



Sermon Transcription • Abbotsford

Story Time - May 27/28, 2017 - Jeff Bucknam
Everyone Gets a Trophy- (Matthew 20:1-16 NIV)

[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]

My team won the FA cup yesterday. Do you know what that is? It's soccer. The English Football. My team is horrible and they won, which means that the Lord is returning soon [laughter]. Yeah, they shouldn't have won, but they beat Ezra's team, so I've been calling him on the telephone and he won't answer the phone, so I just leave messages with me laughing [laughter]. My love for soccer, though, has led me to spend some time with my kids (of course) around the soccer field, especially when they were young. My oldest son, when we first moved to Abbotsford, we became part of the Abbotsford Soccer Association (as it was known then), and I coached for a little while. When I learned that my voice was constantly giving out because we had Saturday morning and then I would have to come preach Saturday nights, "I was always like this," so I decided, "Look, I can't coach anymore. I'll just be one of the guys who helps the coaching." So, I met a guy who -- My son had a friend and his father was English. He was a British guy from London and he likes a soccer team that I don't like and we made fun of each other, so we really hit it off. We ended up having this team together and we were terrible. We were so bad. We kept losing really, really horribly, like 8-0 and at one point, his wife (we'll call her Elizabeth), used to bring, at half time, donuts. Usually you have orange slices at half-time, you know? To give the kids energy for the second half. She would bring donuts and on one occasion she brought KFC. So, that might be why we weren't very good [laughter]. The kids would be out in the second half and then they'd want to have a nap about half way through. We'd give a lot of goals in the second half. Anyway, we were standing on the sideline on one occasion when his wife was cheering away and she had her KFC bucket ready to go for half-time and he just leaned over to me and he said, "You know" [it was after the other team had scored another goal], and he said, "You know, I just want you to know that no matter what happens this year, we are not handing out trophies to every one of these children because, where I'm from, where I grew up, you don't give people trophies for being awful. So, that's not going to happen. I think one of the problems with the world is that we're always giving trophies to everybody for nothing. When I was a kid," he said, "we used to have -- if you won the title, the team would get a trophy and you got to touch the trophy and you might get a firm slap on the back from your coach and that was enough. That needs to be the thing we do with the kids in the future." I was like, "Yeah, okay. You're the coach. That's fine. We'll do that." So anyway, the season went on and we lost most of our games, and at the end of the season we had about a two week break and then we went for the team wrap-up party. I walked into the room with my son and as we walked into this room, on the table, were about 15 trophies. All the same, with the names of the kids on them. I looked at the trophies and then I looked over at him and I went, "What?" He walked over to me and



he quietly leaned over and he said, “<whispering>Elizabeth</whispering>” [laughter]. I said, “It’s a surprise they’re not drumsticks” [laughter].

Millennials are people from 18-35. They are kind of like the whipping boy, these days, of the jokes because they grew up in a culture where everybody gets a trophy. You show up, you get a trophy. You’re terrible, you get a trophy. You’re good, you get a trophy. Everybody gets a trophy. It doesn’t matter, right? Barney loves you. He’s the purple dinosaur who was part of the kids shows and they didn’t know him and he was pretend, but he loves you and he would say that at the end of every show. Greg Harris sits across from me (he’s a millennial) and whenever he gets mad I say, “Do you need me to get Barney for you to make you feel better?” [laughter]. Oh come on, beating up on millennials is like a pastime these days. We do that because we remember <raspy voice> the “good old days” where it was hard and we used to not be that way. We were tough, we Gen-xers </raspy voice> and Baby-boomers, because we grew up in a world where we didn’t get rewarded for everything (supposedly). Yet, here’s a passage of scripture that basically argues that everybody gets a trophy. If you are a Christian, a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and you’ve come to faith in Him by grace alone, in Christ alone, you will enter eternal bliss with him on an equal standing with everybody else. That’s what this passage basically says. Now, that might not sound theologically shocking to you, but actually, it kind of is because the passage is kind of arguing that the whole idea of rewards-doctrine (extra credit rewards), is not actually the way it works. So look, I want to explain a little bit of that to you in the next few minutes. I want to tell you this story in its context, okay? So, a lot of this is going to be Bible Study. I am going to tell you this story in it’s context and then, after that, I want to give you a couple of applications. One of those applications is going to be theological - interacting a little bit with the rewards-doctrines that have surfaced if you’ve been a part of the Christian community for a while - and then I also want to give you an application that hopefully warms your heart a little bit.

[The Story]

Okay, let’s tell the story first, before we get to the applications. I said I wanted to tell the story in context. The story is in Matthew 20:1-16, but let’s get the context right. So here’s what happens just before Matthew 20, in Matthew 19 - the end of it. There’s a man who comes to Jesus (he’s a rich guy) and he says to Jesus, “I want you to tell me what to do to inherit eternal life.” Jesus says to him, “Look, you know the law. You know how to keep it.” Now, the first principle of the law is that you shall have no other gods before me. Jesus sees this rich guy in front of him and says, “Well, you know, I have doubts whether or not you’ve actually kept the law completely because you’re a rich guy. So, let’s put that to the test. Let’s see whether or not you actually have no other gods before you. Here’s what I want you to do, rich guy. I want you to go sell all of your possessions and give your money to the poor and then you come follow me. This is going to be the perfect test. If you love God and find your meaning and purpose and joy in him, then you don’t need the money in order to be happy. But, if you love your money more than God, you will reject this and walk away knowing full well that actually, you don’t keep the whole law because you have a god before him.” Well, the guy hears this and thinks about how much money he has and how much he enjoys driving that chariot, and he walks away sad. To which, Jesus says these words. Matthew 19:23,



“Then Jesus said to his disciples...[As they watch him go. They are watching the back of this guy go and they’re lined up and Jesus says, out loud], ‘Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.’ [Right? Because your riches (like that guy) they draw you away. They make you trust in the wealth instead of in the Lord. So, it’s really hard to be wealthy and to follow Jesus.] When the disciples heard this [verse 25], they were greatly astonished and asked, ‘Who then can be saved?’ [“Because we thought that riches are a sign of God’s blessing on someone. So here’s somebody who is doing really well with God, and therefore God is blessing this person, and now you’re saying that is not the case, Jesus, that it’s actually hard. Well who can be saved then? If the rich people can’t be saved, and they look like they are the ones who are blessed by God, who can possibly be saved?” Verse 26,] Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’ [Even the rich can be saved, with God.] Peter answered him, ‘We have left everything to follow you. What then will there be for us?’ [“We’re not like that guy. He turned around and he left, but when you called me I left behind my dad, my job, the nets, *everything*, Jesus, to come and follow you. So what am I going to get? What are the rewards for somebody who has come to you and is serving you like that?” Verse 28] Jesus said to them, ‘Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things... [When my kingdom has finally come in its fullness - New heavens, new earth], when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne... [And it’s going to be glorious, that throne], you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones... [You can see the visions of grandeur in their eyes, “Thrones?”], judging the twelve tribes of Israel. [Then he expands it. He’s talking specifically about them, but then he expands it in verse 29] And everyone who has left houses and brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much... [Now, the other gospels add ‘In this life’ and that is probably what Matthew means here. He’s basically saying, “Look, if you’ve given up all those things - your fathers and sisters and brothers and possessions - if you’ve given all that up, yes, you’re going to come to a church (a body, a family of brothers and sisters in the church) that is going to replace all of that.” In the early church, the sharing of their possessions was a real way this worked out. “You gave up all of that? Man, you’re richer now than you ever were.” Because all these people are going to share with you.] and... [Notice at the end of verse 29] will inherit eternal life. [So, in this life, you get the church and all the blessings that come with it, and in the next life, you get eternal life.] But... [Please notice that word. “But I don’t want you to get the wrong idea, about the thrones, I mean.] But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.”

Now, the story that we’re going to study, actually tries to explain what those words mean. What does it mean that the first will be last and the last will be first? What you need to see is that coming into this, Jesus is interacting with a bunch of disciples who have just learned that as a recompense for them giving up everything to follow him, they are going to be sitting on thrones. They’re thinking, “I’m going to have jewels on the thrones.” Do you realize that when I sit on a throne and you’re not on that throne, that means that I am lifted up above you and therefore I am going to be more important and valuable and that’s the way it worked in that culture. Now, you might think, “Well, how do you know that’s the kind of thing that he or they (the disciples) are thinking?” I’ll tell you why. Because after Jesus tells the



story that we're going to study, the next passage is about the mother of James and John (two of the disciples) comes in and has a quiet word with Jesus and says, "Yeah, you remember when you were talking about those thrones and things and everybody sitting on a throne? Can I just tell you that I think my two boys (James and John) should sit on your right hand and your left because they are way better than the rest of these doofuses. I know that everyone is going to be sitting on the throne - all the twelve - but can they have the best seats? I mean, we're already talking about grades of importance in the kingdom and the disciples are going to be above everyone, but can my two boys be above even them?" Jesus says to her, "Listen, you don't understand what you're asking for because my Kingdom doesn't work the way the kings of this world work. If you want to be high in the Kingdom of God, and if you are given higher responsibility in the Kingdom, you will be the servant of all. Even the Son of Man came to lay his life down for many. In that way, the first will be last and the last, first." So, that's the wider context, okay?

So here's the story in the middle. You following? Yes? Yes? Yes you are. Here we go. Verse 1 of chapter 20:

["Okay Peter, I don't want you to get the wrong idea. The first will be last, the last will be first."] "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard."

Now, you need to understand, that is a very common scene in the ancient world. If you were a day-labourer, which is the worst kind of worker in those days. It was better to be a slave because if you were a slave, you had a place to stay and you had a guaranteed job for the next day. Your owner made sure (because you were an investment) that you had three square meals or two square meals or whatever, some food, comfort, enough sleep, all that kind of thing. But, if you were a day-labourer, that means that you were disposable. It means that they can hire you in the morning and get rid of you at noon. Hire you in the morning and the next day not hire you at all. If you didn't work that day, your family did not eat that night. You lived, literally, hand-to-mouth. So every morning, day-labourers (unskilled workers) would show up at the market place and you would stand there and you would wait for the farmers to come by and select you out. Some of them would come by and say, "Oh, I want that, you and you, not you (too scrawny), not you (too scrawny)." Right? "I don't like how you're looking at me." Right? "So I'm going to take these ones. You come, you work for me." The normal way that this happened, was that they went just in the morning and then they would work all day. Then the next day the farmer would come back to hire some new people. Sometimes he would hire the ones that they hired the day before if they were good workers and sometimes not. Sometimes their needs were different. This is harvest time, so he's gone to the marketplace to hire this group of men, who were standing there. Now, he's going to pay them a denarius (which was like a standard day's wage). It's not a lot, it's not a little, it's just the standard day's wage. So he selects them out, he drives them to his place on his chariot or whatever, and he drives them to the place and he puts them to work.

"About nine in the morning... [though,verse three] he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay



you whatever is right.’ So they went. He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’ [They replied, “Because we work for the government.” No, they didn’t say that. I’m going to get emails from some government workers, “I work hard!” Okay no, it’s okay. I understand.] Because [Why have you been standing around all this time? Well, verse 7, because] no one has hired us,’ they answered. He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’”

So, the normal workday was from about 6:00am to 6:00pm. 12 Hours. For that you got a denarius. Well, the harvest must have been really busy, because he comes back at 9:00am, noon, 3:00pm, and 5:00pm to keep hiring more people. Now, he says to these guys, “Listen, I will pay you what is right.” By that, he means a percentage (or at least that’s the way they understand him to mean). You will get a percentage of a denarius. So if you come one hour prior to the last hour in a 12 hour day, you get 1/12th of a denarius. If you come half way through you get half a denarius. When they show up to the worksite and they start helping with the vineyard, the guys who were hired at the beginning see them coming and in their minds they’re saying, “Yeah, they will receive a portion of what I will get. That is fair and good business.” But, verse eight:

“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.’ The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received... [Wait for it] a denarius. [To which everyone else would be thinking, “Cha-ching. I mean, if they get one I’m going to get twelve!” says the guy who came at 6:00am.] So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius.”

You’ve been to school obviously, most of us have been (sometimes a long time ago, some of us more recently). We’ve all been involved in group assignments, though. Remember those? They get a group of students and the teacher says, in your socials class or whatever, “Okay, you guys are going to do a presentation on Napoleon Bonaparte. So you need to go away and in two months, you’re going to have this presentation and I want something good. So make this big. This is like 50% of your grade, 30% of your grade or whatever. So you’re going to do this presentation on this particular character in history. You can choose a few of your friends to be part of your group, but I need to have five people in every group because that gets everyone in it.” Of course, you’ve only got three friends in the class, so you get your three friends and you and you have four. You’re like, “We need an extra.” Of course there are always a few singles around (the guys that don’t show up to class, ever, or just don’t care at all). Alright, well you take this single into your group, so now you have four friends and one extra, and when you say, “Okay, we’re going to get together on Monday afternoons (because that works for all of us), the one who is extra says, “You know, that doesn’t work for me. I’m not going to show up on that day because I’ve got work, I’ve got sports, whatever. I’ve got my sock drawer, whatever. There are a whole bunch of things that I’ve got to be doing that’s not sitting here learning about Napoleon Bonaparte.” So you guys get together and he never shows up, but on the day of the presentation and you’ve got the light show ready and a live goat [laughter], he shows up! You’ve got a script, you’re



going to do a play. He shows up and you say, “You haven’t been here the whole time.” He says, “I don’t know, it’s the day of the presentation so I came.” “Okay listen, at the end, what you can do is you can stand up and say, ‘The end.’ Can you do that?” “Yeah, I can do that. That will be easy. That’s good for me.” So you do the presentation and the lights are everywhere, lasers, and then the guy comes up at the end and, “The end” and everyone claps. You all get your grades a few minutes later and on the front page of your script is written a big red ‘A’ and the dude who never showed up walks over and goes, “Hey, check it out what I got. My first ‘A!’” [laughter] and you’re like, “<shouting>Ugh...you dog! You did nothing and you get the same?</shouting> This is unjust.” You want to go talk to the teacher and tell them. They didn’t do anything and just showed up. He just said, “The end” and that was it. It’s unjust. Listen, that’s the feeling that you get here. It’s an outright injustice for these guys to show up one hour prior to the end and get the same. Verse 11:

“When they received it... [The guys who showed up early in the morning, when they received it, you’ve got to picture them with that denarius in their hand and the other guy who showed up at 5pm is like, ‘Hey, I got the same as you. Isn’t that crazy? What a great deal!’] When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. [“These guys, who were hired last, only worked <shouting>one hour! Let me get out my abacus. One twelfth</shouting>. And you’ve made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day? We’ve worked harder, longer, we deserve more.”] But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? [“I mean, I called you out of the marketplace right? There were other people there and I didn’t need to bring them in. I called you out and you’re going to be able to feed your family today because I payed you a denarius.”] Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don’t I have a right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

So was the landowner unjust? Well, kind of, but only to benefit the guys who came at the end. His injustice was a generous kind, right? Everybody got what they deserved. He was just really generous to those who showed up late. He is a generous landowner, this one. Here’s the point that I’m trying to make in all this, okay? As we study the Bible together, here’s what I think Matthew, when he puts these stories together, this is what I think he’s trying to say. Although Peter and the other disciples will be judging the twelve tribes of Israel, they shouldn’t think that high responsibility in the Kingdom of God means a higher reward. I’m going to say that again. Although Peter and the other disciples will be judging the twelve tribes of Israel, they shouldn’t think that high responsibility in the Kingdom means higher reward, because in God’s kingdom, the last will be first and the first will be last. See, those who rule will be the servants of all.

[Application #1 - Don’t Expect Extra Credit]

So look, there is a lot of application to this particular passage. I am going to do one theological and one, hopefully, really practical. Here’s the theological one first: Don’t expect extra credit. Don’t expect extra credit. When I came to faith in Christ, it was out of a nominal Christian background. By that I mean I went to a mainline church, and as a result, when I came to a Christian camp, I first learned



about Jesus and that you could be forgiven of your sins purely by God's grace. You didn't have to earn your way into his favour. That was earth-shattering for me. Like, "What? That's so amazing. That's scandalous that God would give me the righteousness of his son apart from anything I did." Right. You're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, apart from anything you've done. All of my friends who were at the camp where I worked and had first taught me about the Christian faith, they said, "Yeah, that's exactly the way it works, but [they said] when you come to faith in Christ, what ends up happening after that though, is that you'll be rewarded by God in heaven depending on what you do." So there's entrance into the Kingdom that is by grace, but after that there is this process where people who do more for God will receive greater reward and those who don't do as much will receive less. He even talked about two different judgments. See, there is the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25, where God is going to divide between those who are on his right and on his left - those who are Christians and will spend eternity with him and with joy and those who will spend eternity in condemnation (the goats). "But [they said], That's not the only judgement. That's the first one. The second judgement (which they call the judgement seat of Christ, or some the *Bema* seat of Christ) is a judgement of rewards where the 'sheep' are then judged and given either really good rewards or less rewards." So, as a friend of mine told me, "There will be different places that people will live in the new earth, depending on this. So, if you really follow Jesus and you're a missionary and have given up a whole lot for him, you will get a beach house in Maui. If you don't, and you're just your normal everyday electrician who stayed behind and never really wanted to go out on the mission field, you will live in Regina [laughter]. Or, in the new Jerusalem you will have a penthouse where you can see the whole city and if you didn't follow Jesus quite as closely, you will be in the basement suite underneath your brother who has eight kids [laughter]. There's a differentiation between the rewards for all eternity," they said.

Not everybody explains it that way, but let me give you one author (one pastor), a guy I know, who is a very good Christian man, but he teaches this rewards kind of doctrine. Here's what he said in a sermon just recently. He said,

"If I make it into Heaven, isn't that enough? Won't I be totally satisfied if I just make it into Heaven? [Now, his answer in that question is no. He says,] There will be real, lasting, felt consequences depending on how we do at the judgment seat of Christ [That's the second judgement]. The Bible says there are real, tangible rewards awaiting those who serve Christ obediently. There are going to be special privileges in Heaven, for the faithful. For example, Scripture says there is going to be a special entrance into the Kingdom of God. There is going to be a special gate, an access to the Kingdom of God [So we have Disney's Magic Morning at Disneyland, right? You show up early or you get a FastPass and you walk by all the others. Like, "I'm going to go ride the 'Cars' ride and you've got to stay here"]. It even says there is going to be special treatment by Christ to those who are faithful [just note that]. This idea that Jesus is going to treat everybody the same, I'm sorry, that's just not true."

When I read that, I think, "Okay, so at the great marriage feast of the lamb (this great party that God is going to throw), I'm going to show up at the door and Jesus is going to say, 'Jeff, it's so good to see you. I've been looking forward to this --Welcome! (Big hug)' and he's going to look over and say, 'Oh,



and I see you've brought Ezra' [laughter]." I make fun of this, honestly, because really? Okay, where in the Bible - in all seriousness - where in the Bible does it teach such a thing. And then they will marshal passages of scripture where, honestly, that's not what's happening.

A dear friend of mine (I was one of the readers for his Doctoral Dissertation when I was in seminary). He wrote his Doctoral Dissertation on this subject and I had to read all the text that people use to try to argue this. With him, I read and tried to understand them in their context, and I am telling you (or, in fact, challenging you, if you want to disagree) to go to those texts and see if they actually teach that you get extra special credit for obeying Jesus, or is obedience to Jesus a condition for actually entering the kingdom, period. The Bible just doesn't teach this and more importantly, here in Matthew 20, it expressly denies this doctrine, right? Isn't this essentially what this is about? I mean, here's Peter saying, "We're going to judge the twelve tribes," or Jesus is telling him that, but he wants to clarify, "But, I need you to understand, the first are going to be last and the last, first. Because in your mind, you're thinking different differentiations and that's not what's happening. Let me tell you a story of some guys that show up late in the day and they get the same as the guys who came first, and you think, 'What? That's outrageous and wrong and unjust!' Right. I'm generous. Don't complain about my generosity. First will be last, last will be first. Rulership in my Kingdom, means you're the servant of all. Higher responsibility in my Kingdom does not mean higher reward."

So look, Craig Blomberg whose one of the best New Testament scholars in the world today (he's a Greek expert), teaches at Denver Seminary and he wrote about this passage in the *New American Commentary*. Let me read to you what he says. It's a bit extended, but it's excellent. He says,

"The significance of this parable can scarcely be overestimated. Matthew 20:1-16 teaches that there are no degrees of reward in heaven... To be sure, every individual will have a highly unique experience before God on Judgement Day. But no text of Scripture supports the notion that these differences are perpetuated throughout eternity. The very nature of grace and perfection precludes such a concept. The reason we object to equal treatment for all is precisely the objection of the workers in this parable - It doesn't seem fair. But [look] we are fools if we appeal to God for justice rather than grace, for in that case we'd all be damned. Nor will it do to speak of salvation begun by grace but ever after preserved by works. True salvation will of necessity produce good works and submission to Christ's lordship in every area of life, or else it never was salvation to begin with. But all who are truly saved are equally precious in God's sight and equally rewarded with eternal happiness in the company of Christ and all the redeemed."

Maybe an image is the best way to summarize the difference between what I'm saying and what it is that this particular doctrine, that is really popular among Christians, is saying. You've all flown airplanes. You know, you go on the plane and if you're boarding in the front you get to walk through the first-class cabin and they can't wait to pull that curtain so you can't get in. If you fly long-haul flights, there's first-class - which you're not allowed to see, (It's in the holy of holies, near the nose) [laughter], then there's business class - which you get to walk through just so you can be jealous, and then you have economy plus - where people can put their legs out, and then there's you -



who is sitting next to the kid screaming in your ear for twelve hours in the middle seat. There are different compartments to the flight. What some are saying is, “Yes, that’s Heaven. There will be some who are first-class and some people who are in the middle seat and some who have got legs things, and dependant on how well you guys do as Christians in this life.” But what this passage is arguing is, <shouting>“No, no, no. It’s all first class! It’s a Concord, man</shouting>! Because God’s generous that way.” Now, the response that a lot of people have at this point is, “Okay, but what motivation then, is there for us to obey Jesus? I mean, if you say it’s all the same, well give me some motivation.” This is where the scriptures are really clear, aren’t they? Grace is your motivation. Don’t you see what God has done for you? If you know how great the grace is that God’s given you to even bring you into his employ, you will just be overwhelmed with gratitude that will show up in your life. So when Paul, in Romans, describes in the first eleven chapters this grace, he gets to Romans 12:1 and he says,

“Therefore [based on everything I just said], I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice [Go lay yourself down on the altar for him. ‘Oh, but that’s radical.’ Right, but so is his grace, radical] holy and pleasing to God--this is your true and proper worship.”

You see, if you understood the grace, you’d understand how proper this radical worship is. Or Zaccheus, who is this terrible man. Tax collector, he’s hated by his society, he’s thought to be hated by God by everyone around. Jesus is walking down the street, stops and sees the guy up in the tree, for goodness sake, and says, “I want to come to your house this afternoon. I want you to be my friend. I mean, nobody else wants to be your friend, but I want you in my Kingdom, Zacchaeus.” Zacchaeus has him over to his house and in the middle of the meal he is like, “<shouting>I am so overwhelmed by grace that here’s what I am going to do. I am a chief tax collector, filthy rich</shouting>, and I’m going to give away half of everything I own.” What? Yeah. That kind of radical response comes from a radical understanding of the grace. You want to be motivated to follow Jesus? Just revisit the grace over and over again. Let it explode in your mind. Let it explode in your life. So, don’t expect extra credit. Instead, live your life in response to his grace.

[Application #2 - Don’t Grumble Against Grace]

Here’s my second application. It’s right along the same lines, though. Don’t grumble against grace. We have a habit of doing that, right? That’s what’s happening in this passage. These people are holding this denarius, their looking at everyone else going, “Wait a minute, I’m not getting what they’re getting. Why am I not getting what they’re getting? God, don’t you see all the stuff that I’ve done? That guy hadn’t done it, I’ve done it. How dare you God! This is unfair and unjust.” Of course the response in the parable should be largely, “Wait a minute, I hired you. You didn’t deserve the hiring. You’re in with me. My employee. It’s great. Stop complaining about it. Stop whining about my generosity, which has been extended to you. Yeah, maybe differently than this other person, but stop comparing everything. I love you.” This is the problem that the Israelites had, right? When they were grumbling. They come across the Red Sea and Pharaoh is defeated and they sing a song in Exodus chapter 15, “Oh, God is so great. Horse and rider fell into the sea.” That’s not actually how it went, but they’re singing this



song and then they immediately after that they're stomachs start to grumble, right? And then they're mouths follow suit. In Exodus 16:2,

"In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, 'If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat [Oh, that Egyptian meat in the pots] and [we] ate all the food we wanted [we were whipped as well and had to make bricks, but that's not important at this point], but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.'

You and I, we read that, and we go, "<shouting>Are you nuts? Don't you just see that you came across a body of water? Not in a boat, you walked! Pharaoh was defeated without a shot fired! Grace, deliverance, salvation is yours</shouting> and now you're whining about food? You stupid Israelites." Yet, when we say it, we feel it don't we, in our hearts? That we're not just chastising them, we're chastising us because we're the same. We get stuck in these moments where it seems like it's not fair because, "I'm not getting what they're getting."

Look, I have a new car. I didn't mean to buy it [laughter]. I have a new car because I was driving my old car, which was a Toyota and I was told it was going to last forever (that's what everybody says - Toyotas last forever). I drove it to just south of Calgary for a baseball tournament. I drove my oldest son with me to go watch my youngest son (who drove in a bus) to play this tournament in a town called Okotoks. We couldn't get a place to stay in Okotoks, so we had to stay in a place called High River, which is not in the middle of nowhere, but Nowhere is right outside. It's right on the outskirts of town. So, we were there and we were driving all over the countryside and on the flat and we were just laughing about how there's no mountains anywhere. I come from mountainous areas in my life and I was like, "Whoa, this is crazy," and we drove and drove and drove and one night we came back, and as we were driving back to the hotel, my car all of a sudden made this horrendous noise in the engine [Inaudible car noise]. I was like, "Oh no" and I pulled over to the side and I said, "Did you hear that?" and my son was like, "Did I hear it? Like, I felt it, dad." I said, "Do you know what's going on?" "No, I'm my father's son. I haven't got a clue" [laughter]. Okay, so I said, "Well, okay." I drove to the hotel and the next morning I went over to see the mechanic who took his stethoscope and his little long pole (whatever that is) and he pushed it around different parts of the engine, and then he put his stethoscope around his neck, he looked to the sky and said, "It's not good" [laughter]. I said, "What do you mean, 'not good'?" "Well, yeah, it's done." I said, "What do you mean, 'It's done'?" "You need a new one?" "A new what?" "An engine." "How much is that going to cost?" "Well, about the same amount that the car is worth." "What?" "Yeah." I said, "Well, what would you do?" "Um," he said. "I'd get a new car." I said, "Well, how am I going to do that?" He says, "Well, there's a Toyota dealer right across the street there," and he was right. I said, "Do you work for them?" Right? He was right. He said, "What I would do, is I would get in the car and I would try your hardest not to push the pedal down at all and just get over there and then park it and leave it and just buy a new one." So I did. I drove across, I get out of the car, the salesman comes to me and I said to him, "Listen, this is going to be the easiest sale you've ever had, okay? I need a new car. This one is broken." "What's wrong with it?" I describe it all and in the middle of it I said, "By the providence of God I'm here," and he paused and kind of looked around like this and he said, "<whispering>Are you a believer?</whispering>"



[laughter]. “Yes, <whispers> we buy cars too </whispers>” [laughter]. So, he quietly said, “Well actually, I don’t usually tell people this, but God’s looking after you because I’m a Christian as well.” I said, “Well, is there a friend’s rate here? [cajoling laughter]” and he said, “No, probably not” [laughter]. Anyway, so I end up getting this new car. It is a Corolla because I make fun of Corollas from the pulpit and I make fun of Alberta. So I bought a Corolla in Alberta and God says, “Ha ha!” Right? So I got a new car. That night, I’m in my bed and I am livid with God. I can’t sleep I am so mad. You know why? <shouting>”I preach four sermons every weekend and I don’t have money to pay for this sort of thing and --I’m not independently wealthy, man</shouting>. I know other people who don’t do anything near what I do and have had cars coming out of their ears. See, God, here’s the way it works. I got --I don’t --A denarius?” Anyway, the next morning I woke up, after I fell asleep angry at the Lord, and I walked out to this new car. I stood by it and I felt so horrible because I realized, “Jeff, why are you so stuck in a moment like this? Because you know what’s going on here? You just spent the last four days of some of the most delightful time with your oldest son that you’ve had in the last number of years. You have a brand new car paid for with money that you were able to borrow because your house, which just accrued in value like double since you moved here. Contrary to popular opinion, I didn’t control that. God has just blessed and blessed and blessed and blessed, and then I just started thinking, “I mean really, at the end of my life, am I going to be worried about this?” You know what I have? I have an eternity to look forward to with my Father in Heaven. I have joy forevermore and I’m standing outside this car going, “God, why is it that we get so stuck in these moments? Why do we focus so much on the thing that we think we’re being wronged in, in this moment, that we don’t step back and realize how much grace brought us here and how much grace will follow?” Because you do know that you’re going to be graced and you have been, right? Like, you have more than you could possibly ever imagine materialy, but you have a God who called you out, who brought you into the knowledge of Him, who is blessing you in the present moment with life and breath, and who has promised that forever and ever and ever you will be his and a trophy of his grace. Each morning in the New Heavens and New Earth will be richer and newer than the one before. And you got there, not because you were great at anything, but because he loves you. Man, that knowledge should do something to the present moment, right? I don’t consider the present sufferings worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed in us. So come on, step out of it for just a minute. Don’t grumble against grace. Just rejoice in our generous God. Let me pray for us.

Lord, I love this text and I’ve really enjoyed sharing it with my friends. I pray Lord, that these truths would just be exploding in our lives and that our lives then would explode in worship. We pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.