

The Tautochrone Vineyard

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The parable of the land owner (Matthew 20:1-16) concerns the idea that all hired workers, no matter what time they started, ended up with the same pay at the end of the day. In other words, the landowner decided that all contributions were somehow comparable so that in his eyes the least times were equal to the greater ones and rewarded all of them equally, much to the consternation of some who expected more. But no doubt that those hired last worked extra hard in appreciation of the unique opportunity given by the creative landowner.

This parable is likened to the kingdom of heaven and gives hope especially to those who suddenly find conversion in the twilight of life and are despairing about those many unproductive years. The last verse of this parable notes: "Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last." Most likely this too leads to stunning surprises in the Kingdom, however, to use this parable as an excuse to delay acceptance will reap only a bitter harvest.

This reminds me of the Tautochrone problem in mathematics as a metaphor for this parable. "Tautochrone" comes from the Greek *tauto* for "the same" (which also gives us "tautology") and *chronos* for "time." The problem posed in the 1600's involved finding the curve down which an object can slide from any point to the bottom (accelerated by gravity and ignoring friction), always in the same length of time.

http://www.daviddarling.info/encyclopedia/T/tautochrone_problem.html