They got the same as those who had worked five, eight, or even eleven hours that day, and those who had worked longer were made to wait at the end of the pay queue! The owner of the vineyard however paid everyone "what is right". Those who had been unemployed most of the day must surely have appreciated the kind and compassionate treatment they received.

Verses 11-12 show how even though God does the right thing, some people will object. The workers who had been employed all day were thinking only of the hard work they had done, not the plight of those who were unable to obtain work and feed their families. This attitude was not much different to that of the second son in the parable of the lost son (Lke 15:25-30).

Verses 13-15 show the landowner's attitude. He had given people work. He had made an agreement with some to pay them a full day's wage for a full day's work, and he had kept that contract. What was their problem? Only that they resented the landowner exercising his right to show whatever kindness to others he thought proper. We should never envy God's love for others. He treats them right, and he treats us right.

Verse 16 ends the parable with the same statement that began it, "the last shall be first, and the first last". (Mtt 19:30). I often think of this when I consider how fortunate I am. My parents, and others in earlier generations of my family, were faithful members and ministers of the church of our Lord. Is it not right for God to expect more of me than he may do of others who did not have such a good start?

God came to me first and I was able to come to him very early in my life. If God gives more honour to someone who sought and found him the hard way, after a long struggle --if he gives them first place and me last-- is that not right and proper? He has shown true kindness to me, and true kindness to them. So be it.

Whilst I have made a general application of this parable, it seems also to have a more particular application, namely God's kindness to the Gentiles. The parable helped to prepare the Jewish believers for the ingathering of Gentiles into God's kingdom and the removing all distinction between Jew and Gentile (Acts 10:34-35, Gal 3:26-29). The same may be said of the parable we consider next...

(2) Marriage of the King's Son

Matthew 22:1-14

Verses 1-6 show the grace and goodness of God. His goodness, however, is spurned. Some simply ignore his kind invitation. Others answer the invitation with malice and violence toward those who bring it. Similar atrocities took place in the parable of the wicked tenant farmers, recorded in the previous chapter (Mtt 21:33-46).

There Jesus indicates that he is thinking in particular of the rejection of God's grace --and of the Christ-- by the Jewish religious leaders. However we find everywhere those who ignore God's invitation, and even those who respond to it with persecution and violence against God's servants and messengers.

Verses 7-10 show the wrath and severity of God. The king in this parable represents God. The king was angry and he ordered his armies to destroy those who rejected his invitation, and to burn down their city.

This is very likely a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem which was to happen circa AD70. However it is certainly more widely applicable to the destruction of all ungodly at the end of the world (2Ths 1:6-10).

Verses 11-14 show the conditional nature of God's grace. In this part of the parable we come across something that we might not have expected.

Here we find a man who accepted the king's invitation, yet the king treated him as one who had rejected it! How can this be?