

THE PARABLES OF Jesus

Last First & First Last Parables

Lesson 9

“So the last will be first, and the first last.” (Matt 20:16)

Talk about an upside-down statement! We’ve been exploring the parables of Jesus as pictures of the kingdom that turns the world upside down, and that verse powerfully summarizes the overall principle in just a few words. To help us unpack what Jesus meant and why it matters, let’s take our time with three “the last will be first, and the first last” parables. First up, the parable from which the statement actually comes...

● **The parable of the laborers in the vineyard** (Matt 20:1-16)

The comparison: “For the _____ of _____ is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.”

The conclusion: “So the _____ will be _____, and the _____.”



● **The parable of the seating arrangements** (Luke 14:1-11)

The context: Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of _____...

The conclusion: “For everyone who _____ himself will be _____, and he who _____ himself will be _____.”



● **The parable of the great banquet** (Luke 14:12-24)

The conclusion: “For I tell you, none of those men who _____ invited shall _____ my banquet.”



So what do you think? What do these “the last will be first, and the first last” parables mean? Why did Jesus tell them? What do they teach us about the nature of his kingdom? **Let’s talk about it...**



For Class & Family Discussion:

Looking back at the parable of the laborers in the vineyard ([Matt 20:1-16](#)), what had happened just before in Matthew's account? Who had Jesus and his disciples interacted with that would have been "first" in the eyes of most everybody?

Notice what Jesus says in [Matthew 19:23-24](#) and the disciples' reaction in [19:25](#). How does this scene give us insight into why Jesus might have told the parable that came next?

Why did the laborers get upset in Jesus' parable? Can you relate? If so, why?

How does the master of the vineyard reason with the laborers in [Matthew 20:13-15](#)?

So, what does Jesus mean in [Matthew 20:16](#)? How can this parable help us understand what "the kingdom of heaven is like" ([20:1](#))?

Our second parable ([Luke 14:7-11](#)) ended with, "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." What did Jesus mean, and what does it have to do with the kingdom of heaven?

In our third parable ([Luke 14:16-24](#)), who might have been "the first" to receive invitations to the great banquet? What can we learn from their excuses?

By the time the parable ends, the banquet doesn't look like what many would have expected. Why, and what is it all teaching us about Jesus and his kingdom?