

GOAT: Greatest of All Time | The First Will Be ... Last?

Aaron Brockett | Matthew 20:1-16

All right. I want to welcome all of you here today, especially all of our guests and first time visitors—whether you are joining us from our North campus, Downtown, West, online and those of you here at our Northwest campus. You guys doing good? Good to see all of you. Hope that you have had a great week and weekend.

My wife Lindsay and I spent the last five days in England at a conference for church leaders all over the world. We gathered together in London and it was just really encouraging. I wish I could share with you everything that we saw, heard, and experienced. I got a chance to meet with church leaders in England, in Germany, Indonesia, and Australia and heard just some of the amazing things that God is doing. There were about 6,000 people at this conference. We were all gathered in one room—just incredible what God is doing around the world. You should really, really be encouraged about it.

We got back late Friday night so this message will be preached under severe jet lag so I cannot guarantee the quality of what is going to be talked about today. I will ask this of you at all of our campuses. If I say something and it sounds like I want it to be meaningful, even if it's not very good, just go ahead and give me a shout out, alright? I need that from you to kind of stay awake. I'd really, really appreciate it.

We were really looking forward to being back this weekend because it's Mother's Day weekend. So I want to say happy Mother's Day to all of the moms and moms to be. We love you. You deserve more than one day a year for us to express our gratitude toward you.

When I was about six or seven years old, I remember it was Mother's Day and I was with my mom at church walking through the parking lot holding her hand and I was complaining, of all things. And I was like, "Mom, when's it going to be kid's day?" And she was like, "Every day is kid's day." I didn't understand that then, but I get it now. So thank you so much.

I also want to acknowledge that I am very well aware of the fact that this day is very hard for some. Maybe you came today and this is just a really difficult day for any number of reasons. I want you to know that you've been on my heart and mind this past week in preparation for today. I've been praying specifically for you.

So before we get started at all of our campuses I just want to pray a pastoral prayer over all of our moms, but also over everyone who may be just struggling right now. So if you would, just join with me as I pray.

Father, I come to you right now and thank you so much for these incredible ladies we get to call mom. For those ladies who are expecting and going to be mothers—we celebrate them and we thank you for them.

God, I also know that this day is really hard for a number of reasons. Maybe there are some ladies who really want to be moms and they can't. Lindsay and I know the pain of miscarriage; we know what that feels like. So, God, our hearts are with them. We know that you are with them.

God, I know that this day is hard for some for other reasons as well. Whatever those reasons may be, I pray that they would be reminded that the Spirit of God is close to the brokenhearted and the weak. So, God, I'm thankful that they are here. I pray that they would know that they are not alone even though they might feel it. And I pray that they would be encouraged by your love, even right now as we speak. We ask this right now in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, we are in week number two of a series of messages that we are simply calling *GOAT*. It stands for Greatest Of All Time and it's a phrase that we use whenever we are talking maybe about, potentially, the greatest athletes of all time—that's usually when it comes up. So is it Lindsey Vonn or Jackie Joyner Kersee; Carl Lewis or Usain Bolt; is it LeBron James or is it the true greatest of all time—Michael Jordan? I know LeBron may have the physique as well as the refs but MJ has the killer instinct and the style—there's just no contest.

Are you proud of your Pacers this year? Even if you're not a Pacers fan you've got to give it up for the Pacers. Man, they were in game seven with the Cavs. And right after they lost game seven to the refs, Victor Oladipo texted this to his trainer. I don't know if you saw this. He said: "When do we start?" what he meant was training, "I'm ready to take it to another level." Man, as soon as I read that I got chills up and down my spine. I was like, "Man, that's somebody who is aspiring toward greatness and I want that as well.

Here's kind of the conflict that I think that all of us face. Last week if you were you heard Petie talking about these two brothers named James and John who were disciples of Jesus. They aspired toward greatness but it sort of went awry in the sense that they wanted seats on Jesus' left and his right. They wanted them for selfish reasons and purposes. So I look at that Scripture and I kind of cringe, because that's aspiration for greatness that went bad.

I think for many of us, especially those of us who may have been following Jesus, we sort of shrink back from any aspirations. In the name of humility we think, "God asked me to be humble. He tells me to be humble so I shouldn't aspire toward greatness."

But that's not what that means. Humility doesn't mean that you settle to be mediocre or vanilla. In fact, the prophet Jeremiah said that God has a plan and a purpose for your life. Jesus gave us the Great Commission in Matthew 28 that is pretty great. It is to go and make disciples of all nations all around the world. That's a pretty lofty goal.

So it's not bad to aspire toward greatness. Where we often go wrong is in our motives: how and why we go after it. Jesus talked about greatness a lot. And when Jesus talked about greatness, and how to be great, he always flipped it upside down and inside out.

I want to look at a parable—a story—that Jesus tells in Matthew, chapter 20 in which he really tells us how to be great and actually warns us against bad motives for being great. It's in Matthew 20 so if you have a Bible or a Bible app go ahead and meet me there. If you don't I'll throw these passages up on the monitor beside me.

This parable, as we read it, at first we're going to read it and go, "Man, that doesn't seem very fair," especially if you've never heard it before. This story is sometimes referred to as the parable of the unfair employer.

Now in order to understand what a story means, you've got to understand what prompted Jesus to tell the story in the first place. There was actually a conversation, there was an event that goes down, that then prompts Jesus to tell a story to teach us something. So the reason why Jesus tells this story is that back in Matthew 19 there's this rich, young man—you might be familiar with the story, it's called the rich young ruler.

He comes to Jesus and he says: Jesus, what must I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus gives him a couple of things. He says: I've done all of those for a really long time. So then Jesus knows what this guy needs to hear. He knows that he's looking for status. And so he gives him an impossible answer. He says: Well, why don't you sell everything that you have and give it away to the poor and come follow me?

Now Jesus didn't tell him that because that's what God requires of us for salvation. That would be a misunderstanding of that text. Jesus tells him this because he knows that this young man needs to hear this to rehab his heart. And the young man couldn't do it and he walks away.

Now what you need to know is Peter and the rest of the disciples are all listening in on this conversation and they had left everything to follow Jesus. I don't know what your impression of a disciple is. For a long, long time I always thought that they just had nothing better to do. They were just kind of hanging around playing video games or something and Jesus says: Hey, why don't you guys do something with your life? Why don't you come and follow me? So they were like: Okay, we've got nothing better to do, we'll follow you. But that's just not the case.

At least five of the disciples had very, very successful careers. Matthew was a tax collector. He was well off financially. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were all successful fishermen. They had their own boats. They were doing really well when Jesus asked of them what he asked this rich, young ruler to do: leave everything that you have and come follow me. And they did.

So Peter is listening in on this conversation with the rich, young guy and his wheels start turning and he blurts out this question right here, he says to Jesus: "We've given up **everything** to follow you. **What will we get?**"

Hear what he's asking? He's like: Well, Jesus. We've done what this rich, young guy couldn't do and we've been following you for a while. We should be platinum status by now Jesus. We should be silver medallion. We should be flying first class, Jesus. And Jesus goes: Whoa, whoa, whoa Peter. Slow it up just a little bit. Let me tell you a story. That's what prompts this parable in chapter 20. Let's look at it together.

Jesus says, "For the Kingdom of Heaven **is like**," so he's comparing it to something, "the landowner who went out early one morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay the **normal daily wage**," which is about 100 dollars in our money today, "and sent them out to work."

So here's the story. It's harvest time. There is a landowner. The landowner very clearly represents God—going all the way back to Isaiah, God is oftentimes compared to a landowner—and he's got a vineyard and he needs some workers to go out and pick some grapes during harvest time.

The beginning of the work day is six o'clock in the morning and the work day would end at six p.m. So it's a twelve hour day. So the landowner goes to the marketplace, which is where all of the day laborers would have been gathering hoping that they would get some work for the day. It was kind of like the unemployment office of their time. He goes and he says: Hey, I'm looking for some day laborers and he hires some people to go out at six o'clock in the morning. He says: I'll pay you a fair wage for your work.

Look at verse 3. It says: "At **nine o'clock**" so three hours into the work day the landowner was back in the marketplace. He was passing through and he saw some people standing around doing nothing. "So he hired them, telling them he would pay them **whatever was right**," he doesn't tell them specifically what he will pay, he just said: I'll do good by you. He'll pay them at the end of the day. "So they went to work in the vineyard."

This happens again, three hours later, at noon. And then again three hours later, at three o'clock he does the same thing. Now here's what is really unusual. "At **five o'clock** that afternoon," so one hour left of work in the day, "he was in town again and saw some more people standing around. He asked them, 'Why haven't you been working today?' They replied, 'Because no one hired us.' The landowner told them, 'Then go out and join the others in my vineyard.'" It doesn't say that he will pay them anything. He just says: go out and join the other laborers.

Now, it's really important to understand that the employment situation for day laborers in the first century was really dire straits. They had no worker's comp. They had no Social Security. They had no insurance. If they didn't work that day, their family wouldn't eat. So they are in a really, really serious situation.

The way that Jesus tells the parable doesn't really seem to indicate that the landowner needed these laborers throughout the day. Now, he needed them at six o'clock in the morning but it doesn't say that he had more work than he had help so that he goes back to the marketplace to hire more laborers. It just says that he goes back to the marketplace.

I don't know. Maybe he just went back to pick up some avocados or something. But he goes back and as he's there he sees some more people standing around. They don't have any work and he has compassion on them. It's not like he had a bad business plan, it just that he sees that they need work. So he goes: Hey, why don't you guys go out into the vineyard. He does this again and again, even all the way up to the five o'clock workers. He was acting compassionately to alleviate the financial and the emotional hardships of the unemployed.

So he's being reckless. He's being gracious.

Professionally speaking, he's being a fool. Look at verse 8, "That evening he told the foreman to call the workers in and pay them," it's payday. And then he says, "...**beginning with the last workers first.**" That's unusual. "When those hired at five o'clock were paid, each received a full day's wage." Not just for one hour but for the whole day.

"When those hired first came to get their pay, **they assumed** they would receive more. But they, too, were paid a day's wage." Same as the one hour workers, and their response is about what you would expect. They were upset.

Look at verse 11. "When they received their pay, they **protested** to the owner, 'Those people worked only one hour, and yet you've paid them **just as much** as you paid us who worked all day in the scorching heat.'"

So they are ticked off. They are irritated. If the unions would have been around then they would have had a field day, alright? And I can't say that I blame them. I think I would have felt the exact same way. Wouldn't you?

Now, it's not like the landowner agreed to pay them a 100 dollars and then changed his mind. It's not like he's cheating them out of anything. It's not like he goes and only pays them 75 dollars. He didn't give them less than what they had agreed upon. He isn't cheating them. It's just that they had already witnessed how extravagant he had been with the one hour workers and so now their fair and agreed upon wage seems unfair in comparison.

Now if he would have paid them first, they would have never known the difference. I was thinking about that last week. If I was the landowner and I was going to pay the one hour workers a full day's wage, here's what I would have done. I would have lined them all up and I would have said: Okay, the all day workers get to the front of the line. Let me pay you first and then get you home. Then they would have never known the difference.

I'm a father of four. I know how important it is to at least give our kids the appearance that we're being fair, alright?

I would have paid them, gotten them out there and then I would have had the five o'clock workers last and I would have said, "Listen. We just need to keep this between us, alright? I'm going to pay you a full day's wage but don't say anything, because, man, if this gets back to the all day workers, they're going to be upset." That's how I would have done it.

But Jesus says: No, no. He put the one hour workers at the front of the line, paid them a full day's wage in front of everyone else. Do you think he's trying to communicate something? I think he is. And there's a reason for it. Jesus gets to it at the end of the parable.

Verse 13: "He answered one of them," he's talking to an all day worker who is upset and he calls him friend. He's not his enemy. He says, "'Friend, I haven't been unfair! Didn't you agree to work all day for the usual wage? Take your money and go. I wanted to pay this last worker the **same as you**. Is it against the law for me to do what I want with my money?" The answer is: no. "Should you be jealous because I am kind to others?" Once again the answer should be: no. And then here's the principle, "'So those who are **last** now will be **first** then, and those who are **first** will be **last**.'"

Here's the question that I have: What in the world is he talking about? What in the world does this mean? With most of Jesus' parables the meaning, when you finally get to it, is actually pretty clear and pretty simple, but the message and the application is always much more complex.

So let me just try to be as clear as I think Jesus is trying to be here. He's trying to say here: Listen. God's grace is the same for everyone. Nobody is more saved, more loved, more favored, more forgiven than anyone else. God is reckless with his grace, more reckless than I would be. More reckless than likely you would be. God is giving it to us regardless of how and when we come to him—regardless of what your story looks like.

Some of us came to know Jesus really early in life. Maybe you grew up in a great Christian home and you had parents who really modeled this well for you. You had mentors and people who just really spoke life into you and maybe others of you, you just didn't. Maybe you grew up in an environment where God wasn't part of the equation, and actually it was even worse than that because there was abuse and there was addiction and there were people who actually pushed you down rather than lifted you up.

Maybe you came to know Jesus later in life. You are not a second-rate Christian. There are no second rate citizens in the kingdom of God. He paid you in full the reward of grace, because you can't work for it, you can't earn it. He gives it to you just as much as goodie-two-shoes whose been living for Jesus her whole life, alright? That's what he is saying.

So the meaning of the parable and really the application can be found in verse 16. Let me start here. He says, “The **last** will be first...”

Now have you ever tried to take that principle and use it for your benefit? Have you ever tried to say, “Oh, if that’s the way that works let me willingly be last so that way later I can be first.” It’s kind of like when I was in grade school and I was standing in line, whether it was the water fountain or the lunch line, I’d find a buddy of mine and I’d try to butt in line and I would tap him on the shoulder and say, “Hey, if you give me ups, I’ll give you ups.”

It’s that whole principle, “Hey, man, if you let me cut in, I’ll let you cut in front of me.” It’s this whole idea, “Okay, if that’s the way that it works, then let me have this false humility where I’ll go to the back of the line so that way later I can be at the front of the line.” And that’s a misapplication of what Jesus is talking about here. Jesus is saying that people come to him in a variety of ways and at different times in their lives with varying levels of commitment and faithfulness.

So maybe some of you are still in the marketplace. You’ve not even accepted the landowner on his offer. It doesn’t matter. God will keep coming back again, and again, and again, and again.

What’s unusual about this parable is that a landowner would never do the hiring himself. A landowner would always send someone to the marketplace to do the hiring. In this parable, Jesus says: The landowner goes personally to the marketplace at six, at nine, at 12, and three, and at five. Why? because the landowner represents Jesus and Jesus would come to us.

God keeps coming again, and again, and again, and again. 1 Peter says that he is patient with you. It says that he wants you to receive this reward of grace and to actually have that award of grace in full regardless of your story, regardless of how badly you’ve messed up, regardless of how badly you’ve been burned or hurt by the all day worker. This is the theme we see all through Scripture. It’s how reckless God is with his grace and how quick he is to forgive—more quick to forgive than what most of us listening to this would be.

So two weeks ago we finished up a series on David and if you were here you remember me talking about it. And I really wanted to emphasize this then. David really makes a horrible mistake. He sleeps with a woman who isn’t his wife and she gets pregnant and he has her husband murdered. And David just sweeps it under the rug.

And God sends Nathan to confront David. And David says, “I have sinned against the Lord.” And before he could even say: please forgive me, before he could even say: I promise I’ll never do it again, before he could even say: I have a sex addiction and an image problem and I need some therapy and I need some accountability—before he could say any of that Nathan says: Yes you have and the Lord has already taken away your sin. That’s reckless.

The woman at the well who is in Samaria—Jesus is traveling and he actually cuts through Samaria, which a good Jew would never do. And the disciples warned him. They said: Jesus you shouldn't do that. But he says: No, no, no. I'm after somebody here.

He goes into Samaria and there is a woman at a well gathering water for the day. A man would never talk to a woman who wasn't his wife in public and Jesus blows through that guardrail and just walks right up to the well and he says: Hey, I'll give you water that will never make you thirst again.

She doesn't get it at first. She isn't looking for it. She's not asking for forgiveness. She's not even necessarily acknowledging her sin. And he's like: Why don't you go get your husband and come back here. And she was like: Well I don't have a husband. And he goes: Yeah, you're right. You've had five and the guy you're living with now isn't one of them.

He doesn't say that to judge her. It's because he knows her. He's like: Hey, I know you and you are valuable to me. And Jesus gives her water that will never make her thirst again. She goes back to Samaria as a missionary to her home town. She's a one hour worker. She got the same reward of grace as anyone else.

You've got the thief on the cross. I love this guy. He's like hanging there. He's guilty as all get out. His partner in crime is making fun of Jesus. He looks at Jesus. He didn't even think that there was any hope for him at all. He looks at Jesus and he says: Would you just remember me when you get into your kingdom? He didn't say forgive me. He didn't say have mercy on me. He just says: Would you at least remember me? And Jesus looks at him and says: I'll do you one better. You'll be with me today in Paradise. He's the one hour worker.

Jesus is saying that God makes no distinction between somebody who has been following Jesus their whole life and somebody who comes to Jesus late in life. Somebody whose faith is easy for them and others whose faith is really a challenge for them. And all of these interactions reveal to us that God is pursuing every single one of us.

There is somebody who needs to hear this. Maybe in this room or maybe at one of our campuses—it is not too late for you. You might think it is. You might think that you've messed up too badly. You might think that you're broken. You might think that you're damaged goods. You're not. That's a lie straight from the pit of hell.

Jesus says to you: The reward of my grace is available to any and all.

I love what pastor Tony Evans says about grace. He says: "Justice is getting what you deserve, mercy is not getting what you deserve," but grace is so much better. **"...grace is getting what you don't deserve."**

Now if Jesus would have stopped there, then the application would have kind of been enough, but he actually has something to say now to the all day workers. He says this. It's the second part of the principle. He says:

The **first** will be last...

So it's clear that he wants to communicate something to the person who has been out in their Father's vineyard working all day. Now these all day workers, when they see the generosity of the landowner toward the one hour workers, they could have responded in a different way.

They could have responded by just ignoring it, they could have said, "Well, I'm not really happy about the fact that he paid them a whole day's wage, but what can I do? It's his vineyard. It's his money. I can't really do anything about it."

They could have celebrated it. That would have been nice, don't you think? They could have walked over to the one hour workers and said, "Man, I'm so happy for you guys. That's amazing. You're going to be able to provide for your families. Let's go celebrate it together."

Or they could have complained about it and criticized them. Could you imagine how the one hour workers would have felt when the all day workers started to complain about the generosity of the landowner? They probably would have said, "We're probably not going to be friends. We're probably actually have any sort of relationship."

You know, it's a warning to those of us who have been following Jesus for a while. We've been in church for a while. The longer you're in church—and I speak from first-hand experience—the easier it is to fall into the mindset thinking that you're entitled to some things that maybe some other people aren't.

How many of you remember your freshman year in high school? You were the low person on the totem pole. It wasn't so much fun. My freshman year my locker was in the basement next to the boiler room. That's how low I was. I was late to every single class because I had to go all the way down to the boiler room and try not to die just to get my algebra book, alright. By the time I was a senior, I was like big man on campus, right? I had seniority over everybody else.

Now here's the thing. That mentality should never exist within the kingdom of God, but it happens in the church all of the time. And it happens in subtle ways, in ways that I think that many times we're blinded to. I know that I've actually been guilty of this and I didn't even necessarily see it, in and of myself. I thought that my motives were better than that, but it actually crept into my mindset where I actually was communicating in ways that I actually told others that I was entitled to some things just because I'd been following Jesus longer than they had.

As a pastor there are times, occasionally, when I have an email or a letter or I'll have an interaction with somebody in which the dialogue begins with this statement: Aaron, I've been a

20 year member around here... And I always know that what is getting ready to come next is usually not good. I've never had anybody start off and go, "I've been a 20 year member around here and I want you to know that you're doing a fantastic job." That's never happened, alright?

Always—when an interaction starts with that statement I always know that it's a complaint or a criticism or somebody who's expressing disapproval of something that is getting ready to come. And it's not that their opinion doesn't matter. It's just that—why are they starting to tell me their opinion with that statement? Why should it matter that they've been a 20 year member? They are basically saying, "Hey, I've been an all day worker around here and so my opinion actually matters a little bit more. You should listen up. You should hear what I have to say."

So what does it look like for those of us who are first to be last? What's that look like in everyday life? Well we see examples of this, sometimes in the most unexpected places. There is a man who runs a basketball league at our North campus. And really his heart behind it is to share Jesus with as many kids and their families as possible. So, after every game he lines the kids up and he passes out basketball cards. And he always throws in a few Michael Jordan cards, because MJ is the greatest of all time.

So all of the kids always get excited and they are jockeying for position in line because they want to get those cards. Well there was a father who had a son in that league and he noticed that his boy was actually going to the very back of the line, letting everybody go in front of him. He was like, "Well that's pretty cool. He must be having a good day." He didn't really think much of it.

The next Saturday he noticed that his son was doing the exact same thing. He was letting everybody go in front of him. So when they got home he asked him about it. He said, "Son, is there a reason? Did somebody tell you to do that?" And the boy just simply said, "No. I just want others to have an opportunity to go before me." That's greatness in Jesus' eyes.

So what does it look like within the body of Christ? What does it look like within the church—for those of us who should be on mission with God? Well I see examples of this from time to time.

Not long ago I was in the lobby here at our Northwest campus and there was a lady walking through and she stopped me and she said, "Aaron, I've been a part of this church for the past 25 years. I just want you to know that when I first started attending here there was a group of people I sat with, and a group of people I saw all of the time. I was in classes with them."

She said, "You know, the church has grown so much I hardly ever see them anymore. She's like either they've moved on, passed away, or the church is just so big we never cross paths." And I was bracing myself for her to express her disapproval. But then she gets this big smile on her face and she said, "I just love it. I just love the fact that God is drawing so many brand new people, so many young people to him. I just love our church and what God is doing here."

I thought, “That’s greatness in Jesus’ eyes.”

I don’t know about the other campuses, here at Northwest that was sort of a half-hearted clap. Let me give you another one for which I know you probably won’t want to clap for. This might get a little too close to home.

I was talking to an older gentleman not long ago and he’s a great guy—very gracious spirit. And he was just explaining to me that our music style and the volume in which we run it just isn’t his thing. And he just said, “Man, I was kind of grumpy about it. I was complaining. I was going to fire off an email to you.”

And then he said, “I don’t know what it was. It was like the Spirit of God just really convicted me because on one particular day, in a particular room I looked around and I saw all of these young people—all of these people who are not in my generation just fully engaged.” And he said, “Man, if Jesus is doing that in the next generation, I don’t have to like it. I want to actually encourage as many people to get to Jesus as possible.”

Now listen. It’s not that his opinion doesn’t matter. It’s just that he said: You know what? It’s more important that we get people to Jesus than to actually have my personal preferences met.

The all day workers—they did not get less than what was promised them. It’s just that many more got much more than they deserved. And instead of celebrating it they complained about it. What a tragedy.

I’ve got to tell you, in case you are wondering, which group I identify with. I clearly identify with the all day worker, because of nothing that I have done but just because—for whatever reason because of God’s grace I was born into a great family with a great mom and dad who raised me in church. I went to a Christian school. I had an opportunity to respond to the gospel at six years old. My grandfather baptized me.

At 17 I read the book of Romans. It wrecked me. I rededicated my live to Christ. At the age of 19, I didn’t want to do it, I went in kicking and screaming—I felt like God called me into ministry. For the past 22 years I’ve been serving, imperfectly, as a pastor for him. I feel like, as I read this, I most definitely fit into the category of an all day worker.

Not only that, but I know all of the books of the Bible from memory and can say them in one breath. Would you like to see me do it? Challenge accepted. Alright, I’m so jet lagged right now and... Alright, here we go. I’ve got to get my heart rate down:

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi,

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3 John, Jude, Revelation.

Applause!

I cannot see my wife right now but I guarantee that she's rolling her eyes. It means absolutely nothing. Just means that I've got a lot of time on my hands, alright?

The reason why I tell you that is that there was a season in my life where my head for God grew bigger and my heart for God grew small. I call it Bible College. I wanted to go deeper and I criticized my church because it was too seeker and the gospel was watered down. There were all of these new people coming to know Jesus and I just thought, "Well, it's because we're lowering the bar. We need to go deeper." What a tragedy when your head grows bigger and your heart for God grows smaller.

I've been in church long enough to see that usually there are two big groups of Christians. There are Christians that all wear the evangelism shirt. If you don't know what that term means, it just means they want to tell everyone about Jesus. And then there are Christians who wear the discipleship shirt. If you don't know what that means it just means, "I want to go deeper in my knowledge of God," which actually is a misunderstanding of that word because discipleship should mean helping others grow toward Jesus.

What ends up happening is that we have Christians who say that they want to go deeper and we have other Christians who say that they want to reach others outside of God. So we sit on either side of the bleachers yelling at each other trying to shout each other down. What a tragedy because Jesus never once separated those things. They always go together.

When you separate evangelism from discipleship, you just create a bunch of unkind eggheads. When you separate discipleship from evangelism, then you actually just kind of water things down and actually the gospel is never even presented and there is zero transformation.

This parable—I've got a question for you—is it an evangelism parable or is it a discipleship parable? It's both. Jesus always includes both. This clearly is Jesus calling people to him but it's in a discipleship section.

In Matthew, chapters 18 through 20 are all about discipleship, all about Jesus' teaching us to follow him. So he talks about counting the cost, he talks about forgiveness, he talks about marriage, and then right at the end of it Jesus tags this little parable on here and he's basically saying: As disciples this is how you should love people. Take what God is teaching you and develop a bigger heart for those who desperately need to know him.

There have been times when I have been in conferences and gatherings with other Christians who are really, really smart and I'm a pastor and I feel like I don't belong because they just kind of give me this kind of vibe that they're better than me.

And if I've felt that way at times, there are most certainly people that may walk in here and maybe they don't feel like they have anything in common with anybody in the room. How are we, as all day workers, going to make them feel? We should celebrate the fact that God's reward of grace is for everyone.

Here's how you know if you've slipped into this mentality. You just no longer get excited about God's grace. It's not amazing anymore. It's boring. It's not incredible. It's sort of ho-hum. So you see 157 people get baptized publically like we saw two weeks ago and your immediate response isn't to be broken into tears, it isn't to celebrate with them.

Your immediate response is to question their sincerity. That's how you know. And you thought, "Well, do they really know... I mean 157. Clearly somebody doesn't know what they are doing. Clearly Aaron has lowered the bar so much and pulled on their emotional heartstrings so that they're just doing it. It's a show." You just sort of have this inner dialogue going on.

Now, hear me. I'm not saying that those questions over their sincerity shouldn't be asked. That's why I will never do a spontaneous baptism without clearly explaining the gospel and trying to discourage people from doing it for the wrong reasons.

That's why we have prayer counselors in the lobby who actually talk to people. And there are actually several people to whom we say, "You're not ready yet. We'll keep working with you." That's why when I'm in the tank, I look eyeball to eyeball with somebody and I say, "Do you know what you are doing? You're accepting Jesus, not just as Savior to get you out of your mess, but as Lord over every area of your life," before they ever do it.

But if your immediate response isn't to celebrate it, instead you question it then you know that you've slipped into the mindset of an all day worker. God's grace is way more reckless than yours. We've got to come back to this fact that as we grow in our knowledge of God it is always meant to be translated to our hearts growing bigger for God.

I want you to know, clearly, what kind of church you're a part of. You're a part of an evangelistic church that seeks to make disciples. It is not either or. It's both and. It's a church that celebrates the one hour worker and says, "Man, welcome to our Father's vineyard. We're so happy that you got the full reward of grace. We don't deserve it either."

That's the kind of church I want to be a part of, that's the kind of church I want to serve in. That's the kind of church that will change this city and this world. The question is: Are you awake? The question is: Are you hearing what God wants to do in and through you?

Let's be the kind of church that takes this parable and puts it into practice. Let's be willing to see and to recognize that the last will be first and the first will be last, because Jesus willingly went last to become a servant of all so that you and I could be first.

Let's pray.

Father, we come to you right now and I thank you for your reckless grace that doesn't make logical sense to me but I'm so thankful for it because without it I would have zero hope. God, I pray that you would enlarge our minds for you and keep our hearts soft for you as we celebrate people who maybe come to the vineyard late in the day and as we have a heart for the people who are still in the marketplace, not quite sure if they want to go to the vineyard, And I pray, God, that you would enable us and equip us to be that kind of celebratory church.

So here in the next few moments at all of our campuses as we respond to you in worship now, I pray that our response to you would be a bit reckless, that we would forget about what other people think of us, that we would forget about how we look and that we would just be willing to worship you in a way that is equal to the grace that has been given—however that looks.

For some of us it means that we we're going to get down on our knees. For some of us it means that we're going to raise up our hands. For some of us it means that we're going to close our eyes. For some of us it just simply means that we're going to change our body language and not look angry to be here, but to be grateful for who you are and the grace that you've given to us.

We know that if you take a group of people whose heads grow bigger for knowledge of you while their hearts grow softer and bigger for the people who are far from you, you'll take that church and use it to change the world.

Thank you God for you grace for a sinner like me. May I never forget it. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.