



# Workers in the Vineyard

Level A  
Ages 3-6

**Matthew 20:1-16**

**Lesson Focus:** Serving the Lord

**Reading Summary:** The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who hired workers for his vineyard. In the morning he hired workers for a denarius a day. During the 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hours he hired additional workers. All of these workers agreed to accept whatever pay the landowner thought was right. At the end of the day, the workers all received a denarius. Those hired first thought they should have received more, because they had worked longer. The landowner reminded them that they received the agreed amount. The last would be first, and the first last.

## Lesson 4

**Materials Supplied**

**Materials Needed**

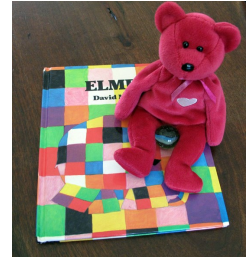
<b>1. Welcome Warm-up Activity</b> (2-3 minutes)	<b>Activity</b>	<b>“Not Fair”</b> directions p. 2	item to practice sharing such as a toy, ball, book, etc.
<b>2. Focus on the Word</b> Use all activities (5-7 minutes)	<b>Read the Word and Talk About It</b>	see <i>Reading Summary</i> above discussion guide p. 2 teaching picture p. 5	Bible or copy of Matthew 20:1-16
<b>3. Learn by Doing</b> Choose 1-2 activities (15-20 minutes)	<b>Act-It-Out</b> children act out the parable of the workers in the Vineyard and take turns to squish grapes to make grape juice	<b>Workers in the Vineyard</b> directions p. 3 <i>Workers in the Vineyard Script</i> p. 6 <i>Vineyard Tokens</i> p. 7	stiff paper or sticker (adhesive) paper for printing, open space for acting, grapes, small plastic bags with strong seals, strainer, pitcher, small cups, basket <i>optional:</i> t-shirts, extra grape juice
	<b>Make</b> think of ways to help at home and make thumb print grapes on pictures of service activities	<b>Serving in the Vineyard</b> directions pp. 3-4 <i>Serving the Lord</i> p. 8	crayons or markers, <i>washable</i> purple markers to make thumb prints, handwashing supplies (soap and water or hand wipes)
	<b>Coloring Picture</b>	<b>In the Vineyard</b> p. 9	crayons, markers or colored pencils
<b>4. Wrap It Up</b> (2-3 minutes)	<b>Memory Verse</b> introduce the memory verse for the week	<b>Memory Verse</b> <i>Parent Notes</i> p. 10	

# 1. Welcome Warm-up Activity

## “Not Fair”

*Supplies needed:* an item for sharing such as a toy, book or ball

Welcome the children and invite them to sit in a circle on the floor. Show them the item you have brought to share. Ask the children if they like to play with things like that, or have similar things at home.



Choose one or more of the following questions or activities to start them thinking about what is fair and what is not fair. Invite them all to say “Not Fair” if something is not fair.

1. What if you wanted a turn playing with this, and I would not let you have one? (“Not Fair”)
2. What if you were enjoying playing with this and would not give your friend a turn? (“Not Fair”)
3. Let’s pass this around in a circle. You can choose whether to hold on to it (“Not Fair”), or pass it nicely. If someone holds it for too long, everyone can call out “Not Fair”!

Some people in our story today thought that something was not fair. Let’s see what it was.

## 2. Focus on the Word

**Read:** Matthew 20:1-16. A teaching picture is available on p. 5.

**What did some of the workers think was not fair?** That they received the same payment as people who had worked for less time.

**Imagine that you helped *all day*—from the time you woke up until dinner time. That’s a long time, isn’t it! How would you feel at the end of the day? Tired? Proud of doing a good job?**

**Now imagine your brother, sister, or friend started helping just before dinner time, and was given the same reward as you for being helpful. Would you feel happy? Or disappointed?**

**The Lord told this story in the way He did because He knew how we would feel, and He wants us to think about it.**

**Some of the workers in the vineyard started working early in the morning. They agreed on their wages with the landowner, but by the end of the day they thought he was being unfair. Why?** Some workers worked for much longer than others—but they all got paid the same wages.

**Who was the landowner in the story? The Lord. The Lord comes to ask each of us to serve Him.**

**What reward does the Lord promise if we do this?** Heaven! *Everyone* who loves the Lord and does what He says to goes to heaven. Some people go as babies and some after a long life.

**The laborers felt they had worked hard. Sometimes serving the Lord feels hard to us as well. It is hard to always remember to be kind, to share things, or to do what we are supposed to do—like putting toys away when we still want to play.**

**But whenever we are willing to serve—to do what He asks—the Lord gives us the gift of feeling happy and useful like the angels in heaven. Serving the Lord is easier when we don’t think as much about getting a reward, but instead just about helping.**

# 3. Learn by Doing

Choose one or two activities

## Choice Workers in the Vineyard

Children will act out the parable of the workers in the vineyard as the teacher reads it. Groups of workers are called to work in the vineyard at different times throughout the “day.” Their “work” is squeezing grapes to make grape juice. Finish by sharing a grape juice drink and getting a “wage” or reward token.



1. Explain that you will be acting out the parable, and doing a fun job in the vineyard. Point out the places you have chosen to be the “vineyard” and the “marketplace.” Assign a student to be the landowner. All other students will be workers. The teacher will read the story as the children act out the parable.
2. Show the children the vineyard “work”. Squeeze the bag of grapes with your hands until all the grapes are thoroughly squashed. Do not open the bag!
3. Have the children act out the story as it is read. If you have a small group, have the workers go back to the marketplace after their turn to act out another set of workers.
4. When the story is finished, give the landowner and steward a chance to squeeze bags of grapes too. Pour the juice from each bag through a strainer into a pitcher. Give each child a little of the grape juice to drink. Tell them they are enjoying the fruits of their labors! (*Note:* crushing the grapes does not make much juice. You may want to supplement your yield with extra juice.)
5. Finish the activity by giving each child a token. If you printed the *Vineyard Tokens* on sticker paper, put a sticker on each child. Read the statement aloud. Remind the children that the landowner is really the Lord. He wants us all to work in His vineyard—that is, do what He asks us to, so that someday we can enter the kingdom of heaven.

## Choice Serving in the Vineyard

The Lord calls each of us to help in His “vineyard” or church. This activity invites children to think about ways they help others now and ways they might be able to help in the future. Children color a “vineyard” border and then make grape thumb-prints on pictures showing “fruits” they would like to cultivate.



### Materials Needed

Stiff paper or full page sticker (adhesive label) paper for printing, open space for acting, grapes, small plastic bags with strong seals (1 for each child plus a few extra), strainer, pitcher, small cups, basket  
*Optional:* t-shirts, grape juice

### Prepare in Advance

Pull stems off grapes, cut in half and put 7-12 grapes worth in each bag. Squeeze out most of the air and seal the bags. Print *Vineyard Tokens* (p. 7) on stiff or sticker paper and cut apart.

### New Church Concept Hours of Work

“Laboring in the vineyard” is acquiring spiritual life by the knowledges of truth and good from the Word applied to the uses of life. Instead of times of day, the angels perceive the states of life of people who die in old age, adulthood, youth or childhood, and who have equally acquired for themselves spiritual life. See *Apocalypse Explained* 194

### Materials Needed

Crayons (especially green), purple washable magic markers, copy of *Serving the Lord* p. 8 for each child, handwashing supplies (soap and water or hand wipes)

### Prepare in Advance

Set up a handwashing station.

## Serving in the Vineyard *continued*

1. In what ways do you like to help at home? What is your favorite job? What do you like about doing it?
2. The Lord calls us to help Him—just as the landowner hired the workers in the marketplace. We help the Lord by doing things for other people. There are so many wonderful ways in which we can serve! We are going to decorate a picture showing some of the many things we can do to help.
3. Give the children copies of *Serving the Lord* (p. 8). Look at the pictures of ways in which people can help others and talk about them.
4. Hand out crayons and ask the children to color the grapevine borders.
5. The helpful actions we do are like the juicy grapes in the vineyard. They are the fruits of our lives.
6. Color one of each child's thumbs with a (washable) purple marker. Show them how to use their thumbs to make grape prints on or next to each picture that shows things they like to do to help.
7. Encourage children to talk about ways in which they like to help others. These are like the "fruits" of their life.



**Choice**

### Coloring Picture: In the Vineyard

Hand out copies of *In the Vineyard* (p. 9) for children to color.

#### New Church Concept First Will Be Last

People who place merit in their actions wish to be saved not because of the Lord's righteousness, but because of their own. Some like this, after death, say they have worked in the Lord's vineyard, but they have continually had in mind their own superiority, glory and gain and thought that they might become the greatest in heaven. They have no mutual love, in which heaven consists, but only love of self, and they do not know what heaven is. They wish to be first, but become last. See *Arcana Coelestia* 2027

#### Materials Needed

Copies of *In the Vineyard* p. 45; crayons, markers, or colored pencils

## 4. Wrap It Up

### Memory Verse

Help children start learning the memory verse by reading it one phrase at a time. Invite the children to repeat each phrase after you. Then repeat the entire verse, inviting the children to say it with you.

**The last will be first, and the first last.  
Matthew 20:16**

### Closing

The Lord wants heaven for each one of us. He gives us the gift of heaven each time we serve Him and put others first.

**Give a Parent Note (p. 10) to children as they leave.**



# Workers in the Vineyard Script

Adapted from Matthew 20:1-16

**Roles:** Narrator (teacher), landowner, steward, workers

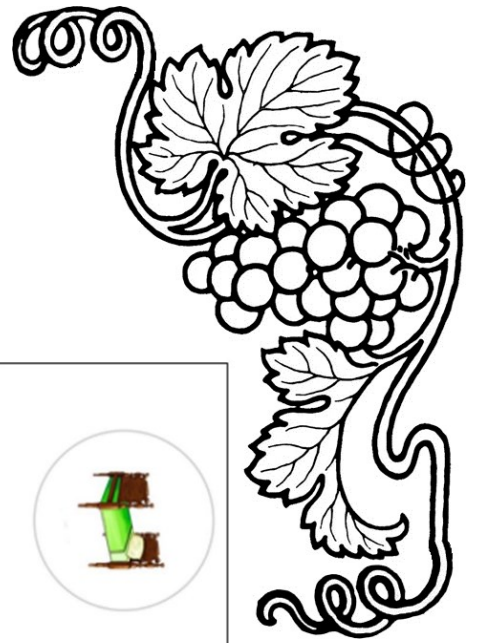
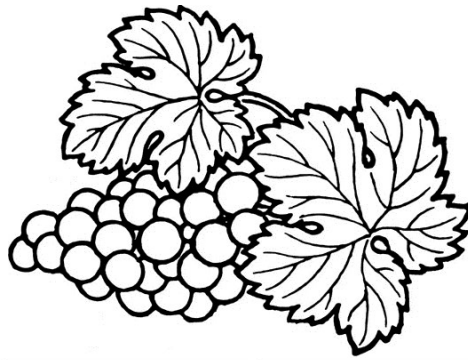
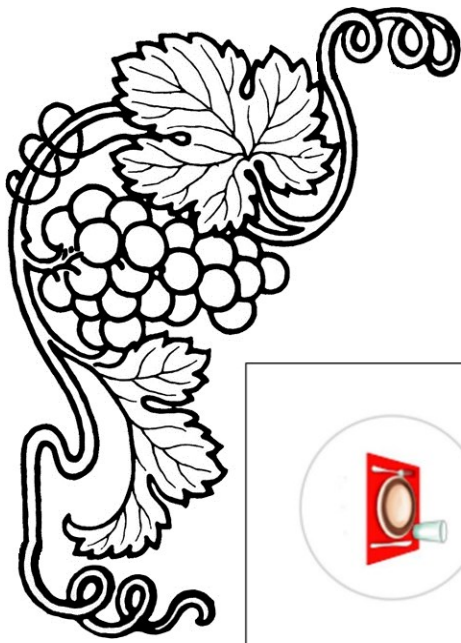
**Props:** Basket with plastic bags of grapes, strainer, pitcher, small cups. *Optional:* simple costumes such as large t-shirts turned inside out, extra grape juice







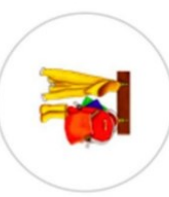





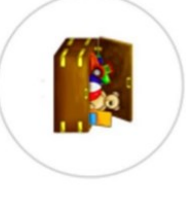
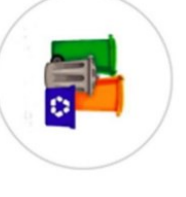


**Set-Up:** Choose one end of the room to be the marketplace and the other end to be the vineyard. Place the basket with the grapes in plastic bags in the vineyard space.

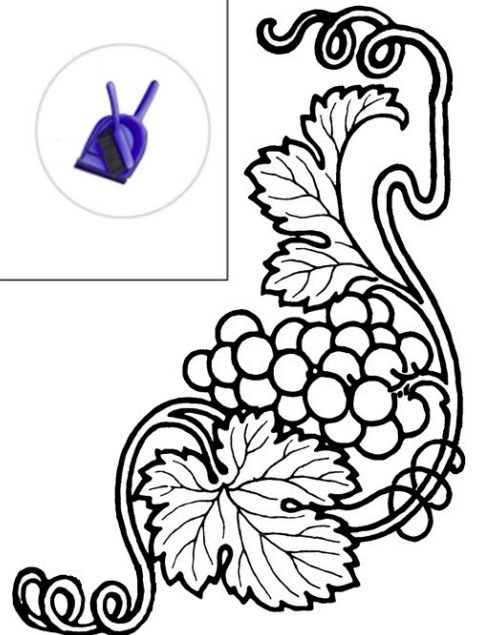
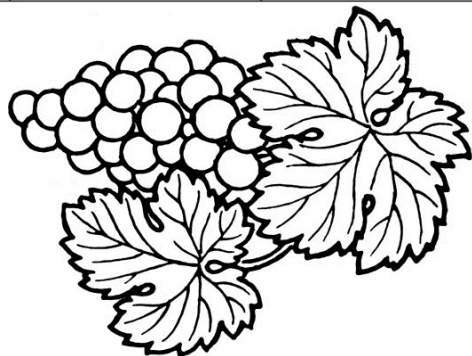
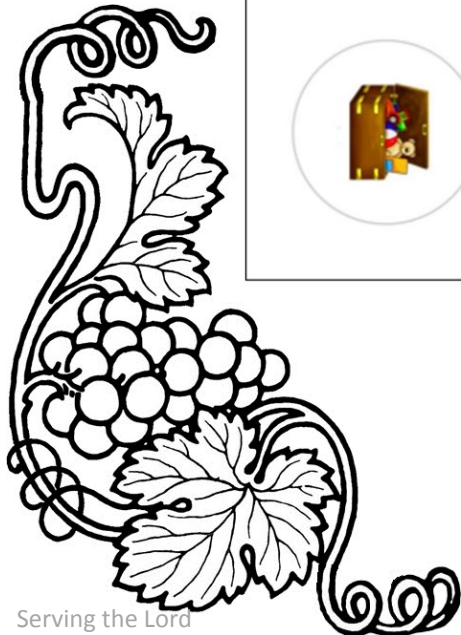
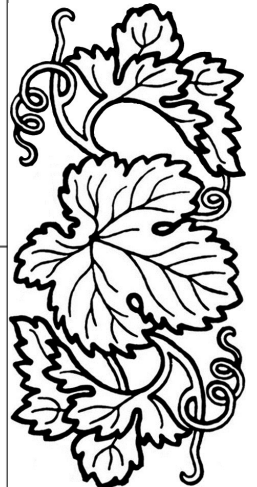
**Narrator (teacher) reads the story aloud, pausing to direct the action.** The landowner and steward start in the vineyard. Everyone else waits in the marketplace.

Story to Read	Actions
This is a parable about the kingdom of heaven. Early in the morning, a landowner went to the marketplace to hire workers for his vineyard.	The landowner walks from the vineyard to the marketplace.
He agreed to pay the workers a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. And they went into the vineyard and worked.	The landowner takes a few workers to the vineyard. The workers go the vineyard, take bags of grapes from the basket and squish them.
And the landowner went out about the third hour and saw others, and said, "You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you." So they went into the vineyard and worked.	The landowner returns to the marketplace and chooses a few more workers go to the vineyard to squish grapes.
Again the landowner went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And the people went into the vineyard and worked.	The landowner takes more workers to the vineyard to squish grapes.
And about the eleventh hour the landowner went out and found others, and said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive." So they went into the vineyard and worked.	The landowner takes more workers to the vineyard to squish grapes.
When evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said, "Call the laborers and give them their wages."	The landowner motions to the workers to come to him.
And when the workers who were hired at the eleventh hour came, they each received a denarius. And so did all the rest of the workers. The workers who had been hired first thought they would get more, but they also received a denarius.	The workers place their bags of squished grapes back into the basket. The steward pretends to give each worker a coin.
And they complained to the landowner, saying, "These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have worked all day!"	The first set of workers complain.
But the landowner answered 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?"	The landowner speaks to the workers.
So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few are chosen. This is a parable of the kingdom of heaven.	After the play is finished, pour the contents of the baggies through a strainer into a pitcher and share the juice.











In the Vineyard

## Parent Notes

Make a copy for each child. Hand out as children leave.

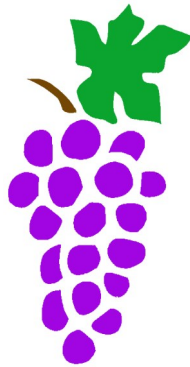
### PARENT NOTE

Dear Parents,

Today we learned about some people who worked in a vineyard. Even though they all got paid what they were promised for their work, some of them were unhappy and said it was not fair. Ask your child why.

The Lord promises everyone the same reward for following Him. Heaven!

We encourage you to help your child remember this week's memory verse by saying it once or twice a day—in the morning, at mealtime, or before bed.



#### Memory Verse

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and the first last.  
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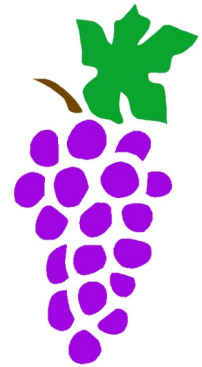
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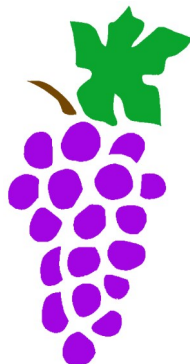
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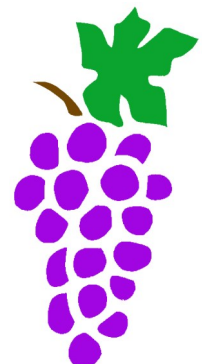
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