

A Clergyman was talking to a neighboring farmer and asked, "If you had 500 cows would you give me half of them? Yes, said the farmer. The Pastor then asked, "if you had 100 horses would you give me fifty? Yes, replied the farmer. Finally, the Pastor asked "If you had two pigs would you give me one." The farmer exclaimed, "That's not fair Pastor, you know I have two pigs."

Jesus told his disciples this parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with them for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. Going out about nine o'clock, the landowner saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and he said to them, 'You too go into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just.' So, they went off. And he went out again around noon, and around three o'clock, and did likewise. Going out about five o'clock, the landowner found others standing around, and said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' They answered, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You too go into my vineyard.' When it was evening the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Summon the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and ending with the first.' When those who had started about five o'clock came, each received the usual daily wage. So, when the first came, they thought that they would receive more, but each of them also got the usual wage. And on receiving it they grumbled against the landowner, saying, 'These last ones worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who bore the day's burden and the heat.' He said to one of them in reply, 'My friend, I am not cheating you. Did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what is yours and go. What if I wish to give this last one the same as you? Or am I not free to do as I wish with my own money? Are you envious because I am generous?' Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last.

Two couples were on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and they decided to rent a boat and go fishing in the Sea of Galilee. Suddenly, they see Jesus walking on water toward their boat and He finally climbs in. When the couples settled down, Jesus asked if there was anything He could do for them. The first couple said, "Jesus we both suffered from chronic back pain. The Lord reached out and touched them His gentle hands and they were healed. The other woman approached the Lord and ask if He could heal her blurred vision. Jesus touched her eyes and she could see clearly. As the Lord was approaching the other man, the man put his hands out defensively. "Close enough, Jesus, close enough, I just started receiving my disability pension."

Isn't it funny sometimes when we really don't want to change, we say to Jesus, close enough, close enough!!

My friends God sent His only son in order for us to get close to Him. The more we invite Jesus into our lives, the better we are able to see what God is like. Jesus said, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father and in so many ways Jesus revealed God by the things He did and the teachings He shared. Today's parable Jesus presents God as being like a land owner who keeps searching and inviting people into His vineyard.

John Newton was a British sailor and an outspoken atheist who lived in the eighteen century. While at sea he awoke to find his ship caught in a severe storm, and about to sink. In response, Newton began calling out for God's mercy, suddenly the storm dies down. Once safely on shore, Newton wondered why he called out to a God, he did not believe in. John Newton began reading the Gospels and there he discovers Christ and eventually becomes a Pastor. John Newton was inspired to write the song called. "Amazing Grace." Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wrench like me, I once was lost but now I'm found,

was blind and now I see. John Newton experienced God's Amazing Grace, realizing that no matter how many times he denied Christ, Christ never stopped searching for him.

There is a story about a teenager whose parents forced him to go to Church and after the service the teenager approached the Clergyman and said, "Pastor I don't believe in God." The Pastor responded, "But God still believes in you."

Jesus not only taught us about God's Amazing grace but demonstrated it on the cross at Calvary. The unnamed thief hanging next to Jesus has been given the name Dismas. Jesus judged Dismas' conversion as being sincere and genuine. Dismas was aware of his guilt but in desperation he asked, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus assures him, "Truly, I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." God does not give up on anyone.

In today's parable the landowner goes out and invites workers into his vineyard at different times of the day. However, it was the workers who had to finally accept the landowners invitation. The landowner going out and inviting workers to come to his vineyard reminded me of a picture that my parents had hanging in their living room. It was a picture of Jesus knocking on a door. What was unique about the picture was that there was no door handle for Jesus to come in. The image is meant to remind us that Jesus knocks on the door of our hearts but only we can let Him in. The Lord said, "Behold I stand at the door and knock if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in."

Are there certain areas of our lives which you are keeping Jesus out? Areas where we say, "Close enough Jesus, close enough." My friends, the more times we say yes to the Lord's invitation in our lives, the more our lives will be filled with peace, joy and hope.

This week I invite you to pray this daily prayer: "Lord Jesus, I open the door of my heart and invite you in. Come Lord Jesus."

Let us pray: please pray after me: Lord Jesus, you teach me that God is like a landowner who invites us into the vineyard. I accept your invitation and I open the door to your kingdom. Thank you, Lord, for never giving up on me and for searching for ways to invite me into your life. Amen and Amen.