

Gospel of Matthew Chapter 20 -- John Karmelich

1. My title for Chapter 20 is “Proper Perspective Of Heavenly Rewards”.
 - a) A subtitle is, “What’s in it for me? ☺
 - b) That is a question asked by Peter and the disciples prior to this chapter.
 - c) That is the question asked by two of the apostles (James & John) in this chapter.
 - d) The answer was probably a shocker to the apostles.
 - i) The most overriding point of the whole chapter is to humble yourself like the lowest servant and then you will have great rewards in heaven.
 - ii) It is as if Jesus took an organizational chart of a large corporation and turned it upside down! The idea is the lowest people in the company will get the greatest rewards. Humility and service comes before power and prestige.
2. This whole chapter is a “road” chapter. It takes place on the road of Jesus walking to Jerusalem.
 - a) Beginning with the next chapter, the pace of Matthew slows down to a crawl.
 - b) From Chapter 21 to the end of Matthew in Chapter 28, are the events of the last week of Jesus’ life on earth and one chapter post resurrection.
 - c) What we are reading here is the last set of events prior to “Easter Week”.
 - i) It is important to keep that in perspective as one reads this chapter.
 - ii) Jesus takes the time to teach his disciples some of the most important facts that are about to happen and what will be the future for the disciples.
 - iii) The reason Jesus focuses on eternal rewards is that Jesus himself will no longer “be around” in less than a week. Given that, Jesus needed to focus on the fundamentals prior to the events of Easter week.
 - a) The essentials included giving a prediction of the events of the following week. That prediction didn’t sink in to the disciples as they still have the preconceived notion that Jesus was going to overthrow Rome and set up a kingdom here and now.
 - iv) Further, on the expectations of a great messianic kingdom coming soon, the disciples were busy arguing over who would be the greatest. Jesus uses that opportunity to teach that heavenly rewards are based on faithfulness and not power nor status.
 - a) Jesus knew he would not be around much longer. Therefore, he needed to prepare the disciples for the future. They were about to set the foundation for the whole Christian church. Jesus’ teaching on humility and servant hood is the basis for how the church is to be set up.
 - b) The application for you and I is we don’t know when Jesus is to return. We don’t know how long of a life we have on earth. Therefore, we need to be primarily concerned with the eternal.
 - (1) Our rewards in heaven are based on our faithfulness to whatever God has called us to do.
 - d) The final story in this chapter is about two blind men who get healed.
 - i) A question to ponder is “why is this story included at this point in Matthew?”
 - a) I’m sure it took place at that point.
 - ii) It is the last recorded miracle before the events of Easter Week.
 - iii) It took place probably 1-2 days prior to Palm Sunday.
 - iv) Something to consider in this chapter is why Jesus took the time to perform this miracle prior to all of the “big events” and right after Jesus spends most of the chapter teaching on servant hood. (That last phrase is a clue as to why I believe Jesus healed these men. I’ll talk about this more when we get to that verse.)
 - v) In the meantime it is time for Verse #1:

3. Chapter 20, Verse 1: "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. ² He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.
 - a) Near the end of Chapter 19, Peter and the disciples were wondering what their reward would be for following Jesus. This 15-verse parable is part of Jesus' answer.
 - i) A "parable" is simply a story designed to make a point.
 - b) The first 15 verses of Chapter 20 are a "sandwich" between 2 very similar verses:
 - i) Here's the last verse of the last chapter, Chapter 19:
 - a) But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.
 - ii) Here's is Verse 16 of Chapter 20:
 - a) "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."
 - c) For those who don't know this story, let me summarize:
 - i) A landowner hires people throughout the day to go work in the vineyard.
 - ii) Those hired at the beginning of the day agree to a "normal" day's wage.
 - iii) Those hired throughout the day are told that you will get paid "what is fair".
 - iv) At the end of the day, everybody gets paid the same amount.
 - v) Those who are hired early in the day say it isn't fair.
 - vi) The landowner says, "That is what you agreed to, stop whining". ☺
 - a) Luckily, they didn't have employee wage attorneys in those days. ☺
 - vii) A lesson to learn is not to complain about what God has called you to do.
 - viii) Now that you see the big picture, let's talk about some of the individual verses.
 - d) First, let's remember what "kingdom of heaven" means:
 - i) This can refer life in heaven.
 - ii) It more often refers to our Christian life here on earth.
 - iii) One can read this parable about either life in heaven and/or life on earth.
 - e) During that time era, like today, there are day laborers.
 - i) These men gather around a certain location waiting to be hired.
 - f) A "denarius" was a Roman coin, roughly equal to a day's wage.
4. Verse 3: "About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. ⁴ He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' ⁵ So they went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing. ⁶ About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?' ⁷ "Because no one has hired us,' they answered. "He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.'
 - a) Notice that the word "denarius" is not used again in this section.
 - b) The landowner says to everyone else in effect, "I'll pay you what is right".
 - i) These others expected lower wages, because that is what they were used to.
 - c) On a side note, don't obsess over the meaning of the hours of the day.
 - i) This refers to times of the day-by daylight.
 - ii) The third hour corresponds roughly with the third hour of daylight.
 - d) I stated earlier that you could read this whole parable about either being about heaven, or about your life of Christian service here on earth.
 - i) Let's start with the "this-is-about-heaven" view of this parable.
 - a) Jesus is teaching that one can be saved at any time in our life on earth.
 - b) Many elderly people have given their life to Christ by reading this illustration and realizing that they are at their "11th hour" of their life.
 - c) Jesus' point in this view is that God is gracious and still is calling you to follow him, even if you have ignored God all of your adult life.
 - d) This parable ends with all the workers receiving the same pay.
 - (1) In that sense, it refers to salvation. We are all saved for eternity no matter when we commit our lives to serve God.

- (2) Be careful not to “overuse” this illustration for salvation.
 - (a) We can’t work for our salvation like these vineyard workers.
 - (b) Salvation is a free gift from God. (See Ephesians 2:8)
 - (c) If you are reading this parable in terms of eternal salvation, the point is “we all get a days pay” (i.e., salvation) no matter what “time of the day” in your life you were called.
- ii) Now let’s talk about the “this parable is about the here & now” view.
 - a) I take the view that one does not begin to experience what “life” is all about until you have committed your life to Christ.
 - (1) “I (Jesus) have come that they (us) may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. (John 10:10b, NKJV)
 - b) Some people are called early in life to serve Christ.
 - (1) Statistically, more people commit their life to Jesus as teenagers than at any other time in their life.
 - (2) This does not mean that any other age is too late, it just means the older you get, the more the odds are against you. As we get older, we get used to living for things other than God and it becomes more difficult to commit our lives to Jesus.
 - (a) That’s ok though, God is in the miracle business. ☺
 - (b) Never, ever give up praying for someone! Pray that their heart be opened to the truth and for God to bring witnesses into their lives about Jesus.
 - (3) One of the things that caught my eye was Verse 7. It says, “Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?”
 - (a) You can read that verse about someone who has spent all of their adult life ignoring God. It is as if a loving God is pleading with them saying, “Why have you wasted your life “doing nothing””? Remember that God doesn’t want to see anyone perish in hell. He is pleading with us to turn to Him all the way until the point it is too late for us to change.
 - c) We see people spending all of their time and resources going after riches, after fame, or great building projects, or whatever else builds their ego. The sad thing is that in the end, it doesn’t matter. In a matter of decades or centuries, whatever they have accomplished will be long forgotten.
 - d) On the other hand whatever we do for God has eternal implications. Our heavenly rewards are based on our service to whatever God has called us to do. I’m convinced that to minister to others on God’s behalf brings more joy and happiness in life than anything and everything the world has to offer. Having been on “both sides” of this fact, I can testify to its truth.
- e) Notice that all the workers of the vineyard agreed to work “based on what was right”.
 - i) Those who got hired at the beginning of the workday agreed to a full day’s wages.
 - ii) Those who got hired through the day agreed to “whatever is right”.
 - iii) That should be our attitude toward Christian service for God. Our attitude should be something like this:
 - a) “Heavenly father, I want to spend the rest of my life serving you. I am forever grateful for Jesus paying the price for me so I can spend eternity with you.”
 - b) “Out of that gratitude I want you to run my life. I desire to please you, and the way to please you is to let you live through me so that I can be a witness and or of service to others.”

- c) "Further, whatever you want to do with me is fine. You have called others at earlier ages and will call others at later ages. That is your problem and not mine." I'm not going to worry about other people's ministries, but focus on what you have called me to do."
5. Verse 8: "When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.'
- a) We will learn in a few verses that the reason the landowner wanted to pay the last-guys first is so the first-guys could see that everyone gets paid the same.
- b) The purpose of last-goes-first in this illustration is mainly for the benefit of those who have worked the longest. It is to show God's generosity.
- c) This verse does not mean when we get to heaven, we have to wait in line for our rewards based on when we showed up. ☺ I personally take the view that time has no meaning in the next life. God created time, and therefore God exists outside of time as we know it.
- d) Remember that God is in charge, and we are not.
- i) How he chooses to reward us is his business, not ours.
- ii) One has remember not to get too obsessed over the idea of heavenly rewards. Let's say you're a competitive person. You study all the verses in the bible on rewards and figure, "ok, here's what I've got to do to be in first place. ☺"
If you're ego is working on being the top guy, you are now thinking like the 12 apostles, which is to say, you need to work on humility.
- iii) Focus on what God has called you to do (or work toward that goal) and the rewards will take care of themselves.
- iv) "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up." (James 4:10 NIV)
6. Verse 9: "The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius.
- a) This verse, by itself shows the grace of God.
- b) To those who get saved near the end of their life, God does not say, "Well now old-timer, about time you acknowledged me, here's a few bucks for your trouble." ☺
- c) The correct view is just the opposite. God's grace is just as generous to those who have committed their life to Jesus at the end of their lives to those who have committed their lives at an earlier time.
- d) This verse is also not intended to say, "Ok, I can wait until I'm old to become a Christian".
- i) The idea of the same-wage-for-everyone is about God's grace being poured out on us whenever we make that commitment.
- ii) I stated earlier that there is nothing greater in life than to commit it to following Jesus. Those who commit later in life miss out on all the blessings of having that personal relationship, that joy and happiness in life.
- iii) I remember hearing a man speak in a large church. This church had five services, two on Saturday night and three on Sunday mornings. I went to the last service. In each service, the man talked about how he went to church on and off his whole life, but it wasn't until late in life he realized he never knew Jesus. The man broke down in tears when he made that statement. The pastor said later that the man cried at every service making the same proclamation.
- a) The point is when we turn to Jesus late in life, we realize how much of life we have really missed by waiting too long.
- iv) The good news is we still get a "full denarius" whenever we turn our lives over to Jesus. God's grace is infinite and cannot be measured. The bad news is the realization of the missed opportunities to serve God at a younger age.
- a) Getting back to the parable, notice you don't read of the landowner "scolding" any of the late-workers at pay-time. There is the mention of "why

haven't you been hired yet", but once you make that commitment, God forgives all of your sins, even of a great delay in following him.

7. Verse 10: So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. ¹¹ When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ¹² `These men who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, `and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.' ¹³ "But he answered one of them, `Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? ¹⁴ Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. ¹⁵ Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?"
- a) Those who were hired first, saw the others get a full day's pay and thought, "Well, we agreed to a full day's pay, but since the landowner is so generous, we should get more".
 - b) God is in charge, and we are not. This is emphasized by Verse 15 that says, "Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money?"
 - i) If God chooses to give the same wage to others as to us, it is his decision to make.
 - ii) This is the grumbling of those who have committed their lives to God at an earlier phase and see the "late-comers" and think, "OK, they're saved, but their reward is not as great as mine.
 - iii) This is the grumbling of those who think, "I do a lot of work around this church. This other guy gets saved later and everybody is making a big deal about it. I never get appreciated for all the service I do around here."
 - iv) The mistake the early-workers made is they got their focus off of God and unto other people. God calls us into service for Him. It is not a competition among believers. You don't get more "points" in heaven by outdoing other Christians.
 - c) We are called to be of service to God.
 - i) At whatever age we are called, we need to stop worrying about others and focus on what God calls us to do.
 - ii) If you are not sure what God calls you to do, don't worry, He will. ☺
 - iii) The answer usually involves whatever God-given talents he has given you. He expects you to use them for His glory. A way to tell what special service God has for you is to figure out whatever you enjoy doing anyway. It may be a hobby or interest. God may use that as a ministry opportunity.
 - a) This also not to ignore what "normal" things God has called you to do. If you are supporting a family, one should not neglect that responsibility in order to "better serve God". In fact it is just the opposite.
 - b) Understanding our service to God requires balance. One must put God first in our lives, but one does not ignore the responsibilities we are supposed to do as well.
 - d) Going back to the life-in-heaven aspect of this parable, we may be surprised when we get to heaven and see people saved late in life get some special rewards in heaven.
 - i) In such cases, we are not to grumble, but to praise God for his generous grace.
 - ii) Again, God is in charge and we are not. Our job is to serve him and let God worry about other believers in the aspect of heavenly rewards.
8. Verse 16: "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."
- a) Ok, we are now back where we started. ☺
 - b) Again, the last verse of the last chapter says, "But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first." This whole parable is located between two fairly identical statements.
 - c) I believe the purpose of the illustration is given to us who follow Jesus here and now.

- i) We have to be careful about our egos. It is easy to focus on “Gee, what will God do for me in heaven? I’ve been serving him for many years, I must be due for something special”.
 - a) First of all, that is true. We as believers will inherit all things with Jesus.
 - b) I think when we get to heaven, some people are going to appreciate it more than others only because we comprehend God greater based on our Christian maturity.
- ii) A purpose of this illustration is that God wants us to watch our attitude.
 - a) When you read the entire bible, you will notice there are only a few chapters about what heaven is like. There are a few chapters in Revelation, but that’s about it. Most of the bible focuses on what God expects from us here-and-now. That should also be our perspective.
 - b) Our job is to focus on our Christian ministry. If God has called you to do something, go do it. Don’t worry about other people’s rewards are getting.
- d) A similar illustration in the bible is the “prodigal son”.
 - i) This is the story told in Luke 15.
 - ii) It is the story of two sons. One takes half of his father’s inheritance while his father is still alive and squanders it away. When that son hits rock bottom, he goes back to dad and asks to be one of his servants. His father is excited and makes him a son again.
 - a) The point is that the lost-now-found son never lost his “son-ship”. He is still the father’s son and the father always loved him. The father’s love is there when the boy repents.
 - iii) The second half of this story talks about the “grumbling” of the other son.
 - a) The other son knows all the details about the first son.
 - b) The second son grumbles to dad how, “He has served you all of his life and I never got a party like the one you’re throwing for the returning son.”
 - iv) Notice the father’s comment to the long-time-serving son:
 - a) ‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”
(Luke 15:31-32, NIV)
 - b) That should be the attitude of the long-serving Christian. We have to celebrate the latecomers first because they escaped eternal hell and realized their mistakes before it was too late. That is always worth celebrating over.
 - (1) “Tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.” (Luke 15:7, NIV)
 - c) To realize, “So the last will be first, and the first will be last” may be to understand that “God is saving the best for last”.
 - (1) First, God wants to celebrate with those who have made their commitment. Then those “who will be first” will be rewarded as they were promised. Again, notice in the “Prodigal son” story what the father says to the other brother: “you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.” That is enough reward in of itself.
- 9. Verse 17: Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside and said to them,¹⁸ "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death¹⁹ and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!"
 - a) Now the story “switches gears”.
 - b) Everything up to this point was Jesus talking alone with the disciples.

- c) Now Jesus is on the road to Jerusalem, for the last time.
 - i) It is about one week before the crucifixion.
 - ii) The beginning of the next chapter talks about the events of “Palm Sunday”, which is one week prior to Easter Sunday”.
 - iii) Jesus is aware of what is about to happen to him. Among the large crowd of followers, Jesus takes aside the 12 apostles and tries to let them in on what is about to happen.
- d) The question to ask is, “Why did Jesus mention this here and now?
 - i) The last verse we read is the story of who’s first and last in the kingdom of God. Now we read of the crucifixion details.
 - ii) My personal view (meaning, its not in the text), is Jesus is trying to get our attention on what is really important.
 - iii) Remember the disciples were busy worrying about who is the greatest in heaven.
 - iv) In fact, the next story is back to that topic as well.
 - v) Matthew “happens” to mention the gospel story in-between two separate stories about who is the greatest in heaven.
 - vi) I believe Matthew is trying to get our focus on what is really important here.
- e) Notice Jesus is aware of all the details in advance of what is about to happen to him.
 - i) It is as if Jesus had already read the gospels and is now reliving the story.
 - a) Jesus mentions the fact he will be arrested and tried by the Jewish leaders.
 - b) Jesus mentions he will be turned over to “the gentiles”, which refers to the Roman leaders.
 - c) Jesus mentions he will rise again. In fact, whenever Jesus discusses his death in future-terms he always mentions the resurrection as well. That’s a reminder for us to keep our focus on the right place.
 - ii) Just how Jesus knew the details is unknown. God the father revealed it to him.
 - iii) Let’s get back to the purpose of Matthew’s Gospel: to show Jesus is the Messiah.
 - a) One of the aspects of the Messiah is that he will be a prophet. That simply means that he has God-inspired abilities to predict the future. Prophecy is used as validation for the authenticity of Jesus' words.
 - (1) Moses once said, “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. (Deuteronomy 18:15, NIV).
 - (a) This is a prediction about the Messiah as “The Prophet”.
- f) When you read Luke’s account of the same story, Luke adds this comment:
 - i) “The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about.” (Luke 18:34, NIV)
 - a) Translation: Jesus said it, the disciples didn’t get it.
 - (1) The point is they didn’t comprehend at this point the concept of the crucifixion and Jesus rising on the 3rd day.
 - ii) Maybe the disciples were still focused on this “be humble and get great reward statements”.
 - iii) Maybe they thought when Jesus said, “he would be alive the 3rd day” it was some sort of mystical saying. I suspect they still thought that Jesus was going to overthrow Rome. Maybe they thought it would be a 3-day battle.
 - iv) Jesus made this comment to try to comfort them after the resurrection.
 - v) If I were to try to make up a story about Jesus, I would probably say that his followers figured it all out beforehand. The fact that the disciples didn’t get it until after the resurrection adds validity to the Gospel stories.

10. Verse 20: Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. ²¹ "What is it you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom."
- a) Here is another story of some disciples asking, "How can I be great in heaven?"
 - i) This time, James & John were too scared to ask themselves, so they put their mother up to asking. If you read the story in Mark's Gospel (Chapter 10), you get the impression this was James & John's idea.
 - ii) Remember that Jesus just gave a long parable about our rewards in heaven.
 - a) Next we read of Jesus predicting his death and resurrection.
 - b) Now we read of James & John saying in effect, "yeah, yeah, death and resurrection, that's interesting, but what about our rewards?" ☺
 - c) It's almost comical in that sense.
 - b) Remember Jesus said in Chapter 19 that the disciples would be seated in 12 thrones "Judging the 12 tribes of Israel (Ref: Matthew 19:28)
 - i) These two remembered that. They were asking for the 2 top seats.
11. Verse 22: "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered. ²³ Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."
- a) If you want to have some fun in a crowded movie theatre, the next time someone asks you if the seat next to is available, respond, "To sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father." ☺
 - b) Here's the most important lesson to learn from these verses: (pay attention! ☺)
 - i) You can't ask Jesus for special heavenly status. Jesus never "owes you one!"
 - ii) Yes you can pray for God's will to be done. But you can't say, "Hey Jesus, its your buddy John down here, you know, the one who prays to you every day, listen I have a favor to ask, if it's not too much trouble." ☺
 - a) We pray for God's will to be done, not our will!
 - iii) Remember that humility and servant hood is the key to great rewards in heaven.
 - c) Remember their mother asked the question, but Jesus knew who really asked it.
 - i) In Verse 22, Jesus responds to them, and not to their mother.
 - ii) This verse also shows that there were more than the 12 disciples following them on the road to Jerusalem.
 - d) Verse 23 says, "You will indeed drink from my cup". What does that mean?
 - i) The book of Acts records that this James was the first martyr of the church.
 - ii) History records that John outlives the rest of the disciples, but it wasn't for a lack of trying to kill him. John survived several tortuous attempts to kill him.
 - a) Jesus point is that both James & John were called to suffer heavily for the sake of the gospel.
 - iii) In fact, early church records recorded that most of the disciples were martyred for their faith. (Church history knew the deaths of most, but not all of disciples.)
 - a) There are many people throughout history who were willing to die for what the believed is true. I don't believe anyone at anytime would be willing to die a painful death for something they knew was a lie.
 - b) That is the point. The disciples paid with their lives their belief in Jesus and the Gospel message. Many critics of the bible accuse the disciples of making up the stories about Jesus. Stop and ask yourself, are you willing to be tortured and killed for something you knew was a lie?
 - (1) Of course not. This adds to the validity of the bible.
12. Verse 24: When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers.
- a) The other disciples were mad that these two "beat them to the punch".

- i) Deep down, they weren't so much mad that they asked Jesus as much as they didn't think of the idea first.
 - ii) The point is we are still dealing with the ego's of the disciples, which means its time for another lesson from Jesus.
- 13. Verse 25: Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
 - a) In the introduction of this lesson, I described rewards in heaven like being an upside down organizational chart for a large organization.
 - i) A typical organizational chart has the president on top and the janitors down on the bottom. Jesus is teaching in heavenly status, we want to be a janitor! ☺
 - ii) The word "minister" means to be a servant. Unfortunately, many church denominations put their ministers as someone having top status.
 - iii) Notice the word "must" in Verse 26. Jesus says if we want to be great in heaven, then we must be servants. It is a command for us to be a servant. We are to make a priority of other's needs over our own. That is what biblical "love" is all about.
 - b) I am convinced that when we get to heaven we are going to be surprised at what rewards people will have in heaven.
 - i) We tend to think of people like Billy Graham having a top seat. We may be surprised to find a working mom who was dedicated to raising Godly children having a top spot in heaven. Our heavenly rewards are based on our faithfulness to whatever God called us to do.
 - ii) Jesus taught a similar principal back in Chapter 10:
 - a) Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward.
Matthew 10:41, NIV
 - c) There is an idea taught by some people called "limited atonement".
 - i) Notice in Verse 28, Jesus says he came to "give his life as a ransom for many".
 - ii) This is the concept where Jesus died only for those who accept Him, and not for everyone else. I disagree with this view, but it is there.
 - iii) Paul said, "the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men".
(1st Timothy 2:5b-6a, NIV)
 - iv) Paul's statement sounds like a contradiction to Jesus' statement in Verse 28.
 - a) Jesus said, "ransom for many" (Verse 28 here in Matthew)
 - b) And Paul said, "ransom for all". (1st Timothy 2:6).
 - c) So, which is it? The answer is both. Jesus died for the world. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16a, NKJV).
 - (1) The "world" means everybody.
 - (2) To those who choose to accept Jesus get eternal life.
 - (3) That is why both statements are correct.
- 14. Verse 29: As Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him. ³⁰ Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"
 - a) We now have a change in the story. Let's do a quick review first:
 - i) Remember this whole chapter is a "road chapter". It takes place while Jesus is traveling with the disciples and others from Galilee region to Jerusalem.
 - ii) First Jesus talks heavenly rewards.

- iii) Jesus is traveling with a crowd that includes his disciples. Next Jesus sets aside his disciples to tell them about the crucifixion and resurrection.
 - iv) Next we have the story of James & John asking for top seating status.
 - a) Jesus says in effect, “You’re asking the wrong guy. ☺
My father makes those decisions.”
 - v) Then we have the other disciples being mad at James & John for asking that question. Jesus then again explains who is great in heaven.
 - b) Which leads to the next story in this road adventure. Jesus heals 2 blind men near Jericho.
 - c) What I want you to think about is “why this story “here, and now?”
 - i) We’ll get to the answer in a minute. First, I need to clear up some things. ☺
 - d) Some people make a big deal about what “seems” to be a contradiction.
 - i) Matthew says here that as Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho.
 - ii) In Luke’s Gospel of the same story, it says, they were entering Jericho (Luke 18:35).
 - iii) It sounds like a contradiction. I’ve heard a number of ways to explain it.
 - a) The most likely versions is the fact that archeologists have discovered there was actually two Jericho’s. There was a “new” Jericho that existed around Jesus’ time, and an “ancient” Jericho that existed before. Some people call them “upper” and “lower” Jericho as they are on different elevations. The point is Jesus could have been leaving one Jericho and entering another. This would explain the apparent contraction of Matthew and Luke,
 - b) The good news is you don’t have to remember this. ☺ Just remember that many things that appear to be a contradiction in the bible can be explained once you study the facts.
 - e) There is another apparent contradiction in that Matthew mentions two blind men and Luke mentions only one (Luke 18:35) and Mark mentions only one (Mark 10:46).
 - i) In fact, Mark mentions the one by name, which was Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46).
 - ii) So, was it one or two blind men that Jesus cured?
 - iii) Again, it is not really a contradiction. One guy was probably the more “outspoken” of the two. The fact that Mark mentions Bartimaeus by name may mean he knew the guy personally. If two guys received a miracle, and one was your friend, you might write, “My friend Bartimaeus got healed”. It doesn’t mean there were not two people; you just choose to write about the guy you knew.
 - iv) Again, you don’t have to remember the details. Just know that there are explanations for what appears to be contradictions in the bible.
 - f) Meanwhile, back to the story. Visualize a large crowd following Jesus. Here were these two guys, probably shrieking at a loud voice so they could be heard. Let’s go on to the next verse and tie them together.
15. Verse 31: The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"
- a) Personally, I was wondering why the crowd rebuked them. A lot of people were following Jesus to see miracles.
 - i) Maybe everyone was being “selfish” and wanted Jesus to heal their problems and ignore the blind men. It is as if the crowd was saying “Yeah, yeah, they’re blind Lord, but I have this bad bump on my head and I want you to heal that first. “ ☺
 - ii) More likely, most of the followers of Jesus were looking for Jesus to go to Jerusalem to set up his kingdom. Remember that the pre-conceived notion of the “Messiah” was that he was going to rule from Jerusalem. This is not a false-notion. That is the purpose of Jesus’ second coming.
 - a) Here was this large crowd following Jesus to Jerusalem. They were thinking “this is it, Jesus is going to Jerusalem, overthrow the Roman government and start the messianic kingdom right now”.

- b) Maybe that is why when Jesus predicted his death and resurrection, nobody “got it”, because in their minds, they were still thinking Jesus was going to Jerusalem to overthrow Rome. Maybe they were thinking “Jesus must mean we will lose the battle for 3 days, and on the 3rd day, we’ll win and we’ll be ruling from Jerusalem.”
 - iii) So, here were these two blind men yelling out to be healed. The crowd was probably thinking, “this is no time to be asking for a miracle, don’t you know Jesus is going to Jerusalem to overthrow the government?”
- 16. Verse 32: Jesus stopped and called them. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. ³³ "Lord," they answered, "we want our sight." ³⁴ Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.
 - a) I always wondered why Jesus asked, “What do you want me to do for you?”
 - i) Shouldn’t that be obvious? They were blind and called out for healing.
 - ii) The best explanation I’ve heard is that God enjoys us asking for things via our prayers. God knows all things, even those we are going to ask him in prayer. God delights in a relationship with us and wants to hear from us.
 - iii) You have to read this sentence like a loving father asking a child, “what can I do for you? How can I be your servant?” Yes Jesus knew they were blind and wanted healing. I believe Jesus just wanted to enjoy the moment of hearing them ask for healing.
 - b) There is one more “Jewish” point I want to make before I wrap this up. It ties with the next lesson.
 - i) The next lesson, Chapter 21 focuses on the events of “Palm Sunday”.
 - a) If you read through most of the gospels, Jesus heals people and then turns around and tells them “don’t tell anybody”. If Jesus is thronged by crowds demanding healing, he can’t preach.
 - b) Yet on “Palm Sunday” Jesus arranges to be worshipped. Jesus organizes an event for people to see him as the promised Messiah.
 - (1) Remember the crowd was following Jesus to Jerusalem. They probably had expectations of “this is the moment”.
 - ii) Now let’s get back to the “blind men”.
 - a) They called out to Jesus as “Son of David”, a messianic title.
 - b) Now lets recall something from Chapter 15:
 - (1) A Canaanite woman (just remember she was non-Jewish) asked Jesus to heal her son who was demon possessed.
 - (2) This was the story where Jesus said, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and feed it to the dogs” (Matthew 15:26, NIV)
 - (3) She responded in effect, “Yes, lord, but even the dogs get to eat the crumbs that fall off the dinner table. Just give me some “crumbs” and heal my son”.
 - (4) One of the points of that story is she first approached Jesus as “Son of David”. Jesus denied that request, essentially because she was not Jewish. It was only because of her faith in a Jewish Messiah that Jesus healed her son.
 - (5) The point is that Jesus came as the Messiah to the Jewish nation first. Only after their rejection is when Gentiles, (corporately) can approach Jesus for salvation.
 - c) Which leads us back to the events of Palm Sunday.
 - (1) This is the day that the Jewish nation corporately, meaning as a group, not individuals, rejected Jesus as the Messiah.
 - d) Which leads us back to the two blind men who were healed.

- (1) They approached Jesus as “Son of David”.
 - (2) They happened to be Jewish. ☺
 - (3) Jesus stopped walking toward Jerusalem to heal them.
 - (a) Jesus was still reaching out to the Jewish nation for healing up to the point of his rejection.
 - (b) Despite the events of the “big week” was right around the corner, he still took time out to heal people.
- c) About one page ago, I asked you to think about “why this story, here, and now?”
- i) Why is it important for Jesus, on the way to Jerusalem to heal these people?
 - ii) First of all, notice what Jesus did not say:
 - a) “Hey you two, I’m going to be Jerusalem to be crucified. Who cares about your sight, I’m busy right now! ☺
 - b) “Hey, where have you two been for the last three years of my ministry? Why ask now right before my big moment? Bug off! ☺
 - iii) If you remember Jesus parable from earlier in the chapter, Jesus talked about some workers in the vineyard only worked one hour, and Jesus still gave them a full days wage.
 - a) I’m going to argue, that in a sense, this story of the two blind men is connected to that principal.
 - iv) These two blind men called out to Jesus as “Son of David”.
 - a) That is a common Jesus nickname for the Messiah.
 - b) These two men wanted Jesus to heal them because Jesus is the Messiah.
 - c) Here was Jesus, probably one day before “Palm Sunday” and eight days before “Easter Sunday” healing two blind men.
 - d) For these two blind men, today is the “11th hour”!
 - (1) They called out to Jesus the Messiah right before the events of the crucifixion so “they can see”.
 - (2) Like the vineyard workers who only worked one hour and received a “full day’s pay”, here were two blind men, near the end of Jesus ministry, yelling out for Jesus the Messiah.
 - e) Jesus made a pit stop from his journey to Jerusalem to heal people who wanted to be healed.
 - f) The application, like those on the “11th hour”, is that one can always come to Jesus for healing. It is never too late.
 - v) Notice the last part of this verse. After they were healed, “they followed him.” That is the happy ending. Not that they were healed of their blindness, but out of gratitude for that healing, they followed Jesus. That simple illustration is an excellent model for what Jesus does for us.
 - a) He heals us and then we follow him. End of story. ☺
17. Heavenly Father, we, like the blind men, have received new sight. You have healed us of all our sins and have given us new sight. We were blind, and now we see. Out of gratitude, we now follow you. Help us to live humbly and put other’s needs over our own. Help us to keep you in the center of our lives, as we live as witnesses for you. Help us to keep the eternal perspective as we wait for your return. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.