

The First and the Last

A Blending of Scripture

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People will come "from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and will take their place at the feast in the kingdom of God. Some who are last will be first and who are first will be last." (Luke 13:29-30.)

There are those "who have given up home, brothers or sisters, father or mother, wife or children, or lands" for Jesus' sake and the gospel's sake. In the eyes of the world they are last and look foolish. "But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first." (Matt 19:29-30).

The wealthy and the powerful are first in the eyes of the world, but with all their possessions they face the "narrow door" (Luke 13:24). Many may suppose their wealth and position are a divine favor, but Jesus thought otherwise (Matt 19:24).

In the vineyard the first group of workers agreed on the usual wage; the second on the word of the master that it would be a fair wage. The last group went on faith alone, and they received an equal compensation and were put first (Matt 20:1-16).

"Whoever wants to rank first among you must serve the needs of all" (Matt 20:27). This is what Jesus told the first disciples after "they had been arguing who was the most important" (Mark 9:34).

"The first laborers in the vineyard supposed they would get more" (Matt 20:10), and they were "envious" of the owner's generosity (Matt 20:15). They were put last.

The first ones who heard "John preaching a way of holiness" (Matt 21:31-32) put no faith in him even when they saw the lives he was changing. The tax collectors and the prostitutes were not even last, but they believed his message and were put first.

The first son replied "I am on my way," but never went (Matt 21:29-31). The second said "no," felt a pang of conscience, and then went. The second was put first.

"They ate and drank in his company" and assumed casual familiarity would be sufficient to have the Lord's approval. He told them that he didn't know where they came from (Luke 13:22-27)

One time Jesus noticed how some of the guests were choosing the best places. He suggested taking the lowest place so that the host would invite them to move up to a better place (Luke 14:7-11).

I am the first and the last;
there is no God but me. (Isa 44:6)



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