

引言 INTRODUCTION

To a certain extent, the world works like a vending machine. We expect certain outcomes based on our effort. But sometimes we get more than what we put in. For example, teachers may curve grades up if most students did not do well in an exam. Some bosses give employees a bonus for their good performance. In both cases, people did what they should but they got surprising freebies. I read a heart-warming story like that about basketball coach John Calipari of the University of Kentucky. He actually directed the team at the University of Memphis for nine years before that. After a pre-season exhibition game, someone forwarded a photo to coach Cal. It shows a father sitting with his young son at the game. The dad was wearing work clothes and his face was covered with coal dust. Coach Cal could identify with the man because his grandfather was also a coal-miner. The coach was able to track down the family the next day. The worker, named Michael, is a big fan of Kentucky basketball. He got off work late that day, and he did not have time to take a shower and change clothes before taking his son to the game. Coach Cal was moved by the love of Michael for his family and the team. He promised to give VIP tickets to the whole family for the season. He also used the story to motivate his players about the lessons of hard-work and dedication. Later, restaurants, hotels and car dealerships reached out to the family and presented them special treats. An ordinary man became an instant celebrity because of the kindness of a famous coach. The Bible calls such virtue grace. The parable we will study today is about God's grace. Often when we think of grace, our focus is on the recipient. But we should not lose sight of the grace-giver. Like coach Cal did to Michael's family, God offers grace to us out of His power.

解釋 EXPLANATION

The parable captures a common scene in Jesus' days. At that time, most people were day-laborers. They gathered at the town-square early in the morning and waited for employers to hire them. I saw the same situation when I lived in Texas. Some Hispanic men met at a gas station, hoping that someone would give them work. Perhaps it is some home-improvement duties or landscaping jobs. Two things are identical to the situation in the parable. Employees receive their pay at the end of the day, and there is no guarantee that they will find work the next day. The Lord told this parable after a rich young man visited Him. He asked the teacher what he had to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus ordered the man to sell all that he had, gave to the poor, then followed Him. The wealthy guy was unwilling, and he walked away in a sad face. Then Peter asked Jesus: "Lord, we have given up everything to follow you. What will we get?" Jesus replied that the disciples would receive blessings in this life and in heaven. He ended by saying: "The first will be last, and the last first." (Matthew 19:30) The Lord then used the parable to explain that statement. Afterward, He repeated the same words: "The first will be last, and the last first." (Matthew 20:16)

1. 找工人 Recruit Workers

In the parable, a landlord went to the marketplace early in the morning to recruit workers to labor in his vineyard. At that time, most people worked from sunrise to sunset. We can assume that the master recruited those workmen at 6 a.m. Verse 2 says he agreed to pay each person one denarius. That was the standard rate for a day of work at that time. The landlord did something unusual because he went out again to recruit workers four more times. In today's language, he recruited them at 9 a.m., noon, 3 p.m. and even 5 p.m. Suppose they finished their job at 6 p.m. You can calculate the number of hours they worked. The boss promised those he hired at 9 o'clock: **"Whatever is right I will give you."** (v. 4) No detail was given. Those men trusted that the landlord would be fair. In comparison, he said nothing about the pay to the other three groups of workers he later recruited. If I were them, I would feel fortunate to find a job so late in the day. After all, no income means no dinner. Family members would go to bed hungry. Therefore, it was better than nothing even if they could only earn a small amount. But as we shall see in the story, those late-comers got more than they deserved. Why did the owner recruit more workers? Did he underestimate the number of people he needed? Did the workmen hired earlier not perform well enough? Those are not the reasons given in the passage. Jesus gives us a clue. Verse 3 says when the landlord went out at 9 a.m. **"...he saw others standing idle in the marketplace."** We find similar wordings in a conversation between the owner and the eleventh hour workers in verses 6-7: **6 ... "Why do you stand here idle all day?" 7 They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.'"**... They had the capability to work. All they needed was an opportunity. They could do nothing besides waiting. There was no temporary job agency in town that posted job listings. They could not put their resumes online either. They just hung around passively while chatting with each other or starring at their phones. The landlord showed grace to them by hiring them. It was not because of his need but their needs. The helpless situation of those unemployed people symbolizes our spiritual status before we knew Jesus. We were lost, ignorant and spiritually-blind. Paul describes in Ephesians 2:4-5 – **4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved.** God showed grace in saving us. Paul makes it plain that we were not just bad when we were sinners. We were dead like a piece of meat! You cannot yell to a pack of chicken or a fish filet at a grocery store: "Wake up, try harder. I know you can do it!" The meat is helpless because it is dead. It is only fit for your stomach. We are dead in our sin. We have no interest in spiritual matters because we cannot respond to God. If it is not because of His grace, no one can be saved. We often mistakenly believe that we are like cute little kids. They are adorable by their appearance. They look more charming when they put on beautiful clothes. Salvation is not decorating a good-looking person. It is infusing a new life to a set of skeleton! God gives you grace when He picks you out from millions of people in the world. God saves you not because you are good. It is because He is good to you. Therefore, we are not saved by any good work we do. Work is contrary to grace. Paul explains in Romans 4:4-5 – **4 Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. 5 And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.** Paul compares a wage to God's grace. A wage is something we work hard for. In contrast, grace is something we receive freely like a gift. To say that we are justified means that our sins are forgiven. God also considers those He saves as righteous. God gives us salvation grace because no one can earn it. We will be prideful if we believe that we can somehow earn salvation by doing good work. We think that we deserve a place in heaven. God saves us not because He is short of members in His heavenly choir. He does not need us. But we need Him desperately. A brother once shared his testimony that illustrates God's grace perfectly. He came

to the U.S. several decades ago to study. Like many young people in that era, he had to work part-time to pay for tuition and living expenses. One of his jobs was to work in the library. In one winter break, a lot of students went home. With not many people on campus, the chief librarian told the brother that he did not need to work the next few weeks. The brother explained his financial situation to the boss. Later, he was told that he could continue to work as usual. The librarian assigned him to move some journals from one section of the building to another area. Later he found out that the library did not actually need to relocate those books. The librarian created the task to find an excuse to pay him. He kept a worker not because he had work. It was because the worker needed work. That was grace! The landlord in the parable also recruited workers out of grace. Similarly, God saves us by grace into His family. We are the eleventh hour workers. Our contribution amounts to nothing. God's grace makes up for what we are lacking.

2. 發工資 Reward Workers

The master recruited workers to help in the vineyard. Soon the sun set. It was time to reward people for their service. Once again, the landlord did something out of the norm. Listen to his instructions to a foreman in verse 8: "...**Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.**" Of course, he did that on purpose. Continue to read the next verse: **"And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius."** Everyone must be surprised that those who only worked an hour received a full pay. Naturally, other workers expected that they should get more. Their high hope quickly turned into a dashed dream. Everyone received one denarius regardless of the length of their service. Guess who would be the most upset people? The ones who worked the whole day! They went to the boss and vented their frustration. They protested in verse 12: "...**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.**" They stressed the workload as well as the extreme heat. In their mind, those who contributed more should get a higher wage. They believed that they were unfairly treated. Too bad that there was no Labor Department for them to file a complaint. Was their argument reasonable? In his answer, the landlord presented a very different perspective. Look at verses 13-15: **13 "...Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for denarius? 14 Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. 15 Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?"** The master highlighted a few qualities in his answer. First, his honesty. He had agreed to pay the 6 a.m. workers a denarius. They got what they were told. He did not cheat them. Second, his authority. He had the freedom to use his money the way he wanted. Third, his generosity. He willingly pay the other four groups of employees more out of compassion. Allow me to change the plot to prove a point. What if the foreman paid the 6 a.m. people first? If you were one of them, how would you feel when you received your paycheck? You may say to yourself: "Finally, I'm done! No more roasted pig in the field. I can go home and relax." You would be satisfied to get the money, but there might not be any excitement. It was because you knew all day that one denarius would be your reward. You felt relieved that at least you fulfilled the obligation by putting food on the table for your family. You can guess that the landlord intentionally paid the eleventh hour laborers first so that everyone else could see their wage. He showed them that he rewarded their effort not according to their work, but based on his grace. The 6 a.m. workers felt unfairly treated because other people got more than they deserved. Joy can quickly change to jealousy when we make comparison. You feel content that you have a stable income, a decent

house, two cars and healthy kids. All that feeling of accomplishment turns sour when you go to a class reunion party. You feel jealous when you hear that this person has a successful business, another classmate married a rich and handsome man and the guy who had the worst grades in school retired at 50. You say to yourself: "Life isn't fair!" Comparison may lead to two outcomes. We take pride in ourselves, thinking that we earn everything by our own effort. On the other extreme, we blame God for blessing others more. Both situations will take our joy away. If you truly want to compare, you should compare your current status with the time when you had not much. Remember when you were a poor student or when you first immigrated to the U.S.? In addition, you should compare yourself with the God who blesses you with everything. It is true that you work hard to accumulate wealth. But who gives you intelligence to study? Who gives you good health to work? Who gives you opportunities to prosper? Let me also ask you this: who do you thank when you receive your income? I doubt anyone will thank his/her boss. If you feel that you deserve what you get, then you will only thank yourself. But if you remember to thank God, then you understand and appreciate His grace. God does not follow the rule of fairness because He operate by a principle of grace. What do you think we deserve if we ask God to deal with us fairly? Paul says in Romans 6:23 – **For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.** We only deserve God's punishment due to our sins. It is interesting that Paul uses the word "wages" to describe the consequence of sin. From the moment we were born, we started sinning. It is like kids saving money in a piggy-bank. Our sin record keeps piling as we grow up. The time will come for God to settle our account. The sins we earn in our lifetime will result in death. In other words, hell. That will be the only payment we truly deserve. Thankfully, God has a much better solution for us. He deals with us by grace. God sent His Son to die for us on the cross. Jesus paid our sin debt in full. Those who receive Jesus are recipients of God's grace.

結論 CONCLUSION

God offers grace to us out of His power. He freely gives grace to those He intends to save. Now let us go back to Jesus' statement "The first will be last, and the last first." What does He mean? The last group of workers recruited were rewarded first. God's priority is different from ours. He gives grace to the people whom we feel the most undeserved. Heaven will be filled with eleventh hour people. They may include criminals, dictators, crooked politicians, disabled people, the poorest folks from third world countries, etc. It will also include you if you are a true believer. These people get there not because of what they have. No one can enter heaven by their own effort. Everyone who joins God's family is by invitation only. His name be praised!

引言 INTRODUCTION

在某程度上，世界的運作就像一台販賣機。根據我們的努力，我們期望得到某些結果。但有時候我們得到的比我們付出的更多。例如：有些老師會因為大部份學生考試成績不好而調整分數。有些老闆會因為員工表現出色而發獎金。在這兩種情況下，人們盡了他們的本份，但他們得到了額外的好處。我曾經看過一個類似的故事，是關於肯塔基大學籃球隊的教練。他之前其實帶領過孟菲斯大學的球隊九年的時間。在一場季前表演賽之後，有人轉發了一張照片給這位教練，上面看到一位父親和他的兒子去看比賽。那位爸爸穿著工作制服，臉上沾滿了煤炭。教練熟悉那個畫面，因為他的祖父也是煤礦工人。第二天，教練找到那家人。那名工人名叫邁克爾，是肯塔基州籃球隊的忠實粉絲。那天他下班比較晚，沒有時間洗澡和換衣服就帶著兒子去看比賽。教練被邁克爾對家人和球隊的熱愛所感動。他答應送整個球季的貴賓票給全家。他也用這個故事來激勵他的球員學習努力和忠心。隨後，餐廳、旅館和汽車代理商也給這家人一些優惠。一個平凡人因為一位教練的善意而成為名人。聖經稱這種美德為恩典。今天我們要學習的比喻就是關於神的恩典。通常，當我們想到恩典時，我們的注意力會放在接受恩典的人身上。但我們不該忽視施予恩典的一方。就像這位教練對邁克爾的家人所做的那樣，神藉著祂的能力賜給我們恩典。

解釋 EXPLANATION

這個比喻描述耶穌時代的一個常見的情況。那時，大多數人都是臨時工。他們一大早就聚集在廣場，等待雇主僱用他們。我住在德克薩斯州時也看到過同樣的情形。一些中南美州人在加油站碰面，希望有人能找他們做事。也許是一些裝修或是庭園的事務。這些工作有兩方面與比喻中的情況相同。員工在當天下班時會拿到工資，但是他們無法預計第二天能找到工作。耶穌講這個比喻之前，有一位富有的年輕人拜訪祂。他問耶穌他必須做什麼才能承受永生。耶穌吩咐那個人變賣一切所有的，分給窮人，然後跟隨祂。那個人捨不得他的財富，然後愁眉苦臉地離開了。於是彼得便問耶穌：「主啊，我們已經撇下一切跟隨你。我們會得到什麼？」耶穌回答說，門徒會在今生和天上得到祝福。然後主說：「那在前的將要在後，在後的將要在前。」（馬太福音 19:30）主用這個比喻來解釋那句話。講完比喻之後，祂又重複同樣的話：「那在前的將要在後，在後的將要在前。」（馬太福音 20:16）

1. 找工人 Recruit Workers

在比喻中，一位地主一大早就到廣場找工人到他的葡萄園工作。那時，大多數人都是從日出工作到日落。我們可以假設，主人是在早上 6 點找那些工人的。第 2 節說他同意付每個人一錢銀子。那是當時一天工作的通常收入。園主後來做了一些不尋常的事，因為他又四次出去找工人。用今天的話來說，他是在上午 9 點、中午、下午 3 點甚至下午 5 點招募他們。假設他們是下午 6 點下班。你可以計算他們的工作時間。老闆答應那些他在 9 點鐘僱用的人說：『...所當給的，我必給你們。』(第 4 節) 他沒有講任何細節。那些人相信園主會合理地對待他們。相比之下，主人沒有和後來三批工人提到薪水。如果我是他們，我會覺得很欣慰能在那麼晚的時候找到工作。畢竟，沒有收入就沒有晚餐。家人便要餓著肚子睡覺。因此，就算只能賺到一點點，總比兩手空空要好。但我們在故事後面看到那些晚來的工人得到比他們該得的更多。老闆為什麼要找更多的工人？他是否低估了他需要的人手？是不是之前僱用的工人表現不夠好？這些都不是經文告訴我們的原因。耶穌其實給了我們一個線索。第 3 節說，當地主早上 9 點出去時，「...看見市上還有閒站的人。」我們在第 6-7 節中主人和 5 點鐘聘請的工人的對話中找到類似的用詞：6 ... 『你們為什麼整天在這裡閒站呢？』7 他們說：『因為沒有人雇我們。』... 他們不是沒有工作能力，他們是沒有工作機會。除了等待，他們什麼都做不了。鎮上沒有臨時職業介紹所張貼招聘廣告。他們也無法把履歷表登在網上。他們無所事事，只好互相聊天或玩手機。主人僱用他們，表現出對他們的恩典。給他們工作不是為了主人的需要，而是因為工人的需要。那些等待工作的人無助的處境象徵著我們在認識耶穌之前的屬靈光景。我們是迷失、無知、靈裡面眼瞎。保羅在以弗所書 2:4-5 中形容：4 然而，神既有豐富的憐憫，因他愛我們的大愛，5 當我們死在過犯中的時候，便叫我們與基督一同活過來。(你們得救是本乎恩。) 神拯救我們，顯示祂的恩典。保羅明確地表示，當我們還是罪人時，我們不只是壞人，我們就像沒有生命一樣！你無法在超市對著一包雞肉或魚肉大喊：「醒來啊，加油。我知道你可以做得到的！」那些肉無能為力，因為它們已經死了，只能留給你的肚子享受。我們死在罪中。我們對屬靈的事情沒有興趣，因為我們無法回應神。如果不是因為神的恩典，沒有人能夠得救。我們常常錯誤地以為自己像一個可愛的小孩。他們長得很可愛。如果他們穿上漂亮的衣服時，看起來就更加吸引人。救恩不是裝飾一個外表好看的人，乃是給一副骨頭注入新的生命！神賜給你恩典，從千萬人中揀選了你。神救你不是因為你好，而是因為祂對你很好。因此，我們不是因為所做的好事而得救。人的努力是與神的恩典互相矛盾的。保羅在羅馬書 4:4-5 說：4 做工的得工價，不算恩典，乃是該得的；5 惟有不做工的，只信稱罪人為義的神，他的信就算為義。保羅比較工資和神的恩典。工資是我們努力換來的，但是恩典是像禮物一樣白白得到的。說我們被稱義是指

我們的罪被神赦免了。神看祂所拯救的人為義人。神賜給我們救贖恩典，因為沒有人能賺取它。如果我們可以透過做好事得救，我們就會感到驕傲。我們以為自己應該在天堂佔一個位置。神拯救我們並不是因為祂天上的詩班缺少成員。祂不需要我們。但我們迫切需要祂。一位弟兄曾經分享他的見證，充分說明了神的恩典。幾十年前，他來到美國求學。和那個時代的許多年輕人一樣，他必須打工來賺取學費和生活費。他其中一份工作是在圖書館做事。有一年寒假，很多學生都回家了。由於校園裡人不多，圖書館長告訴那位弟兄，接下來幾週他不用上班。弟兄向老闆解釋他的經濟需要。後來，他被允許繼續工作。圖書館長要他把一些期刊從大樓的一邊搬到另一個區域。後來他才知道其實圖書館不需要搬那些書。圖書館長安排這個任務，是為了找藉口給他薪水。他留住一名工人並不是因為他有工作，而是因為工人需要工作。那就是恩典！比喻中的主人出於恩典找工人。同樣，神以恩典拯救我們進入祂的家。我們都是 5 點鐘的工人。我們的貢獻微不足道。神的恩典彌補我們的不足。

2. 發工資 Reward Workers

主人找工人到葡萄園裡幫忙。很快太陽下山，是發工資的時候了。園主又做了一些不尋常的事。聽聽第 8 節中他對工頭的指示：「...『叫工人都來，給他們工錢，從後來的起，到先來的為止。』」當然，他是故意這樣做的。繼續看下一節：「約在酉初雇的人來了，各人得了一錢銀子。」每個人肯定會感到驚訝，那些只工作一個小時的人竟然得到全額工資。很自然，其他工人預計他們會得到更多。他們的希望很快就變成了破滅的美夢。無論服務時間長短，每個人都得到一錢銀子。猜猜誰會是最氣憤的人？自然是那些整天工作的人！他們去找老闆理論，並發洩心中的不滿。他們在第 12 節中抗議：「『我們整天勞苦受熱，那後來的只做了一小時，你竟叫他們和我們一樣嗎？』」他們強調了工作的繁重和炎熱的天氣。在他們看來，貢獻多的人應該得到更多的報酬。他們覺得自己受到了不公平的對待。可惜當時沒有勞工部讓他們投訴。他們的論點合理嗎？主人的回答提出了截然不同的觀點。請看第 13-15 節：13「...『朋友，我不虧負你，你與我講定的不是一錢銀子嗎？14 拿你的走吧！我給那後來的和給你一樣，這是我願意的。15 我的東西難道不可隨我的意思用嗎？因為我作好人，你就紅了眼嗎？』」首先，園主強調他的誠實。他同意給早上 6 點來的工人一錢銀子。他們得到之前談好的工資。因此主人沒有欺騙他們。第二，地主的權柄。他當然可以自由地運用自己的錢。第三，他的慷慨。出於同情心，他願意向其他四組員工支付更多的薪水。容許我改變一下劇情來說明一個論點。如果工頭先給早上 6 點來的人薪水會怎麼？假設你是他們中的一人，當你收到工資時，你會有什麼感覺？你可能會對自己說：「終於收工了！我不用當烤豬。我可以回家休息了。」你拿到錢會很滿意，但你可能不會有任何興奮。因為你整天都知

道，一錢銀子就是你的回報。你感到很欣慰，至少你盡了義務，為家人提供了吃飯的錢。你可以想像，主人是故意先發薪水給 5 點鐘的工人，讓大家都看到那些人領多少錢。地主顯明，他不是根據他們的功勞，而是根據他的恩典來獎勵他們的。早上 6 點的工人認為受到了不公平的待遇，因為其他人得到他們不該得的。當我們跟別人比較時，喜樂很快就會變成嫉妒。你對自己的成就感到滿足：你有穩定的收入、一棟像樣的房子、兩輛車子和健康的孩子。當你去參加同學會的聚會時，心裡的甘甜馬上變成心酸。你聽到這個人的生意賺大錢，另一個同學嫁給了一個高富帥，一個以前成績最差的人 50 歲便退休，你就感到嫉妒。你自言自語說：「太不公平了！」比較可能會導致兩種結果。我們可能為自己得到一切而感到自豪。另一個極端是，我們責怪神給別人更多的祝福。這兩種情況都會奪走我們的喜樂。如果你真的要比較的話，就應該把你的現狀和你以前的情形做比較。還記得你還是個窮學生或是剛來到美國時的光景嗎？另外，你應該將自己與賜福給你一切的神比較。確實，你努力工作累積了一點財富。但誰給你學習的智慧呢？誰讓你健康的身體去謀生？誰給你機會致富？讓我再問你一個問題：當你拿到工資時，你感謝誰？我懷疑有人會感謝他的老闆。如果你覺得你所得到的都是你該得的，那麼你只會感謝自己。但如果你懂得感謝神，那麼你是一個明白祂恩典的人。神不遵循公平的規矩做事，因為祂是按照恩典的原則做事。如果我們要求神公平地對待我們，我們會得到什麼？保羅在羅馬書 6:23 說：**因為罪的工價乃是死；惟有神的恩賜，在我們的基督耶穌裡，乃是永生。**因著我們的罪，我們只配得到神的懲罰。有趣的是，保羅用「工價」這個字來形容罪的後果。從我們出生的那一刻起，我們就開始犯罪。就像小孩把錢儲存在小豬錢箱裡一樣。隨著我們的成長，我們不斷累積犯罪記錄。有一天神要和我們算帳。我們一生所犯的罪將導致死亡。換句話說，就是地獄。那是我們真正配得的唯一報酬。感謝神！祂有一個更好的解決方案。祂以恩典對待我們。神差遣祂的兒子為我們死在十字架上。耶穌還清了我們的罪債。凡接受耶穌的人就是神恩典的受益人。

結論 CONCLUSION

神藉著祂的能力賜給我們恩典。祂白白地把恩典賞賜給那些祂打算要拯救的人。現在讓我們回到耶穌的那句話：「那在前的將要在後，在後的將要在前。」祂是什麼意思？最後一批招募的工人首先得到了獎勵。神的優先次序與我們的不一樣。祂把恩典賜給我們認為最不配的人。天堂將充滿 5 點鐘的工人。他們可能包括罪犯、獨裁者、不擇手段的政客、殘疾人士、第三世界最貧窮的人等等。如果你是個信徒，那麼你也是其中一員。這些人進到那裡並不是因為他們擁有什麼。沒有人可以憑藉自己的努力進入天堂。每個加入神家庭的人都是被邀請的。神的名配得讚美！