

Those who are last, will be first!

The disciples were down by the lake with Jesus and the afternoon's discussion was full of revelation. Jesus had just told them that they would one day sit on thrones to rule the twelve tribes of Israel. He promised eternal life but warned that many that are now first, will be last; and many that are now last will be first.

Thaddeus asked Jesus: "How can those who are now last, be the first? What about those of us who have followed you from the very beginning? Surely we, who were the first, will always be so honored."

Thomas started to join Thaddeus in his argument, but a dark realization stopped him. It suddenly occurred to him that his own faith could be lost, his own promises might be broken. Things are not always the same. People change for better or for worse.

Jesus tossed a pebble out onto the water and watched the wave rings widen. The rings spread from the center where the pebble had broken the water's surface. The rings were like his idea which was widening and growing. Jesus turned back to his group and sat down on the ground, preparing to tell them a story. He leaned back against a tree.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like this," Jesus began. "Once there was a man who went out early in the morning to hire some men to work in his vineyard..."

When Jesus ended the story he emphasized that the employer's generosity was like that of God. He went on to clarify: "...those who are last will be first and those who are first will be last."

The disciples were fascinated by the strange twist of Jesus' clever tale—all except Thaddeus who was still struggling with the concept. Eventually the rings of understanding would encircle him and he too would know the wisdom that God's ways are not the ways of men. All of the disciples would realize that everyone is called to unselfishly rejoice in God's wonderful generosity to his creation.



The parable of the vineyard workers teaches the lesson that all we really have is God's generosity. If we really got what we deserve we might not be such sticklers for justice. It might be a much different story. There is really nothing we can do to "deserve" eternal life or any other gift from God. All we can do is stand in wonder as God patiently forgives us for our weakness, loves us anyway, and still surrounds us with the gifts from his immense generosity.