

Matthew 20:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

Analysis

Because no man hath hired us (ὅτι οὐδεὶς ἡμᾶς ἐμισθώσατο, hoti oudeis hēmas emisthōsato)—The workers' response exonerates them from charges of laziness; they were available but overlooked. The verb μισθώ (misthoō, to hire) indicates contractual employment. Their exclusion was not moral failure but lack of opportunity—a situation mirroring Gentiles and sinners who stood outside Israel's covenant privileges through birth, not choice.

Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive (ὑπάγετε καὶ ὑμεῖς εἰς τὸν ἀμπελῶνα, hupagete kai humeis eis ton ampelōna)—The master sends them without specifying wages, asking only for trust in his justice. The phrase **whatsoever is right** (ὅ ἐστιν ἡ δίκαιον, ho ean ē dikaiōn) appeals to his character, not contract. This represents salvation by grace through faith: those who trust God's righteousness receive beyond merit. The eleventh-hour workers model faith that works without guaranteed reward.

Historical Context

The master's willingness to hire workers with only one hour remaining defied economic logic but demonstrated covenant loyalty (hesed). In Jewish understanding, the vineyard often symbolized Israel (Isa. 5:1-7). Jesus expands this imagery: God's vineyard includes eleventh-hour laborers—Gentiles, sinners, and outcasts—who trust His justice without prior covenant standing or merit.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does the workers' reason for unemployment challenge our assumptions about those outside the church being morally deficient rather than circumstantially excluded?
2. What does the master's invitation to work without specifying wages teach about faith's nature as trust in God's character rather than contractual guarantee?
3. In what ways does this verse comfort those who feel they've wasted years in unbelief and wonder if late-life conversion can be meaningful?

Interlinear Text

λέγει	αύτοῖς,	὾τι	ούδεὶς	ἡμᾶς	έμισθώσατο	λέγει		
He saith	unto him	Because	no man	us	hath hired	He saith		
G3004	G846	G3754	G3762	G2248	G3409	G3004		
αύτοῖς,	Ὑπάγετε	καὶ	ὑμεῖς	εἰς	τὸν	ἀμπελῶνα	καὶ	ὁ
unto him	Go	also	ye	into	G3588	the vineyard	also	G3739
G846	G5217	G2532	G5210	G1519		G290	G2532	
ἐὰν	ἢ	δίκαιον	λήψεσθε					
whatsoever	is	right	that shall ye receive					
G1437	G5600	G1342	G2983					

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 6:10 (Parallel theme): For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

