gospel of Matthew, that highlights God’s outrageous generosity. The story is placed between two framing sayings of Jesus about “the first becoming last, and the last becoming the first” (Matthew 19:30; 20:16). Explaining these sayings, Matthew records the parable of Jesus about the landowner who hired laborers for his vineyard. “The kingdom of heaven is like” a man who hires workers in the morning and agrees to pay them one denarius for the day and sends them to his vineyard (Matthew 20:1, 2). Then he keeps going back to the marketplace throughout the day, at 9:00 A.M. at noon, at 3:00 P.M., to get more workers, agreeing to pay “whatever is right” (verse 4). We are not told why he needs more and more workers all through the day, yet this was a typical scene during the harvest. But it is surprising that the landowner goes out again to hire at 5:00 P.M., with only one hour left to work. When he asks those workers why they are still there, they answer that no one has hired them (verse 7). It is possible that these were rejected, less desirable laborers, but he still hires them. The law of Moses required employers to pay day laborers at the end of each day (Deuteronomy 24:14, 15). The shocking ending of the parable shows how the last group gets called first and gets paid full wages! (Matthew 20:9). They each received one denarius even though they had worked only for one hour! Can you imagine their joy? Do you, or someone you know, feel like a reject or less desirable? God invites you into the kingdom, and it’s not too late! We are all recipients of God’s generous salvation! Eternal life is for all who accept, for “some are not more saved than others.”*

*France, Gospel of Matthew, 751.

Talbot, Elizabeth *Jesus Wins!*, p. 211.