



# **The Workers in the Vineyard**

**Matthew 20:1-16**

**"Knock, knock!" Billy rapped his knuckles on the top of Amanda's bright, yellow hard hat.**

**"Hey! Stop that!" she shrieked, as she ducked before he could do it again.**

**Ranger Reggie held out a hard hat and pair of heavy gloves to Billy. "Here, put these on and stop teasing Amanda."**

**"So, where are going?" Lewis asked.**

**"And why were we supposed to come ready to work?" Natalie added, as she pulled on a pair of the rough brown gloves. "Aren't we supposed to take a hike through the woods this afternoon?"**

**"All good questions," Ranger Reggie replied. "We are hiking to meet Safari Sam. A tree fell across the path and he needs our help to move it out of the way." He looked around at the campers to make sure they were wearing their protective work gear. Once he was satisfied they were ready, he waved for them to follow him along the nature trail.**

**"Hello, Ranger Campers!" Safari Sam greeted them as they rounded a bend in the path. "I'm so glad you came to work on this log!" He was standing next to a large oak tree which was lying on its side. Its branches, loaded with bright green leaves, blocked the trail.**

**The campers dropped their backpacks and gathered around Safari Sam. Amanda kicked at a pile of dirt as he explained their job. "You will pick up the logs after I have sawed them into smaller pieces and..."**

**"Ouch! Ow, ow, ow!" screeched Amanda. The rest of the group turned to see her running in circles and stomping her feet. "ANTS! ANTS!!!" she yelped, as she frantically tried to shake the swarm of red creatures off her bare legs.**

**"Stand still, we'll get them off," Ranger Reggie calmly commanded as he brushed the ants off her legs and shoes. Safari Sam led her to sit on a tree stump and rubbed gel from an aloe plant on the red bites that dotted her skin.**

**"I didn't know there were ants in that pile of dirt!" Amanda grumbled. "Why did they have to crawl all over me anyway?"**

**Natalie had retrieved her magnifying glass from her backpack and was studying the remains of the ant hill. "The worker ant is a very community-minded insect. Worker ants always work side-by-side for the good of the colony. They were working together to defend their hill from you because they thought you were attacking them."**

**"That's true, Natalie," Ranger Reggie agreed. "Also, if ants find a piece of food that's too heavy to carry, they call for help and more ants come to the rescue."**

**"That's how it is in the ant kingdom," Safari Sam explained, as he helped Amanda stand up and rejoin the group. "Everybody shares the work and everybody shares the reward!"**

**"Speaking of ants and working," Ranger Reggie said, "that reminds me of our Creature Feature and parable for today's show. Our featured creature is the ant and the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard is our story."**

**"Oh, I remember that parable!" Safari Sam exclaimed. "Jesus is teaching His followers that the kingdom of God is like a landowner who went out in the morning to hire some workers to work in his field. He agreed to pay them each a denarius for the day of work."**

**"What's a dinner-ar-us?" Lewis asked.**

**"Denarius," Ranger Reggie corrected "It was a valuable coin and a very fair payment for one day's work."**

**Sam found his Bible in his hiking pack and turned to Matthew 20. He sat down on the trunk of the fallen tree and the campers sat on the ground to listen. "The Bible says that about every three hours, he went out and hired some more workers. Then, with only one hour left in the workday, he went out and found still more workers who needed a job. He told them to go work in his vineyard. When evening came, the landowner told his foreman to line up all the workers and pay them beginning with the last ones hired and ending with the first."**

**"Oh, I bet I know what happens next!" Billy interrupted. "They each got the amount they earned for the amount of time they worked."**

**"No," Ranger Reggie responded as he leaned against a nearby tree. "The Bible says the ones hired last got a whole day's pay. When the ones that worked all day saw this, they must have expected to be paid more but they were paid the same—one denarius!"**

**"What?! That's not fair!" Amanda protested. "I bet the guys who worked all day were mad!"**

**"They were mad!" Safari Sam agreed. "They said, 'Hey, these guys only worked an hour and we did most of the work, but you made us equal! Not fair! Not fair!'"**

**Ranger Reggie smiled. "Ah, but listen to what the Word of God says: 'But he answered one of them, "Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius?"'"**

**"That's true, he did keep his promise to pay a denarius," Natalie noted.**

**Ranger Reggie continued, "The landowner said, 'It's my money. Don't be envious just because I am generous.'"**

**"I don't get it!" Amanda complained as she scratched at one of her ant bites. "Some of them worked harder than others, Ranger Reggie. I mean, those guys that got hired in the morning had a right to be jealous, they got gypped!"**

**"You could look at it that way," Ranger Reggie agreed. "but actually, the owner was both fair and generous. He was fair to keep his promise to pay them one denarius and he was generous to pay it even to those who had not worked the full day's work!"**

**"Oh," Amanda mumbled. "I hadn't thought of it that way."**

**"He did give alot of workers a good job and paid them all fairly," Lewis said thoughtfully.**

**Ranger Reggie smiled and patted Lewis on the shoulder. "That's how Jesus is with us! It doesn't matter if you've served King Jesus your whole life or if you just met Him today. He offers everyone the same reward to all who believe in Him: life in heaven with God forever!"**

**"And, we all get to work together for the good of the kingdom, just like the worker ants!" Safari Sam added.**

**"That's right, Safari Sam," Ranger Reggie agreed, "and just like the landowner, Jesus always keeps His promise to us."**

**"And speaking of promises," Safari Sam looked around at the campers and grinned. "I believe you promised to help me move this tree out of the path!"**

**The campers laughed and then gathered close to hear Safari Sam's final instructions while Amanda carefully checked the ground for ants.**