

Reflection Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> September

## **Matthew 20: 1-16**

### **The Labourers in the Vineyard**

'For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the market-place; and he said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, "Why are you standing here idle all day?" They said to him, "Because no one has hired us." He said to them, "You also go into the vineyard." When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, "Call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first." When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, 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." But he replied to one of them, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?" So the last will be first, and the first will be last.'

I know it is only a story to show the generous love and grace of God but as an employment model it is deeply flawed – no one would be keen on being at work early the next day. When would you have turned up on day 2?

When I had a 9-5 job (it was actually 9-5.15) there was a time to be in the office and a time to leave. There were some who would invariably be a couple of minutes late and others would be standing at the top of the stairs with their coats on at 5.14. We used to talk about the coming to work clock that was always slow and the going home clock that was always fast. Others would still be at their desks after hours seeking to get a task completed at nearly 6.00pm.

There are some people who work to live and some who live to work. There are some who so thoroughly enjoy what they do they would do it for a hobby and without pay if they could. When I see people who are multi-millionaires still going to work I wonder what it is that keeps them at it. Why would a 70 year old want to continue managing a football team when money is no object?

In these recent months many people have had their whole way of life transformed by being furloughed from their jobs; asked to work from home, made redundant, spent hours looking at a computer screen rather than seeing people face to face. They have home-schooled their children and wondered how the bills will get paid.

Employment is important to many a persons life. It can define them - "what do you do?" is a frequently asked question – just watch a couple of quiz shows. On some you get a supplementary question "what do you do when you are not working?" With the number of community activities having stopped many have not had the things outside work to do and life has been diminished.

In the Kingdom of God we are called to many "tasks"; God has given us talents and calls us to use them for his purpose. With much of Church activities having ceased in recent what tasks have you not been involved with? Have you felt furloughed, bereft or relieved?

As we move forward and "reopen" what do we keep doing? What do we stop doing and what do we start doing? These are important questions for the individual and the church community.

In the last couple of weeks many have shared in a "Webinar" run by the Methodist Church entitled "Reopening for Mission". It points to a new resource on the Methodist Church website to help churches take a new look at their calling and purpose in a changed community. I am sure it is a subject you will likely hear about again.