

# Aspects of Justice

Notes for 6 Aug

Steve Logan

## Background

Matt	Mark	Luke	John
<a href="#">20:1-16</a>		<a href="#">18:1-14; 19:1-27</a>	

## Discussion

There are several stories in today's texts, but I want to concentrate on just one, the "Parable of the Vineyard Workers".

Let's talk about *justice*...

Here's the entire story from Matthew 20, in the New Living Translation:

*For the Kingdom of Heaven is like the landowner who went out early one morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay the normal daily wage and sent them out to work.*

*At nine o'clock in the morning he was passing through the marketplace and saw some people standing around doing nothing. So he hired them, telling them he would pay them whatever was right at the end of the day. So they went to work in the vineyard. At noon and again at three o'clock he did the same thing.*

*At five o'clock that afternoon he was in town again and saw some more people standing around. He asked them, 'Why haven't you been working today?'*

*They replied, 'Because no one hired us.'*

*The landowner told them, 'Then go out and join the others in my vineyard.'*

*That evening he told the foreman to call the workers in and pay them, beginning with the last workers first. When those hired at five o'clock were paid, each received a full day's wage. When those hired first came to get their pay, they assumed they would receive more. But they, too, were paid a day's wage. When they received their pay, they protested to the owner, 'Those people worked only one hour, and yet you've paid them just as much as you paid us who worked all day in the scorching heat.'*

*He answered one of them, 'Friend, I haven't been unfair! Didn't you agree to work all day for the usual wage? Take your money and go. I wanted to pay this last worker the same as you. Is it against the law for me to do what I want with my money? Should you be jealous because I am kind to others?'*

*So those who are last now will be first then, and those who are first will be last.*

After a quick read of the above, what would you say is the message of the text? What was Jesus trying to say? Listen to your first 'gut' reaction...

Now try this:

- Define the word *Justice* for yourself.
- Re-read the story with "justice coloured spectacles" - with *justice* as the filter through which you look at each person and each action.
- The story has actors who perform actions. Within the narrow context of the story think about the justice of the actions of the landowner, the early workers, the late workers, the foreman...
- Are there other contexts to this story? For instance: why were the workers there, on the street corner offering themselves for hire, in the first place? Why did the landowner own the land? Is the distribution of wealth in the story something we should think about? Is that *unjust*?
- Are there other contexts to this story? Other levels that Jesus might be hinting at? Bring along your thoughts to the discussion...