

Matthew 20:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

Analysis

Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour (πάλιν ἐξελθὼν περὶ ἕκτην καὶ ἐνάτην ὥραν, *palin exelthōn peri hektēn kai enatēn hōran*)—The master's repeated going out (ἐξέρχομαι, *exerchomai*) emphasizes his active, persistent seeking of laborers. The sixth hour (noon) and ninth hour (3 PM) represent half-day and late-afternoon hirings, still offering substantial work time. Each successive hiring represents God's ongoing invitation throughout redemptive history.

And did likewise (ἐποίησεν ὡσαύτως, *epoiēsen hōsautōs*)—The master's consistent pattern of seeking workers demonstrates divine persistence in calling people into Kingdom labor. This repetition underscores grace's initiative: God doesn't wait passively for workers to find Him but actively seeks them in the marketplace. The varying hours represent different life stages or historical epochs when God calls individuals to His service—childhood, youth, middle age, or even life's final hour.

Historical Context

In first-century agrarian Palestine, the marketplace served as a labor exchange where landless workers gathered hoping for day-wage employment. Harvest time was urgent—grapes had to be picked quickly before spoiling. The master's multiple trips reflect a large harvest requiring maximum labor. This parable's original hearers would recognize the urgency and the master's generosity in continuing to hire when the workday was substantially completed.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does the master's repeated seeking challenge the notion that God's call comes once and, if rejected, is withdrawn permanently?
2. What does the varying hours of hiring teach about God's sovereignty in calling people at different life stages or historical periods?
3. In what ways does this parable encourage those who came to faith later in life or feel they've wasted years outside Kingdom service?

Interlinear Text

πάλιν	ἐξελθὼν	περὶ	ἕκτην	καὶ	ἐννάτην	ὥραν	ἐποίησεν
Again	he went out	about	the sixth	and	ninth	hour	and did
G3825	G1831	G4012	G1623	G2532	G1766	G5610	G4160

ὡσαύτως

likewise
G5615