

Parable: The Workers in the Vineyard

Teacher Pep Talk: The parable of the Workers in the Vineyard teaches about the generosity of God in salvation. The Vineyard Owner hires workers at various times during the day, and then generously pays them ALL a full day's wages at the end of the day. This seems "unfair" to those who have worked hard all day in the hot sun. But the Vineyard Owner points out that He has not been unfair to those who came first. (After all, they agreed to work for a day's wages.) He has simply been as generous to those who came last. In this way, Jesus said, that the "last will be first and the first will be last."

The parable teaches us that everyone who believes in God and accepts His call receives the same reward (salvation) at the end of the day (or of time.) Those who work an hour receive the same reward (salvation) as those who work all day: not because the vineyard owner (God) is being unfair to those who worked all day, but because He is being generous to all (with His grace.)

Though we will each receive individual rewards for what we have left for Jesus' sake (Matthew 19:28-29), our salvation isn't earned by our own work or the length of it; it rests in God's grace alone.

You will need: Yard working implements to act out the parable.
(Examples: Rakes, shovels, gardening trowels, etc.)
Something to "pay" your workers with (*How about Lollipops?*)
Paper plates, brads, scissors, & 1 set of clock hands for each child
Crayons & a copy of the Coloring Sheet-Activity Page for each child

Major Points: God loves us and calls each of us to come to Him.
(The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard)
God rewards each of us generously.

Scripture Ref. Matthew 20: 1-16

Memory Verse: Matthew 20:16 "...the last will be first, and the first will be last."

Lesson: **God loves us and calls each of us to come to Him.**

- God loves us! He wants us to be with Him always.
- How do you call someone? Do you say "Hey, Fred, come over here!" or "Hey, Susie, you want to come with us?" You might say something like that. Did you know that God calls to us? He does! We may not hear Him just like that, but He calls to us.
- When we come to Him, we do so at different times in our life.
- Whenever we will come to Him, God gives us good things to do.
- God is always generous with His rewards.

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard

- Jesus told parables (or stories) to help us learn about God.
- A parable is a story that teaches us what God is like. In each parable there is one person who represents God. When we find that person in the story, we can learn something about Him.
- Since Jesus is God's Son, we know that He describes God perfectly! So let's listen to the story and learn about God!
- In this parable, the man who owns the vineyard represents God. *(A vineyard is a big farm where they raise grapes.)* We will need to keep our eye on the Vineyard Owner to learn about God!

The Vineyard Owner Hires the Workers

- One day a man who owned a vineyard went into town to hire some men to work for the day. *(Back then the men of the town would come to the marketplace when they were ready to work, and landowners would come out and hire them for the day.)*
- The Vineyard Owner came very early in the morning *(like 6 AM)* and hired some men, telling them that He would pay them a day's wages to work all day. They agreed and went out to work.
- At 9 AM the Vineyard Owner went back and found some other men standing around doing nothing. He said, "You go work in my vineyard and I will pay you what is right." They agreed and went out to the vineyard to go to work.
- At Noon the Vineyard Owner went out and found some other men just standing around doing nothing, so He sent them to work too, telling them that He would pay them what was right.
- He did this again and again during the day... until at last it was about 5 PM *(almost quitting time!)* and He went and found some men who had been standing around ALL day doing nothing!
- He asked them, "Why have you been standing here ALL day, doing nothing?!" and they said, "No one would hire us."(!!!)
- *(That was pretty silly to say, wasn't it? ... especially since He had already been there several times that day hiring people!)*
- But the Vineyard Owner told them to go work in His vineyard and He would pay them what was right. *(These last men just barely had time to get to the vineyard before quitting time!)*

The Vineyard Owner pays His Workers

- At last it was the end of the day! Time to pay the workers!
- The Vineyard Owner called to His Servant to pay the workers. He told Him to start with the last and to go to the first.
- The men who had been hired last (and had worked for about an hour) got paid enough money for working for a whole day!
- When the others saw this they thought things like: "Wow! I'm going to get paid more than that! I worked longer than he did!"

- But, as the others got paid, they realized that all of them were paid a whole day's wages; no matter how long they had worked!
- When they saw this, the ones who had worked all day grumbled. *(Do you know what grumbling is? What does grumbling sound like? Can you grumble? Let me hear you. "Grump. I'm not happy! That's not fair!" "Yes!" that's just what it sounds like!)*

The Workers Complain to the Vineyard Owner

- Some of these workers were UN-happy!
- They went to the Vineyard Owner to complain!
- One of them said: "Hey! These guys only worked an hour and you paid them the same that you paid us for working all day!"
- *(Now remember, in this parable the Vineyard Owner is the one who represents God. We have to keep our eye on Him to find out what God is like. Let's see what the Vineyard Owner says...)*
- The Vineyard Owner answered: "Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a day's pay? Take your money and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you upset (*envious*) because I am generous?"
- The Vineyard Owner was willing to pay those who showed up last the same as those who had come to work first. He wasn't cheating the ones who had worked all day. He paid them what He had promised them. He was just being generous to those who had come along later! *(In fact, He had been generous to all of them, since He had given them all work in the first place!)*

God Rewards Each of Us Generously

- God is that way! He is GENEROUS! He gives and gives to us!
- God loves us and wants us to be with Him always.
- God calls to each of us and invites us to come to Him.
- When we come to Him, He gives us good things to do. *(Like the Vineyard Owner put the men to work in His vineyard.)*
- In the end, God rewards each of us generously!
- *(There will be individual rewards: Jesus told His Disciples that "at the renewal of all things" those who left anything in this world for His sake would receive 100 times as much, PLUS eternal life.)*
- But this parable teaches us that Salvation is the same generous gift for everyone. *(It is not based on how long we serve God here on earth, but on God's generosity, provision, and grace.)*
- So it is that "the last will be first and the first will be last."

Isn't God good to love us so much that He rewards us all generously? Let's pray and thank Him for loving us that much!

Prayer: Dear God,
Thank you that you love us!
Thank you that you are so generous to us!
We love you back!
Amen.

Suggested Activities: *(Choose a few activities for your class!)*

Act Out the Story *(The children will act out the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard)*

Before Class: Gather together several yard working implements (Fairly safe ones like: Rakes, Shovels, Gardening Trowels, etc.) Bring them to class on the day of the lesson. Clear off one area of the room to be designated for “The Vineyard” and have another part of the room designated as “The Marketplace.” Consider making signs for those.

You will also need something to “pay” the workers with in the play. Consider lollipops!

During Class: Explain to the children that you are all going to “act out” the story in the lesson. Choose one child to be the Vineyard Owner, one to be His Servant, and the rest of the children will be the Workers. Put the yard working implements in the part of the room marked “The Vineyard.” Have the children sit fairly close to the place marked “The Marketplace.” Now tell the story, much like it is written in the lesson. Allow the children to act out the parts. Send a few children to The Marketplace at a time, to get work. When each group is hired, send them to the Vineyard to work. Let them pretend to rake, dig, etc in The Vineyard. *(Not enough yard working implements to go around? Let the new workers have the implements each time you get a new group.)* Continue until everyone is hired and everyone is working in the Vineyard. Now have The Servant “pay” everyone starting from the last to the first. Everyone gets paid the same. *(Bring in the Lollipops!)* Enjoy! Discuss how God is good to give salvation to each of us!

First and Last *(The children will learn and practice the concepts of “First” and “Last.”)*

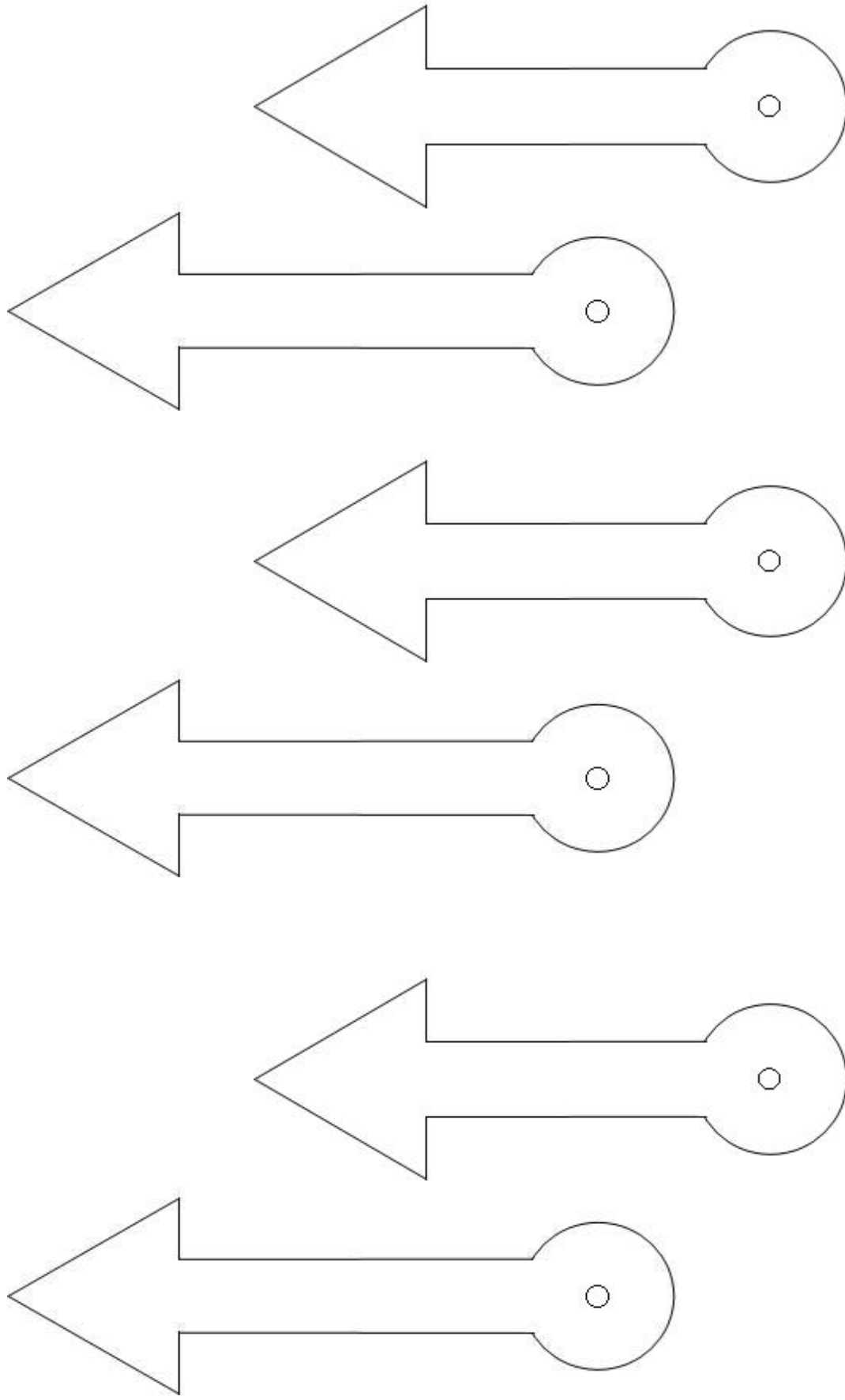
Have everyone stand up and get in a long line (or several lines if you have lots of students.) Then have the children “count off” in this way: The first child says “First!” the next child says “Next!” All the others continue to say “Next!” until you reach the last child in line, who says “Last!” Now, have everyone stand in place and TURN AROUND. Go to the child at the end (the one who said “Last!”) and point out that NOW the one who was LAST is FIRST! Have the child say “First” and repeat the opposite direction. Note that the one who was FIRST is also now LAST! Switch up so that different children are on the ends of the line and repeat.

What Time is It? *(Older students will enjoy making a clock face.)*

Before Class: Provide paper plates, brads, markers, and scissors. Provide one set of clock hands (copied on card stock or paper) for each child. Put a small hole in the center of each plate. Make a sample with 12, 3, 6, and 9 on the face of the plate.

During Class: Ask the children to cut out a set of clock hands, and to draw the numbers 12, 3, 6 and 9 on the face of their plate. Use a brad to secure the clock hands to the center of the plate. Enjoy moving the clock hands around; showing the various times.

Coloring Sheet Invite the children to color the grape cluster with crayons or markers.



The Parable of The Workers in the Vineyard

