

**LIFE OF CHRIST**  
from the gospel of  
**Matthew**

**LESSON 40**

**THE SELFISH WORKERS  
AND THE SON**

**MATTHEW 21:33-46**

# Life of Christ

## The Selfish Workers & the Son

Matthew 21:33-46

### Younger Verse

Don't be selfish. . . . Be humble.

Philippians 2:3

### Older Verse

Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.

Philippians 2:3

### Lesson Goals

Learn the parable Jesus told about a man and his workers  
Recognize the meaning of the story about selfish people who killed Jesus  
Understand that we need to follow Jesus and not be selfish

### Welcome Time

Are you ever tempted to be selfish? It is easy to want to hold on to things and not share with anyone. God was not selfish with His Son; He sent Him to earth to save us.

### Bible Story

*Please note: This portion of the lesson is given to help in teaching the lesson. Please read through the story and read it in the Bible before teaching it. Do **NOT** read from this piece of paper. Instead, make a note sheet and place it next to the story in the Bible.*

We learned in our last lesson that Jesus did not like people selling things in the Temple, God's house. Jesus wanted God's house to be a place of prayer and worship of God.

After Jesus cleared the buyers and sellers out of the Temple, He had some things to say about the Jewish religious leaders. Most of these men did not really love God. They just wanted to impress people and look good in front of others. They wanted to get glory for themselves instead of giving glory to God. Jesus did not like this; He knew what was in their hearts.

The leaders of God's people had been that way for many years. Even in the Old Testament, when God spoke to His people through the prophets, the Israelites did not listen. They did not treat the prophets well, because they didn't want to hear what they were saying.

Jesus told a parable to illustrate what had happened and what was about to happen. It was about a man who owned a vineyard, a place where grapes are grown. This man planted the vineyard, put a wall around it to protect it, and even built a lookout tower.

When the man had the vineyard ready, he let some workers come and take care of the vineyard, while he went to another country.

When it was time for the grapes to be **harvested** (ready to pick), the owner sent his servants to collect his part of the grapes. But when the servants reached the vineyard, the workers grabbed them, beat them and even killed one of them! Then the owner sent a bigger group of his servants, but again, the workers were mean and hurt the servants.

Finally, the owner decided to send his own son. He thought that the workers would think of his son as representing him, and would treat him with respect.

But the farmers had a different idea. When they saw the man's son coming, they decided to kill him! They thought that if they got rid of the man's son, they could keep the vineyard for themselves. They were so selfish!

The religious leaders listened to this story. Jesus asked them what would happen to the evil workers in the story. The religious leaders said that the owner would punish the workers for their cruel behavior.

Jesus wanted these men to understand that He was talking about them. They were the ones who were cruel to God's people. They had treated God's prophets badly, and now they were treating Jesus, God's son, badly. And they were going to kill Him!

Jesus knew that later that week, He would be put to death on a cross. Jesus already knew that this was all part of God's plan to save people. He also knew that He would rise from the dead three days later.

We can ask Jesus to come into our heart and life. Then He will help us to have the right attitude and actions. He will help us to think of others and not be selfish.

#### Review Questions

1. In the parable, what did the vineyard workers do to the servants the owner sent to get the grapes? (Hurt them and killed some of them)
2. What did the workers do when the man sent his son to them? (killed him)
3. What did the people do when God sent His Son into the world? (killed Him)
4. What can we learn from this story Jesus told? (Jesus knew He was about to die; not to be selfish like the workers)

#### Prayer Time

Praise God and thank Him for loving us. Pray that we will think of the needs of others, not just our own.

#### Life Application

The Jewish leaders made a big mistake when they rejected Jesus. They were so busy trying to make themselves look good that they didn't recognize God's Son! They were selfish and wanted all the glory for themselves.

Like the religious leaders, we can get selfish sometimes. What does it mean to be selfish? **Selfish people only think about themselves and getting ahead.** They don't care about the needs of others around them.

What can we do in our lives to be less selfish? We can pray for God's help. Only God can guide us to be more humble and less selfish. We can learn to say, "You can go ahead," instead of, "Me first!"

Can you think of ways to be more humble and less selfish?

Planning for Next Lesson  
A Wedding Banquet  
Matthew 22:1-10

## Preschool Lesson for The Selfish Workers & the Son

(Give each child a grape.)

Jesus told a story to His friends to help them understand what was going to happen to Him.

There once was a man who owned a vineyard. A vineyard is a big field where grapes grow. There are rows and rows of delicious grapes.

This man planted the vineyard, put a wall around it to protect it, and even built a look-out tower. (Put your hand up to your forehead like you are looking for something.)

When the man had the vineyard ready, he let some workers come and take care of the vineyard, while he went to another place.

When it was time for the grapes to be **harvested** (ready to pick), the owner sent his servants to collect his part of the grapes. But when the servants reached the vineyard, the workers wanted to keep all the grapes for themselves! They treated the servants very badly.

Then the owner sent a bigger group of his servants, but again, the workers were mean and hurt the servants.

Finally, the owner decided to send his own son. He thought that the workers would treat his son better than the other people.

But the farmers had a different idea. When they saw the man's son coming, they decided to kill him! They thought that if they got rid of the man's son, they could keep the vineyard for themselves. They were so selfish!

Why would Jesus tell such a sad story? Jesus told the story to help His friends know that soon He would die on a cross. But He also wanted them to know that something good would happen after that. Jesus would come back to life again!

Jesus showed us how to love others and share what we have with them. He died on the cross to show us how much He loves us.

Pray and thank Jesus for loving and caring for us.

**Hands-on Activities  
for  
The Selfish Workers & the Son**

Bring grapes to share with the kids. Talk about how God wants us to share and not be selfish. Have them share the grapes with others.

Veggie Tales has a video called “Lyle the Kindly Viking.” It deals with selfishness versus sharing.

Act out the story. Choose people to be the farmers, servants and Son. When the drama is over, ask them what it meant. Please do not leave the story with the sad ending. Make sure they see that Jesus died and rose again!

Make a “grape” picture using purple finger paint and your finger prints.

Bring a purple balloon. Have the kids get in a circle. As they pass the balloon, have each child say a word of the Bible verse.

**Don't be  
selfish. . . .  
Be humble.  
Philippians 2:3**



**Don't be selfish; don't try  
to impress others.  
Be humble, thinking of  
others as better than  
yourselves.  
Philippians 2:3**



D R O L D H T F O O W T  
 A R O L R H T W S E R B  
 L E T U A G N O T J E E  
 G L O R Y F O R S E L F  
 S B O D E E S K R W I F  
 A A M L N I D E E I G O  
 W R E N I H E R D S I D  
 I A A E V D L S A H O L  
 U P L H C Y L K E O U O  
 S J T S U S I H L N S W  
 E O M O Y N K Y M O M E  
 S T N A V R E S T R U H

Jewish  
 glory for self  
 workers

religious  
 parable  
 hurt servants

leaders  
 vineyard  
 killed son



D	R	O	L	D	H	T	F	O	O	W	T
A	R	O	L	R	H	T	W	S	E	R	B
L	E	T	U	A	G	N	O	T	J	E	E
G	L	O	R	Y	F	O	R	S	E	L	F
S	B	O	D	E	E	S	K	R	W	I	F
A	A	M	L	N	I	D	E	E	I	G	O
W	R	E	N	I	H	E	R	D	S	I	D
I	A	A	E	V	D	L	S	A	H	O	L
U	P	L	H	C	Y	L	K	E	O	U	O
S	J	T	S	U	S	I	H	L	N	S	W
E	O	M	O	Y	N	K	Y	M	O	M	E
S	T	N	A	V	R	E	S	T	R	U	H

Jewish  
glory for self  
workers

religious  
parable  
hurt servants

leaders  
vineyard  
killed son