

## BACKWARD THINKING, PART 7

*“He said to them, ‘You also go out and work in my vineyard.’” (Matthew 20:7b, NIV)*

IF GLORY’S *MODUS OPERANDI* IS TO SLIP INTO NOSTALGIA, it does so more quickly for some than for others. Surely no one foresaw 56-year-old Peter Senior’s win on Sunday at the Australian Masters, but there it was, Senior’s third win in an Australian major since he turned 50. It’s hard for your stories to grow boring when you keep rewriting them!

The sadness for many is that they can’t imagine rewriting their stories. The years since glory have bronzed the memory. It is there to look back on and regale, but it is meanwhile frozen in time, lifeless.

That’s where Christ and his calling make all the difference.

In the parable of the workers in the vineyard, a certain group of laborers has taken to standing around, perhaps telling stories of yesterday’s work because it’s almost surely too late to earn a paycheck today. We read that the landowner passed by several times throughout the day, looking for workers. So where were these few then? Had they gone to the restroom or run to fulfill some other errand at all the wrong times? But once more the landowner comes, at an absurdly late hour, and finds these loiterers. “Why aren’t you working?” he asks them. Their answer is simple: “No one has hired us.”

The wonder of the story emerges twice over. First, the landowner puts them to work, even at this late hour. Second, in his independent generosity, he rewards them with the same pay as those who have worked all day.

Christ is the landowner in the story. And as always, he is not doing what the people expect. Indeed, those hired in the morning were angered at the landowner’s “unjust” largesse. But Christ is king; he does what he has a mind (and a heart) to do.

Now let’s cut to the chase. What Christ has a mind and a heart to do is engage you in the work of his kingdom. For some this will mean leaving their nostalgia behind. There is no work as important or as rewarding as the work to which the Lord calls us. This is the upward call, to do the work of the Lord and store up for ourselves treasures in heaven. “You also go and do the work.”

**Opening questions** Are there things in life you feel you are too old for or that have probably passed you by? Are you discouraged in this reality? Where do you find hope against faded glory?

**READING** 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; 1 Samuel 16:1-13; Matthew 20:1-16

### Those God uses (1 Corinthians 1)

How does this passage define the qualifications of those God entrusts with his wisdom? What attitude is necessary to rightly serve God?

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### How God chooses (1 Samuel 16)

What does this passage tell us about how God makes his selection among people? How would you know you have what it takes to qualify? Does your heart belong to Christ?

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### Life in the parable (Matthew 20)

Reading the whole parable of the vineyard workers, what little lessons catch your attention? How does God’s grace display itself in the story?

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Written by Jeff Hopper ©2015 Links Players International. A 5-minute video accompanies today’s study at <https://youtu.be/3duU49KFAk4>