

Prayer:

Slide # 1

Theme: *Christ the King*

Outline:

Chps. 1-2 The Advent of the King. (Proving His LEGAL right to the throne by His genealogy.)

Chp. 3 The Forerunner of the King and the King’s baptism.

Chp. 4 The Test of the King. (Proving His MORAL right to the throne by not yielding to temptation; and exhibiting His kingdom resume.)

Chps. 5-7 The Pronouncements of the King. (Proving His JUDICIAL right to the throne as seen in the wisdom of His kingdom teaching.)

Chps. 8-10 The Power of the King. (Proving His PROPHETICAL right to the throne by fulfilling prophecy.)

Chps. 11-12 The Rejection of the King.

Chp. 13 The Parables of the King.

Chps. 14-16 The Revelations of the King.

Chps. 17-20 The Instructions of the King.

Chps. 21-23 Formal Rejection of the King.

Chps. 24-25 The Predictions of the King.

Chps. 26-27 The Passion of the King.

Chp. 28 The Resurrection of the King.

In Matthew 19 we have a contrast drawn between childlikeness that enters the kingdom and that of the rich young ruler which does not. In both Matthew 18 and 19 the emphasis is on childlikeness that ultimately will enter the kingdom.

In Matthew 18:3 Jesus said, “***unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.***” In Matthew 19:14 Jesus said of little children, “***of such is the kingdom of heaven.***” And in contrast to this we have the story of the rich young ruler that follows.

Children are an illustration of dependence upon and submission to authority. Children cannot make their own way but are totally dependent. Children are not in control but are under parental authority.

In contrast the rich young ruler thought he could merit eternal life by doing good things and approached Jesus on that basis. And then in response to Jesus' demand that he follow Him as Lord the young man refused to submit to His Lordship authority. So, the rich young ruler refused to depend upon Christ or submit to His Lordship authority. These are the issues related to the nature of a true saving faith – dependence upon Christ as Savior and submission to His Lordship authority.

The main issue in view in presenting the contrast between childlikeness and the rich young ruler is the issue of attaining eternal life. This was the very basis for the rich young ruler coming to Jesus as he came asking “***what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?***” (v. 16).

Keep in mind that the subject of eternal life is the central issue throughout this whole section. This drives the entire narrative.

Slide # 2

- v. 16 “...do that I may have eternal life?”
- v. 17 “...want to enter into life...”
- v. 23 “...enter the kingdom of heaven.”
- v. 24 “...enter the kingdom of God.”
- v. 25 “Who then can be saved?”

In asking, “***Who then can be saved?***” Jesus responded by saying, “***With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.***” (v. 25-26). This is KEY in understanding what Jesus is saying in the parable we are studying this morning. What is impossible with men is possible solely on the basis of GOD’S GRACE!

Yes, Jesus closely connected having eternal life with following Him and having treasure in heaven (v. 21; cf. Jn. 12:25-26; Rom. 6:22). But we need to understand that following is the fruit of salvation and the basis of rewards, but it is not the means of salvation. That is a critical distinction! This must be the case otherwise it would be possible for a person to save himself by following but that is not the case. As Jesus said it is impossible for people to save themselves by anything they do including following.

The order is belief and then follow. We are not saved by following but we are saved by a belief that then has the fruit of following. Belief is the root and following is the fruit.

Slide # 3

John 10:26–28 (NKJV)

26 But you do not **believe**, [*core issue*] because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.

27 My sheep **hear** My voice [*and respond with belief*], and I **know** them [*salvation*], and they **follow** Me [*fruit*].

28 And I give them **eternal life**, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand [**assurance**].

Peter then asked what was in it for them as disciples since they had indeed left all and followed Jesus. Jesus promised that indeed they would share in the rebirth of the kingdom when Christ sits on His throne of glory and that they will sit on 12 thrones governing Israel.

Furthermore, Christ in effect promised that everyone who makes this Lordship commitment and leaves all to follow Him in this life will be rewarded 100-fold in the spiritual realm in the here and now, and then in the kingdom age to come they will inherit eternal life (cf. Mt. 19:29; Mk. 10:30; Lk. 18:30).

Again, the main thing received is eternal life. That is the BIG idea throughout this whole context. And then Christ made the proverbial statement that “**many who are first will be last, and the last first**” (Mt. 19:30). What Christ meant by this is debated. It can have different nuances depending on the context (cf. Mt. 19:30; 20:16; 21:31-32; Mk. 10:31; Lk. 13:30). But here it comes in context with an explanatory parable that emphasizes pure GRACE. In fact, this obscure statement regarding the first and the last brackets the parable on GRACE.

Slide # 4**Matthew 19:30 (NKJV)**

30 But many who are **first will be last, and the last first.**

Parable on GRACE... Matthew 20:1-15**Matthew 20:16 (NKJV)**

16 So the **last will be first, and the first last.**

Now the big debate is this: Is this parable in Matt. 20:1-15 describing rewards on the basis of GRACE or is it illustrating that salvation itself is by GRACE. Both are true – all is of GRACE. And as I emphasized earlier it is true that Christ closely connects following Him as indicative of having eternal life and also with having treasure in heaven.

However, the discussion began with the rich young ruler's question about how to have eternal life (v. 16) and concludes before the obscure "first and last" statement with the promise of inheriting eternal life (v. 29).

If one applies the parable which follows to rewards, then there is a problem because the parable emphasizes NO DISTINCTION and elsewhere the Scriptures clearly teach that there will be a distinction in the matter of rewards (cf. Lk. 19:11-27; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 22:12). We are not all going to be equally sitting on twelve thrones governing Israel as the apostles will be doing. This role uniquely belongs to the apostles.

However, in the matter of salvation there is total equality with no distinction whatsoever. So, I take it that salvation by pure GRACE is what is being illustrated here in this parable in Matt. 20:1-15 which is in keeping with the flow of the conversation generated by the rich young ruler and Christ's statement that salvation is only possible with God – in other words by God's GRACE.

We proclaim the gospel of God's grace. Salvation is all about grace meaning God's unmerited favor. But interestingly Jesus Himself never actually used the word GRACE in His teaching ministry. However, He taught it and illustrated it as seen in this parable in Matthew 20:1-15.

Grace means favor – unmerited, unearned, undeserved favor. The emphasis in GRACE is on what God does for us and not what we do for God. Human thinking likes to say, "**God helps those who help themselves**". But that is not grace. Grace is "God helps those who can't help themselves." In the Bible grace is in contrast to works!

Slide # 5

Romans 11:6 (ESV)

6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

It can't be both: Either we are saved by grace or by works. Grace allows no works whatsoever or it is not grace. Grace in order to be grace must be pure grace. Thus grace and works are mutually exclusive.

And we also note in the Scripture that faith is in contrast to works. Faith is shown to be non-meritorious as a spiritual reality that relates to the heart. And as such faith is not in conflict with grace but according to it.

Slide # 6**Romans 4:16 (NKJV)**

16 Therefore it is **of faith that it might be according to grace**, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all

Slide # 7**Ephesians 2:8–9 (NKJV)**

8 For by **grace** you have been saved through **faith**, and that **not of yourselves**; it is the **gift of God**,

9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

By the way if anyone thinks that the necessity of recognizing Christ as Lord as emphasized to the rich young ruler is contrary to grace then they should read on and study this parable here in Matthew 20:1-15.

Recognizing Christ as Lord over all is not inconsistent with grace but rather harmonizes with saving faith that is in keeping with grace. It is the grace of God that brings us to the point of dependence upon Christ and recognition of His sovereign Lordship authority (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3). As Paul says, “no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.”

By GRACE we as believers have received Christ Jesus as Lord. As Paul says in Col. 2:6, “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him”. We receive Him as Lord and Savior by faith and then we are to walk accordingly. The great challenge of sanctification is to be consistent with the faith we have come to know. This is the whole issue in growth and maturity.

Matthew 20:1–16 (NKJV)

1 “**For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.**

The word “For” (Gk. gar) shows that the thought began in 19:30 now continues on into chapter 20. This is another reminder that chapter divisions were not inspired. They help us to get around in our Bibles, but they are not always contextually appropriate or accurate.

The word “For” shows that Christ is here explaining the meaning of the obscure phrase concerning the last and the first at the end of chapter 19.

When Christ says, “***the kingdom of heaven is like***” this is consistently the language Christ uses when He wants to illustrate some truth related to the kingdom – in this case entrance into the kingdom is on the basis of GRACE (cf. Matt. 13).

This is the same subject Christ was dealing with in regard to the rich young ruler who approached him with the question of how to receive eternal life. When Christ presented to him the condition of exchanging the Lordship of his riches with following Him as Lord the young man went away sorrowful because he was not willing to give up his riches for the Lordship of Christ.

In response Jesus then said this:

Slide # 8

Matthew 19:23–24 (NKJV)

23 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “Assuredly, I say to you that it is **hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.**

24 And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man **to enter the kingdom of God.**”

The issue is entrance into the kingdom and Jesus went on to say this is only possible with God. This parable now builds on that reality showing it is only made possible on the basis of GRACE! God’s grace makes it possible!

The landowner in this parable is God Himself and the workers are believers in Christ who are all saved by GRACE alone through faith alone. The assumption in Christ’s teaching is that being a follower of Christ, which is indicative of true faith, is then demonstrated in being a worker for Christ. Following is basically equivalent to serving or working which is the fruit of true faith.

Slide # 9

John 12:25–26 (NKJV)

25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for **eternal life.**

26 If anyone **serves** Me, let him **follow** Me; and **where I am, there My servant will be also.** If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

Slide # 10**Romans 6:22 (NKJV)**

22 But now having been set free from sin, and **having become slaves of God**, you **have your fruit** to holiness, and **the end, everlasting life**.

So having eternal life and bearing fruit go together. Again, we are not saved by bearing fruit, but if we have eternal life the expectation is that we will show fruit. So faith and fruit are distinct and yet closely linked.

Slide # 11

2 Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

A denarius was a normal day's wage during the time of Christ. Remember this is a parable and parables generally have one main point of application which in this case will be made at the conclusion of the parable.

These were hired early in the morning – probably about 6 AM.

3 And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

4 and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went.

The 3rd hour according to Jewish reckoning corresponds to what is 9 AM on our clock.

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

Still more men were hired at noon (the 6th hour) and then still more again at 3 PM (the 9th hour) in the afternoon.

6 And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day?’

7 They said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.’

The 11th hour is 5 PM which is very late in the day to go to work. If quitting time was 6 PM that means they put in about 1 hour of work. That is a short workday for sure. But they too were hired to go into the vineyard.

8 “So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, ‘Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.’

The day’s work was over and so it was now time to pay the workers. And the instruction was to pay those hired last and then work up to those who were hired first.

“The wage” (ton misthon) is singular, implying only one wage. The point is that only one amount was going to be paid; payment would not be on a scale based on number of hours worked.

– **Ed Glasscock**

Note the wording here in verse 8 of “***last to first***”. This ties back to 19:30 where Christ said the “***first will be last, and the last first.***” And what we find again at the conclusion of the parable in 20:16 where it says, “***the last will be first, and the first last.***”

Undeniably what is being described is total equality as all receive the very same thing whether they be first or last.

9 And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius.

Wow! This probably raised some eyebrows because those hired at the 11th hour received a full day’s wage – the same amount which those hired early in the morning had agreed to work for all day to receive.

So far so good – this landowner is seen to be very generous in paying those who worked for just one hour the equivalent of an entire day’s wage.

Now the other guys who worked all day are of course thinking that if the landowner is this exorbitantly generous with these who worked for just one hour – just think what he is undoubtedly going to do for us who worked the whole day. If they were paid proportionately to this it would mean he would pay them 12 days’ worth of wages for just one day of work.

I mean if you get a full day’s pay for one hour of work; then 12 hours’ worth of work would mean you would get paid the equivalent of 12 days’ worth of wages. That would be consistent! And that is what they were expecting!

10 But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius.

Of course, these earlier laborers based on what they had seen assumed they would receive a much higher wage than what they had agreed upon since those coming so late in the day had also received the full days wage of a denarius. But alas they too likewise received just a single denarius. In other words, at the end of the day they all had an equal standing in terms of what they received.

11 And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner,

12 saying, ‘These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.’

Of course, according to human thinking this just wasn’t right. Those who worked only one hour had received the same amount as those who had worked all the day long.

Note the phrase, “***you have made them equal to us***”. This is the key idea! The word “complained” (Gk. gogguzo) means to grumble or complain.

Slide # 12

Humanly speaking, they had every right to complain. Undoubtedly, no one reading this today would tolerate such treatment. Lawsuits, union strikes, and every kind of action to receive fair treatment would be initiated. – ***Ed Glasscock***

You can almost hear the howl of “*that’s not fair*” and cries of “*injustice*”. But of course, GRACE is not fair. It bestows extravagant undeserved favor upon the unworthy recipient.

What is being described has been called the *scandal of grace*! Grace is not fair – it gives unmerited favor. Grace makes everyone equal to everyone else. No one is in a superior position.

13 But he answered one of them and said, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?’

The landowner did nothing wrong. He paid the initial workers what he had promised. They weren’t slighted. The problem was not the amount that they got paid, but rather that they were envious of the good fortune of those hired at the last hour and were disgruntled over it.

14 Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you.

This is an illustration of GRACE. Note the language “*the same as you*”. All the way through there is this emphasis on total equality.

Slide # 13

- v. 9 ...each received a denarius.
- v. 10 ...likewise received each a denarius.
- v. 12 ...made them equal to us...
- v. 14...this last man the same as you.

In the parable the issue here is not on how hard they worked or even the quality of their work, but rather the length of their service. Some served all day, some part of the day, and some only one hour. They all put some time in, but they all received the very same amount of compensation.

You say, “*Well, how can that possibly be right?*” Well, according to GRACE it is perfectly right which is a point of emphasis being made in the parable.

Slide # 14

- v. 4 ... “whatever is right I will give you.”
- v. 7 ... “whatever is right you will receive.”

You see sin is the great equalizer that results in the wages of sin being death for every person. There are no exceptions. In the matter of death we are all equal. Likewise, GRACE is the great equalizer that makes every believer equally acceptable before God. We all stand on equal footing before the cross! In the matter of GRACE we are all equal!

According to GRACE this equality in Christ is perfectly RIGHT because none of us deserve anything good at all! If you want what you deserve then you should go straight to hell. I don't know about you but I want GRACE not justice. I am going purely on the GRACE system!

Slide # 15

Romans 3:24–26 (NKJV)

24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

In the cross justice was served so that grace might be bestowed. In this action God is both JUST (right) and the JUSTIFIER of the one who has faith in Jesus. This is just (what is right) on the basis of GRACE.

15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?'

If God wants to dish out special grace it is His prerogative to do so. It is lawful (right) for Him to dispense His GRACE as He wishes. After all it is His GRACE to do with as He pleases. And GRACE is always unfair. It is always scandalous in that sense! And praise God it is because otherwise we would have no hope! Our only hope is GRACE – pure GRACE!

We don't want to get what we have coming – because if we receive what we deserve we are all going straight to hell. We all want the “unfairness” (so to speak) of GRACE!

How wrong to have an evil eye because of the GRACE that is bestowed on someone else. Rather we should rejoice that we as believers are all trophies of GRACE no matter when we got saved whether it be early in life or on our deathbed.

In our human “evilness” we like to get ahead of others, and we are envious when they get the better deal. The disciples for example argued over who was going to be the greatest in the kingdom or who would sit in the most favored positions. Everything is a competition. But in the goodness of God His saving GRACE in salvation places us all on the very same level.

And that is the MAJOR point of the parable as Jesus makes clear in His concluding applicational statement in verse 16.

16 So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.”

The last part of this verse, “***For many are called, but few chosen***” is not in the older manuscripts. It is found in Matt. 22:14 and may be a scribal insert from there as found here in Matt. 20:16. So it is Biblical but very questionable as to whether it belongs to this context in the original text of Matt. 20:16.

Verse 16 is KEY to interpreting the parable!

The parable concludes with the summary application here in verse 16: “***So the last will be first and the first last.***” If the last will be first and the first will be last that means they all end up at the same place which is the overall point of the parable.

What is presented here is a “***dead heat***” of total equality. This is not a parable about personal rewards but about salvation. Personal rewards are another issue. In view here is the common salvation all believers equally share in.

Now certainly there is application of GRACE truth to the issue of rewards in the sense of opportunity to serve and some think that is the point here. For example, the thief on the cross had a very limited amount of time to serve in comparison to a person who serves for their full life. But according to GRACE he may be rewarded fully according to the opportunity afforded. He was a testimony to the other thief which will be rewarded for all eternity all out of proportion to the time he had to serve. Thus, his reward will be commensurate with GRACE and not time served. So there is a point of application in this regard.

However, the MAIN emphasis in the surrounding context is the issue of eternal life itself and the MAJOR thrust of the parable is exact equality which is in keeping with the main theme of salvation.

The balance of Scripture consistently emphasizes a difference in personal rewards and not exact sameness.

Slide # 16

1 Corinthians 3:14–15 (NKJV)

14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.

15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Slide # 17

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NKJV)

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Slide # 18

2 John 8 (NKJV)

8 Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.

Slide # 19

Revelation 3:11 (NKJV)

11 Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

Revelation 22:12 (NKJV)

12 "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.

All of this emphasizes that not all will receive the same reward but rather each one according to the quality of their service.

So, my view is that the parable in Matthew 20:1-15 which emphasizes that all get the very same thing, is emphasizing that all will share in the same salvation – not the same personal reward. This is in keeping with the main thrust of the surrounding context in which the main issue in the age to come is made to be eternal life itself.

Thus, the converted thief on the cross will enjoy the full blessing of salvation just as much as those who served Christ for essentially their whole life. All God's children whether saved early or saved late in life are equally saved.

Saving GRACE is equal for all. All God's children will have a room in Father's house (Jn. 14:2). Every believer belongs totally to Christ and is in the position where "**Christ is all and in all**" (Col 3:11). Every believer is an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ (Rom. 8:17).

Every believer has part in the promise that Christ was delivered "up for us all" and that in Christ we are freely given all things (Rom. 8:32). All believers according to Rev. 21:7 "**shall inherit all things**" and God will be his God and he shall be God's child. Every believer equally shares in "**every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ**" (Eph. 1:3).

All believers are part of the same body, all share in the same Spirit, all have the same hope of our calling, all have one Lord, one faith, one spiritual baptism, and one God and Father of all (Eph. 4:4-6). Every believer is a recipient of "**grace given according to the measure of Christ's gift**" (Eph 4:7; 1 Pet. 4:10). All believers alike when we see Christ will be like Him (1 Jn. 3:2). All believers will fully enjoy the splendor of glory. All believers will know the truth of God wiping away all our tears, all will know the glory of no more death, no more sorrow, no more pain (Rev. 21:4).

Every believer whether mature or immature, whether vigilant or negligent, or to put it as Paul says, "**whether we wake or sleep**" – which is to say whether spiritually alert or spiritually lethargic (1 Thess. 5:10, cf. 5:6), all are going to all share fully in the inheritance of eternal life. We are all going to arrive at the same place with the same status regarding eternal life.

And behind it all is the GRACE of God for all believers!

Believing tax collectors, prostitutes, criminals, and social outcasts will have the same heavenly residence as Paul [or any other saint]. There are no servant headquarters or lower-class neighborhoods in heaven.

– **John MacArthur**

Recently, I was talking to an unbeliever, and he said he just couldn't understand how it could be that a person who lived a notorious life could then in the end just be completely forgiven and have every much of the good of heaven as anyone else.

It is true that GRACE makes no sense to natural thinking (1 Cor. 2:14). God's ways are not our ways. They are all out of proportion to our natural normal way of thinking. But it is gloriously good.

Slide # 20

Isaiah 55:7–9 (NKJV)

7 Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will **abundantly pardon**.

8 "For My thoughts are **not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways**," says the LORD.

9 "For as the heavens are **higher** than the earth, So are My ways **higher** than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

God ABUNDANTLY PARDONING is contrary to natural thinking! It is infinitely superior to our natural thoughts. God's GRACE ways are incalculably HIGHER than our ways!

The GRACE standard is seen in the converted thief on the cross who just moments earlier in the day was mocking Christ along with the other thief (cf. Mt. 27:44; Mk. 15:32). But then he repented and turned to Christ and asked the Christ in His Lordship authority to remember Him when He came into His kingdom. Instant forgiveness! Instantly he became a child of God. Instantly Christ said to him, "***Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.***" (Lk. 23:43). That very day he would fully share in Paradise with Christ. Did he deserve this – to share in Paradise that very day – to share in Paradise with Christ for all eternity? No! This was not fair – this was GRACE – PURE GRACE!

The point is this: Whether a person gets saved early in life and is enrolled in service to Christ for their whole life, or whether they get saved very late and have virtually no time for service like the thief on the cross – yet ALL equally share in the inheritance of eternal life. By the way God is still using the testimony of that converted thief right to this very day. You talk about lasting fruit.

Grace gives out of all proportion of what is deserved! And that is true for all of us. We are all simply trophies of GRACE! So why compare?

Slide # 21

1 Corinthians 4:7 (NKJV)

7 For who makes you differ from another? And **what do you have that you did not receive?** Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

There is no place for a “holier than thou” attitude because all our righteousness are as filthy rags before God (Isa. 64:6). Saving grace is all encompassing for all God’s children. None of us are self-made people. Just like little children we are all totally dependent.

No one comes to Christ with more or less merit – we all have none. No one is received by Christ on the basis of more or less grace – we as God’s children all equally receive the same saving grace. Note the radical language in verse 16 that **“*the last will be first, and first last.*”** That is radical GRACE! Note that in 20:16 it is stated in reverse order from the statement in 19:30.

Slide # 22

Matthew 19:30 (NKJV)

- **30** But many who are **first will be last, and the last first.**

Matthew 20:16 (NKJV)

- **16** So the **last will be first, and the first last.**

Christ changes the order to where the emphasis on who is first and who is last essentially blurs together almost as if to emphasize that in the kingdom first and last won’t matter because we all will equally share in kingdom glory and the blessedness of eternal life.

Grace is not about finishing first or finishing last it is the reality that purely by the GRACE OF GOD I AM going to be there. In heaven there will be no score cards about who was the most deserving of God’s grace because no one deserves it and yet all believers are the recipients of it. With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible – even having the first finish last and the last finish first in a dead heat because it is a GRACE heat.

John Newton the author of “Amazing Grace” said, “If ever I reach heaven I expect to find three wonders there:

first, to meet some I had not thought to see there;

second, to miss some I had expected to see there;

and third—the greatest wonder of all—to find myself there.”

Awe, the glory of GRACE where those who get in first and those who get in last will all be equally represented there for all eternity.

Chuck Swindoll writes...

One of my greatest anticipations is some glorious day being in a place where there will be no boasting, no name dropping, no selfishness. Guess where it will be? Heaven. There will be no spiritual-sounding testimonies that call attention to somebody's supercolossal achievements. None of that. Everybody will have written across his or her life the word "Grace."

When I was in seminary, one fellow who struggled with academics – I mean really struggled – was grateful just to get through school. ... He would open his box, pull out his test booklet, and before he ever looked at his grade, he wrote in big bold letters across the front of the test "G-R-A-C-E." If he did poorly: "Grace." If he did well: "Grace!" I learned a valuable lesson from my friend. That's all any of us have to claim. – **Chuck Swindoll** in *The Grace Awakening*, p. 33-34

In final analysis its all of grace and all glory belongs to God alone! Indeed, "the last will be first, and the first will be last."

As Paul so aptly said, "by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10). This is what we all are as God's children – simply trophies of grace and nothing more.

Praise God for His AMAZING GRACE!