

**The Vineyard**  
**(What if God is better than you thought?)**  
Matthew 20:1-19  
Pastor Peter Hiatt  
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We've been preaching through the Gospel of Matthew for over two years now. We have to do it in 35 minute segments, once a week. That's a bummer because the Gospel is a seamless tapestry of pictures, stories, and ideas that are all building on each other. So I encourage you to spend time in Matthew on your own. Review old sermons and get cd's or sermon booklets for weeks that you've missed.

In Matthew chapter 19 Jesus crossed the Jordan to redeem His whoring bride, Israel, and He talks about receiving the kingdom as a child.

Little children receive everything by grace, not works. They work, but we call it play because they don't work for a wage. No matter how they work, their Father still provides for their daily need.

They work freely, out of love.  
So work is its own reward.

Then a rich young ruler came to Jesus and said, "What good work must I do in order to get the kingdom? I've done all these works, what do I get?"

8:30A.M. May 29, 1983, I rolled over and gazed onto the face of my new bride. The day before we'd entered into a covenant. That night we celebrated the sacrament of that covenant as we communed—body and blood, in the sanctuary of our covenant love. I had given her myself and

all my things with me. She opened her eyes, gazed into my face, and said,

“Now... what do *I* get?!  
I serve you, I cook and clean. I have sex with you...  
Now what do *I* get?!”

It absolutely broke my heart.  
And I began to bleed, and bleed, and bleed, and bleed. The blood flowed off the bed, out the door, and covered the whole land to the depths of a horse’s bridle.

Now, of course, that didn’t really happen... to *me*.

What bride would ever say such a thing to her groom?

Matthew 19:27:

*Then Peter answered and said to Him, “See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we [get] have?” So Jesus said to them, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”*

“Many who are first will be last and the last first.”  
Well, if that’s true, what’s the point in competing? What’s

the point is asking, “What do I get... first place, last place?”

It’s like this whole competitive world is a lie...  
like this whole competitive creation is an exercise in  
futility.

*Many who are first will be last and the last first. For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner [landlord, oikodespot] who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. [A denarius supplied a laborer’s daily need.] And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, “You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.” So they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, “Why have you been standing here idle [Interestingly, the word translated “idle” (argos in Greek) is also translated “barren” in the King James Version. That is, “unfruitful...” Why have you been standing here idle] all day?” 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.” So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, “Call the laborers and give them their wages.”*

Well, in the vineyard of the kingdom of Heaven, how much wage do we merit?

~ Technically, none. Right?

“For it’s not by works...”

~ Technically, death.

“For the wages of sin is death.”

*“Call the laborers and give them their wages beginning with the last to the first.” And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius.*

Scripture talks about rewards in Heaven. They must be unique to each individual. But how could one person get more than another, for we each receive “Christ and all things with Him.”

*And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, 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.” But he answered one of them and said, “Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?” So the last will be first, and the first last.*

“The eschatos protos, and the protos eschatos.”

Well, the Lord gives them each the same,  
regardless of merit.

Think of the person that in your opinion least merits  
Heaven.

It could be someone like Adolph Hitler or Judas  
Iscariot.

It could be someone more personal, like your  
worst enemy or an abuser.

Imagine that you arrive at the Great Banquet, and  
they’re seated next to you.

Would you still eat your dinner and drink the wine?

According to the Apostle Paul, the person who least  
merits Heaven *will* be there. Do you remember his name?  
It’s Saul of Tarsus. That is, Paul. He wrote in the Bible (1  
Timothy 1:15), “I am the protos, first, chief, foremost of  
sinners.”

You may say, “Well, Judas was a worse sinner than  
Paul,” (which is to say scripture is untrue). Then you say,  
“Well, Judas is the son of perdition (destruction). How  
could he be saved? That’d be like getting a camel through  
the eye of a needle... Impossible!”

Jesus just said, “With men that’s impossible, but  
with God all things are possible.”

“Possible? Yeah. But actual?” you say.

Well after that, Jesus looked at His disciples, then  
He said, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration,  
you who have followed me will sit on twelve thrones  
judging Israel.” (Someone said to me, “Wasn’t one of those  
12 followers Judas?” Folks will argue Judas gave up his

throne and so they voted that other guy in. But what if Judas is there? ...on a throne?)

I heard someone say, “We love God precisely as much as we love the person we love the least in this world.” Jesus said, “If you don’t forgive, neither will my Father forgive you,” and “Whatever you do to the least of these my brethren, you do to me.” So the way you love the “least of his brethren” is the way you love him.

And so you say, “My enemy is not Christ’s brethren!”

Is that right? You’ve judged him and know this?

Maybe all are Christ’s brethren because, “All shall be made alive.” That is what scripture says:

“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15:22)

“Then as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for *all* men. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man’s obedience many will be made righteous.” (Romans 6:18-19)

[That’s the eschatos Adam, last man... Jesus.]

“For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of *all* men, *especially* of those who believe.”

(1 Timothy 4:10)

“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus *every* knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and *every* tongue confess that ‘Jesus Christ is Lord.’” (Philippians 2:9-11)

[And] “no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:3)

[And] “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Acts 2:21)

“And I heard *every* creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and *all* therein, saying, ‘To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever!’” (Revelation 5:13)

“And he who sat upon the throne said, ‘Behold, I make *all* things new.’ Also he said, ‘Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.’”

(Revelation 21:5)

“This is good, and it is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires *all men* to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for *all*.” (1 Timothy 2:3-6)

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not *willing* that *any* should perish but that *all* should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)

He “accomplishes all things according to the counsel of His will.” (Ephesians 1:11)

“Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.”

“*Love never fails.*” (NKJV) (1 Corinthians 13:7)

“*God is love.* In this the love of God was made manifest among us that God sent his only son into the world, so that we might live through him.”

(1 John 4:7)

“For God has consigned *all men* to disobedience, that he may have *mercy* upon *all*. O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?’ For from him and through and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen”

(Romans 11:32-36)

Shabat!

Stop!

and look at your heart.

For there is one of two emotions in your heart, and probably both at once:

In some of you, there is a thrill—a wild and outrageous hope has just been set ablaze.

But in some of you, there is anger—intense anger.

In all of us, there are questions... that’s fine.

But in some of you, there is anger—intense anger.

You’re thinking, “I can’t believe that piece of crap gets in!” Or maybe it’s a group of people (named or unnamed). To you, they are the last and the least, which makes you the first. So you’re thinking, “I can’t believe those SOB’s get the same wage as me!”

You’re angry...

like Jonah was angry outside the walls of Ninevah.

like the older brother was angry standing in the field.  
like the Pharisees were angry when Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners.

Angry... like we're all angry at some point.

You're angry, and you want to call me a heretic, but this is your problem... all I did was quote scripture (a lot of it).

And, yes, I believe all scripture is authoritative. There's more scripture to read. And, yes, I believe what we'll soon read in Matthew 25, "The king *will* say to the goats on his left, 'depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire... into the eternal punishment.'" That is, the consuming fire, the lake of fire and theion, the Gehenna of fire.

- ~ Perhaps some come out the other side. Some say "eternal" means "eons." I don't know.
- ~ Perhaps they don't come out the other side, but they change and know God as love instead of wrath.

He *is* consuming fire, and He *is* love, and He *is* one.

Perhaps they call punishment by another, new name.

- ~ Perhaps they were never "sons of Adam," but only shadows of people, mere vessels of wrath, without souls, that are destroyed.
- ~ Perhaps Christ is the scapegoat that redeems even these goats.
- ~ Or perhaps, something else.

I don't understand.

But I'm called to believe and certainly hope.

So, if believing “all will be saved” is a heresy; it’s my favorite heresy.

And if hoping that “none will perish” is a heresy, then God is a heretic, for “He wills that none should perish.”

Believing that God gets what He wills is not heresy but orthodoxy. It’s called the doctrine of His sovereignty...

So if you experienced a thrill, maybe it wasn’t just you, but His Spirit in you. This wild thrill...

maybe God gets His wish,  
     maybe love doesn’t fail,  
         maybe the blood of the covenant fills the  
             whole world to the depths of a horse’s  
 bridle, and that blood is so powerful, no one can resist it.

Maybe Christ conquers everywhere,  
                             every when,  
                             every how.

Maybe Christ redeems everyone else the way He redeemed me. For I am chief of sinners, saved by grace and not by works. And so I ain’t got nothin’ against nobody. I hope everybody gets in.

But if you’re angry,  
     maybe you don’t want “everyone to be saved.”

That is,  
     maybe you don’t want the “will of God,”  
 which means,  
     maybe you don’t want the kingdom of God.

I don’t think anyone receives the kingdom who doesn’t want the kingdom. Even though the gates of the eternal city are always open, you can sit outside. You don’t

have to go in now. And this is a paradox, for I believe they call that place, Hell—that is, Hades, the outer darkness.

And isn't that interesting...

You thought you were judging this parable,  
and this parable was judging you.

We thought we were judging the Word,  
and the Word was judging us.

Grace was judging us.

Forgiveness was judging us.

“Now is the judgment of the world,  
and when I am lifted up  
[speaking of the cross],  
I will draw all men to myself,”  
said Jesus  
(1 John 12:31-32).

But the cross is judgment;  
the cross is grace.

It is the bleeding heart of God.

So if you don't want that blood, consider yourself cursed.  
In which case, I'd advise begging for mercy.

And you'll get mercy,  
but when you get mercy, you'll want it for all.

You know in this parable, it seems that the only ones on the outside are those angry over the fact that all are on the inside. That is, that everyone gets a denarius.

To them, it must seem like the landlord isn't worried about getting the work done because He has no problem offending His hardest workers (or should I say, the ones that *think* they're the hardest workers).

You may be thinking even now, “Peter, we shouldn’t ponder these things in public. How are we gonna get anyone to work in the vineyard?”

I mean, if everybody is paid the same or everybody gets in...

- ~ Why work at all?
- ~ Why not “sin that grace may abound?”
- ~ Why fill out these painful giving cards?
- ~ Why take up a cross?
- ~ Why “give away all I have and deliver my body to be burned?”
- ~ Why “imitate our heavenly Father?”
- ~ Why be good?
- ~ Why keep the law?
- ~ Why work the vineyard?

Well, what is it to work in a vineyard? And why would someone want to work there, if not for a wage? Working in a vineyard is tending grapes, pruning branches, harvesting, treading the wine press.

It’s this...

[Movie clips are shown from [A Walk in the Clouds](#).

Keanu Reeves’ character is tending the vineyard to keep the harvest from freezing, then pruning branches, then trampling the wine press—all with his beloved, in tune to music, such that the work is a dance. The intensity between them builds as the scene progresses.]

Golly, I might work in that vineyard for free.

Well, now some of you are thinking, “Oh, that’s just a silly movie clip.”

Okay, let's try scripture.

Song of Solomon, chapter 7, verse 8:

“May your breasts be like the clusters of the vine,  
the fragrance of your breath like apples,  
and your mouth like the best wine.”

[Then the beloved speaks.]

“May the wine go straight to my lover,  
flowing gently over lips and teeth.

I belong to my lover,  
and his desire is for me.

Come, my lover, let us go to the countryside,  
let us spend the night in the villages.

Let us go early to the vineyards  
to see if the vines have budded,  
if their blossoms have opened,  
and if the pomegranates are in bloom—  
there [in the vineyards] I will give you my love.”

If you're a student of scripture, you know that this Shunamite woman was a servant, a slave, one of the last. She's made to work in the vineyards by her brothers, probably Solomon's vineyard—a slave girl working Solomon's vineyard. Yet she, herself, is a vineyard, and she falls in love with Solomon, and gives him her vineyard. At the end she sings:

“Solomon had a vineyard in Baal Hamon;  
he let out his vineyard to tenants.  
Each was to bring for its fruit  
a thousand shekels of silver.  
But my own vineyard is mine to give;  
the thousand shekels are for you, O Solomon...”

As you know, Solomon is the son of David, and a picture of Christ. Then this Shunamite woman is a picture of the bride of Christ—the church.

If you think I'm being whimsical, let's read Isaiah. In the next chapter of Matthew, Jesus will refer directly to this verse, Isaiah 5:1:

“I will sing to the one I love  
 a song about his vineyard:  
 My loved one had a vineyard  
 on a fertile hillside.  
 He dug it up and cleared it of stones  
 and planted it with the choicest vines.  
 He built a watchtower in it  
 and cut out a winepress as well.”

[Then in verse 7...]

“The vineyard of the LORD Almighty  
 is the house of Israel,  
 and the men of Judah  
 are the garden of his delight.”

The Lord looks for good fruit, but sees only bad. So Isaiah prophesies judgment and fire on the vineyard. But then in chapter 27, he prophesies a day to come...

“In days to come Jacob will take root,  
 Israel will bud and blossom  
 and fill all the world with fruit.”

[Chapter 27, verse 9...]

“...this will be the full fruitage of the removal of his sin.”

That is, the fruit of mercy.

So Israel is a vineyard, and we are the Israel of God—the church.

The kingdom is a vineyard, and the Lord calls us to come work in it.

To do His work is to obey His command and keep the law. But there are different ways of keeping the law.

- ~ If you work for a wage,  
then you are a tenant, an employee, a servant girl,  
a maid, or a harlot.
- ~ But if you work for another reason (another logos),  
then you're something else.

It's the same work, but an entirely different reality.

[ Four movie clips are shown in succession...

- Ever After: Prince Charming is kneeling in front of Cinderella, putting the glass slipper on her foot.  
Prince Charming: "I kneel before you, not as a prince, but as a man in love. But I would feel like a king if you, Danielle De Barbarac, would be my wife."
- Maid in Manhattan: The maid, Marisa Ventura, reveals her true identity (in front of the media) to the Senatorial candidate who fell for her when he thought she was a wealthy socialite.  
Marisa: "Marisa Ventura... housekeeping."  
Chris: "Chris Marshall... candidate for Senate. I'd appreciate your vote."  
Marisa: "We'll see."  
Chris then embraces and kisses her.

- Pretty Woman:  
Edward Lewis: “So what happened after he climbed up the tower and rescued her?”  
Viv Ward: “She rescued him right back.”  
They embrace and kiss.
- A Walk in the Clouds: Don Pedro, the patriarch, takes Keanu Reeves’ character (whom he believes is married to his granddaughter) up a hill where he shows him a vine growing in front of a monument with a cross on it.  
Don Pedro (speaking to Keanu Reeves):  
“All our vines come from this one. It’s not just the root of Las Nubes (the vineyard); it’s the root of our lives, Victoria’s life. Now that you are a part of all this, part of us, it is the root of your life. You are an orphan no longer.”]

Cinderella stops working for a wage, but she’ll still work—not as a slave, but as a princess bride.

The maid in Manhattan will still cook and clean for the very same guy. She’ll do the same work but not for a wage. No longer as a maid, but a bride.

Pretty Woman will no longer have sex for a wage. She’ll no longer roll over and say, “What do I get?” Same work... but not as a harlot, but as a bride.

Keanu Reeves is no longer an orphan for he’s part of the root, grafted into the family... just like the prodigal son who returned home. Remember the love of that Father transformed that boy- from an employee into a son.

See, I don't think God wants employees, but sons.  
 He doesn't want mercenaries, but children.  
 He doesn't want slave girls, maids, and harlots...  
 He wants a bride.

I don't think He wants a business, but a family.

What do you want? A wage?  
 Is that why you work the vineyard? If so, maybe  
 you're not really even working the vineyard.

Do you know what the vineyard is producing?  
 This vineyard bears fruit.  
 The fruit is grapes.  
 They are like grapes of wrath,  
 for the grapes are placed in a wine press and trampled.

The grapes are crushed.  
 They bleed and that blood turns to wine.

In Matthew 9, Jesus looked on the harassed and  
 helpless, sinful people of Israel and said, "The harvest is  
 plentiful."

What harvest?

Just a few verses earlier, when the Pharisees  
 complain that He eats with tax collectors and sinners, Jesus  
 says, "Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy and  
 not sacrifice.'"

Maybe that's the harvest... mercy.

He's quoting Hosea who prophesied in the Hebrew  
 language, saying, "I desire hesed [covenant love, steadfast  
 love] more than offerings." Remember Hosea was  
 commanded to marry a harlot, and then shower her with

*mercy that she might be redeemed, for that was what God was doing with Israel.*

The fruit of this vineyard is mercy, hesed, covenant love!  
Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, etc.

If the workers serve the vineyard, they will serve its produce. They will do the work of servant girls, maids, and harlots, but full of hesed, covenant love...

They will be married.

They will be brides.

Like law filled with love, they will be workers filled with mercy—the very blood of the landlord. They will be sons.

The vineyard is producing children, brides, sons, family... filled with the wine of the covenant. Forgiven people full of grace. The blood that flows from the broken heart of the Father.

The vineyard is producing mankind  
in the image and likeness of God.

And who is God?

God is Love.

He is Love that won't quit.

Love that won't fail.

Love that bears all things,

believes all things,

hopes all things,

endures all things...

on a cross

on a hill

that is a winepress.

The vineyard is producing mercy. The landlord is showering mercy on the “idle, unfruitful” workers. And now it turns out that the workers who worked all day and complained were “idle and unfruitful” as well.

They *thought* they were working the vineyard,  
 but they didn't even know what it was producing.  
 The Pharisees *thought* they were working the vineyard,  
 but they hated the wine it produced...  
 the Master's mercy.

They hated that He was good.

They complain to the landlord, and He says to one of them, “Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? [Can I not be sovereign?] Or is your eye evil because I am good?”

The Master's grace is their judgment. The revelation of His mercy is also the revelation of their evil. They hate steadfast love. That is, they hate God who is good.

They weren't working for Him, but against Him.  
 They weren't working for Him, but for a wage...  
 His things.

And so, they weren't sons, but mercenaries.  
 They weren't family, but evil tenants.  
 They weren't the bride, but greedy whores.

So I ask you...  
 Does the revelation of His mercy make you angry?  
 (Not simply ask questions, we all have questions.)  
 Does the revelation of His mercy make you angry?

I can't sort out all the details of eschatology, and I'm not sure what happens to everyone after death. But does the revelation of His mercy make you angry? Does the thought that God *might* have perfect grace on all make you angry? If so, maybe you should ask, maybe we all should ask, "Have I been working for a wage?"

"Am I a son or an employee?"

"Am I the bride or a harlot?"

"Do I even like God, let alone love God?"

The God who *is* mercy.

Now if you feel condemned, ask for mercy, and you'll receive it. When you believe mercy, you'll offer it to all. You'll preach the Gospel.

Like I said, all the workers in the parable are unfruitful and idle. They are all evil tenants. Yet they all receive mercy (even though some don't see it as mercy because they arrogantly pretend it's a wage).

They all receive mercy  
that they might be merciful.

This whole time they were working the vineyard, the landlord was working them. We work the vineyard, and we are the vineyard—the bride, called to bear fruit.

They all receive mercy  
that they might be merciful.

Well then, you might ask, "Who pays for all that mercy?" and "Who is it that works the vineyard first (protos—the seed, the root of all that mercy)?"

Well, it turns out that the landlord has a son. We'll read about His visit to the vineyard in the next chapter, but we are already reading about it now.

The landlord says, “‘Or is your eye evil because I am good?’ So the last will be first, and the first last.”

The last will be first because of grace, and the first will be last because of grace.

“For many are called, but few are chosen.” Perhaps the “many” is all, and the few is one. According to Paul, One is chosen, and we are all hidden in Him. His name is Jesus—the eschatos Adam, last man, protos and eschatos, the first who became last that we might all become the righteousness of God.

He is the root of David. He is the root of the vineyard. The fire comes and destroys all but the root, but the vineyard is hidden in the root.

*“For many are called, but few chosen.”  
Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again.”*

He’s alive. Your sins nailed Jesus to the tree on the hill. For on the cross, Jesus absorbed the sins of the world. Confessed sin is “fruit that befits repentance.” He absorbed the sin, and He was crushed. In Revelation 19 and on that cross, He tramples “the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God.”

His blood flows. It is fire and wine. It is judgment, which is grace. There is enough “to fill the land of Israel to the depths of a horse’s bridle.”

His blood is the fruit of the vineyard, and He wills it to flow in your veins.

So on the night He was betrayed, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to His disciples saying, “Take, eat. This is my body.”

And He took a cup, when he’d given thanks, He gave it to them saying, “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

He told us, “I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is who bears much fruit. For apart from me, you can do nothing.”

Come to the table and abide, commune.

*Believe* the mercy.

*Receive* the mercy.

Then you will *bleed* His mercy,

and join Him working in His Father’s vineyard.

In His name. Amen.

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“So what do we get?” said Peter.

~ A denarius... we get what we need for the day.

~ We get the girl, the bride.

- ~ We inherit the whole vineyard—the kingdom.
- ~ But more than that, we participate in the work of redemption.
- ~ We're made in His image. We are His body, and we bleed His blood.

“What do we get?” Jesus, and all things with Him.

At the end of that movie, A Walk in the Clouds, Keanu Reeves (who's been working the vineyard) has fallen in love with the girl who lives on the vineyard. But due to a lack of mercy, and a fight, and a fall, the vineyard catches on fire.

The whole thing burns. It appears all is lost until Keanu goes to the hill and digs up the root of that original vine, the root of the vineyard.

He brings it to the landlord, thinking it's dead.

[Movie clip:

Keanu Reeves' character finds the root of the vineyard and brings the root to the father, Alberto. Alberto cuts into the root with a knife...

Alberto: “It's alive. It's alive! Los Nubes (the vineyard) lives! This is the root of your life... the root of your family. You are bound to this land, and to this family by commitment, by honor, by love... Plant it. It will grow.”]

Plant it. It will grow. You've been to the table. You received the body and the blood of the root. Now go, work the vineyard. Plant it. It will grow.

You know, the Gospel of Matthew ends like this, Jesus gathers all the guys together on this hill, and He says,

“All authority on heaven and on earth has been granted unto me. Therefore, go. Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And, lo, I am with you always.”

We tell people to go work because the situation is tenuous, and we don't know who will win. We act like all authority hasn't been granted unto Him. We say, “Go do the great commission because, you know, if you don't, who knows what will happen.” But Jesus says, “All authority has been given unto me, therefore... that's why, go. Go children. Tell everybody about it. You don't have to be afraid. You don't have to worry. You don't have to be anxious because I have conquered! All authority on heaven and earth has been granted unto me.”

In other words, plant it. It will grow. Why? Because it's eternal seed. It's eternal root, and it cannot be stopped. It will not be stopped. And that means you can look right into the face of the prince of darkness grim and say, “You lose! Because He always wins.”

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Relevant Texts and Quotations (from bulletin)

And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham is the father of Canaan. These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread. And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard

*Genesis 9:18-20 (KJV)*

“I will sing to the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it, and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit. “Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad? Now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled. I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briers and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it.” The vineyard of the LORD Almighty is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight... In that day - “Sing about a fruitful vineyard: I, the LORD, watch over it; I water it continually. I guard it day and night so that no one may harm it. I am not angry. If only there were briers and thorns confronting me! I would march against them in battle; I would set them all on fire. Or else let them come to me for refuge; let them make peace with me, yes, let them make peace with me.” In days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will bud and blossom and fill all the world with fruit.

*Isaiah 5:1-7a, 27:2-6 (NIV)*

LOVER

May your breasts be like clusters of the vine,  
the fragrance of your breath like apples,  
and your mouth like the best wine.

BELOVED

May the wine go straight to my lover,  
 flowing gently over lips and teeth.  
 I belong to my lover, and his desire is for me.  
 Come, my lover, let us go to the countryside,  
 let us spend the night in the villages.  
 Let us go early to the vineyards,  
 to see if the vines have budded,  
 if their blossoms have opened  
 and if the pomegranates are in bloom -  
 there I will give you my love...

BELOVED

I am a wall, and my breasts are like towers.  
 Thus I have become in his eyes like one bringing  
 contentment.  
 Solomon had a vineyard at Baal Hamon;  
 he let out his vineyard to tenants.  
 Each was to bring for its fruit a thousand shekels of silver.  
 But my own vineyard is mine to give;  
 the thousand shekels are for you, O Solomon,  
 and two hundred are for those who tend its fruit.

LOVER

You who dwell in the gardens with friends in attendance,  
 let me hear your voice!

BELOVED

Come away, my lover, and be like a gazelle  
 or like a young stag on the spice-laden mountains.

*Song of Solomon 7:8b-12, 8:10-14 (NIV)*

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

Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market place, and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Again, he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. 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?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.' 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.' And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, 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.' But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen." Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to

scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again.”

*Matthew 20:1-19*

And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.”

*Matthew 26:27-29*

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

*John 15:1-5*

And another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. Then another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has power over fire, and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, “Put in your sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe.” So the angel swung his sickle on the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth, and threw it into the great wine press of the wrath of God; and the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood

flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for one thousand six hundred stadia... Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself. He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, followed him on white horses. From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords.

*Revelation 14:17-20...19:11-16*

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

*Matthew 20:15 (NKJV)*

It is the evil eye, you see...the *ophthalmos porneris*, the eye that loves the darkness of its bookkeeper's black ink, the eye that cannot stand the red ink of unsucess as it appears in the purple light of grace that is condemned here. Bookkeeping is the only punishable offense in the kingdom of heaven. For in that happy state, the *books* are ignored forever, and there is only the *Book* of life. And in that Book, nothing stands against you. There are no debt entries that can keep you out of the clutches of the Love that will not let you go. There is no minimum balance below which the grace that finagles all accounts will cancel your credit. And there is, of course, no need for you to show large

amounts of black ink, because the only Auditor before whom you must finally stand is the Lamb -- and he has gone deaf, dumb, and blind on the cross. The last may be first and the first last, but that's only for the fun of making the point: everybody is on the payout queue and everybody gets full pay. *Nobody is kicked out who wasn't already in*; the only bruised backsides belong to those who insist on butting themselves into outer darkness. For if the world could have been saved by bookkeeping, it would have been saved by Moses, not Jesus. ...*Opsias de genomenes*. Heaven is Miller Time. Heaven is the party in the streaming sunlight of the world's final afternoon. Heaven is when all the rednecks, and all the wood-butchers, and all the plumbers who never showed up - all the losers who never got anything right and all the winners who just gave up on winning - simply waltz up to the bar of judgment with full pay envelopes and get down to the serious drinking that makes the new creation go round. It is a bash that has happened, that insists upon happening, and that is happening now - and by the sweetness of its cassation, it drowns out all the party poopers in the world. Heaven is, in short, fun. And if you don't like that, Buster (*hetaire*), you can just go to...well, you'll just have to use your imagination. You'll need it: this is the only bar in town.

*Robert Farrar Capon, Kingdom, Grace, Judgment*

Heaven offers nothing that a mercenary soul can desire. It is safe to tell the pure in heart that they shall see God, for only the pure in heart want to. There are rewards that do not sully motives. A man's love for a woman is not mercenary because he wants to marry her....

*C.S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain*

Nothing is more repugnant to reasonable people than grace.

*Charles Wesley*

“Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out; and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” He said this to show by what death he was to die.

*John 12:31-33*

Other scriptures of interest:

1 Corinthians 15:22

Romans 6:18-19

1 Timothy 4:10

Philippians 2:9-11

1 Corinthians 12:3

Acts 2:21

Revelation 5:13

Revelation 21:5

2 Peter 3:8-9

1 Timothy 2:3-6

Ephesians 1:11

1 Corinthians 13:7-8

Romans 11:32-36