

First Come first served

This title, from world's logic, would mean that those who arrive early or act swiftly receive priority benefits. Rewards are determined by order of arrival, seniority, or one's amount of effort. The principles of God's kingdom differ greatly from this worldly mindset. The key passage is the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16). From our human thinking, people who come early and strive first deserve greater rewards. Late-comers only get what is left or receive less compensation.

From our biblical perspectives, there are contrasts taught by Jesus that God does not operate by "first come, first served". The Lord's Grace does not depend on when we come or how long we serve. In the parable, the landowner hired workers at daybreak, then again at midday, in the afternoon, and even shortly before sunset. Those who worked the full day received exactly the same wage as those who laboured only one hour. The early arriving workers complained, believing they ought to earn more for their longer hours. The landowner replied that he had treated them fairly according to their agreement. It was his right to show generosity to those who came later.

So as Christians, we learn that Salvation and God's grace are not measured by when someone becomes a believer, how many years they serve, or their seniority. Even a person who turns to God late in life may receive the fullness of Grace, without being penalized for coming late. The thief or sinner on the cross is a classic example: he trusted Christ and begged for forgiveness in his final moments and was promised entry with Jesus into Paradise.

Therefore Christians remember and reflect on the spiritual meaning of what Jesus concluded "So those who are last will be first, and those who are first will be last." (Matthew 20:16) The moral lesson is that God's kingdom operates on divine grace and generosity, not human strict fairness or earned merit. Then God's Grace is over my merit and God's ultimate reward, such as salvation and eternal life, is a free gift of love. It cannot be earned through a longer or harder workload. This teaches man to avoid envy and jealousy. People should not begrudge or resent God's goodness and mercy toward others. When others receive unearned blessings, it does not diminish what you have been given.

The Bible also teaches active seeking and timely response. Scripture does not discourage diligence or seizing God-given opportunities. "But seek his kingdom and his righteousness." (Matthew 6:33). Here the word "first" refers to priority of the heart - putting God above all else. It is not the worldly idea of rushing to grab advantages. Believers ought to be earnest and alert to respond to God's calling, and not deliberately delay. Nevertheless, entitlement to grace comes from God's mercy, not from how fast we act.

It seems to me that our assertiveness working on coming first should be for the good of others. Freedom from pride or arrogance helps to reach the quality of being humble. Humble can be used to describe what is ranked low by others, as in "persons of humble origins." When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom. - Proverbs 11:2

The real meaning of humility is having an accurate, honest view of oneself - knowing both one's strength and limitations - without an inflated ego or constant self-preoccupation.

If leadership has a secret sauce, it may well be humility. A humble boss understands that there are things he doesn't know. He listens: not only to the other bigwigs in Davos, but also to the kind of people who don't get invited, such as his customers. - The Economist 26 Jan 2013

Her ideals of Christian humility and simplicity and service are genuine. - Literary Hub, 31 Aug 2026

For many, the lowness in both humility and humbleness is something worth cultivating.

A Theory of Justice is a work of political philosophy and ethics by the philosopher John Rawls (1921-2002) which addresses distributive justice. - Concept relating to distribution of rewards to group members.

1985 essay "Justice as Fairness" and the 2001 book Justice as Fairness, a significant reappraisal and Rawls' two central principles for his discussion of justice. Together, they assert that society should be structured to provide the greatest possible degree of liberty to its members, limited only by the principle that one individual's liberty must not infringe upon the liberty of others. Secondly, inequalities - either social or economic - are only to be allowed if the worst off will be better off than they might be under an equal distribution. Finally, if an inequality is to be justified on the grounds of its benefits, it must not create additional barriers for those without resources to access positions of power, such as public office.

Dorothy Day (1897-1980) was an American journalist, social activist and anarchist who, after a bohemian youth, became a Catholic without abandoning her social activism. Day worked closely with fellow activist Peter Maurin to establish the Catholic Worker Movement, a pacifist movement that combines direct aid for the poor and homeless with nonviolent direct action on their behalf. Day advocated the Catholic economic theory of distribution, which she considered a third way between capitalism and socialism. Pope Benedict XVI used her conversion story as an example of how to "journey towards faith... in a secularized environment". In an address before the United States Congress, Pope Francis included her in a list of four exemplary Americans who "built a better future". The Catholic Church has opened a beautification process for Dorothy Day. For that reason, the Church refers to her with the title Servant of God.

Shusaku Endo (1923-1996) was a Roman Catholic writer who explored Christian themes in his work. His most celebrated book is *Silence*, a powerful historical novel about 17th-century Jesuit priests facing persecution in Japan. The deeply engaging plot follows a 17th century Portuguese Jesuit priest who travels to Japan during a time when Christianity is violently outlawed, facing a dangerous quest to find his missing mentor. The profound themes explore intense human struggles like doubt, suffering, the silence of God in the face of pain, and the heavy cost of holding onto beliefs.

The novel *Silence* means that true faith is internal and compassionate, rather than tied to external pride or rigid religious rules.

The ending of the film explains that divine faith does not require loud public proclamation. Father Rodrigues', though an outcast, silently survived his Faith, proving that his internal bond with Christ was never truly broken by force.

Now daily life in Hong Kong is certainly a 'first come, first served' lifestyle. Lining up for taxis, rushing to find a parking spot, ordering take out lunches, waiting to book for tickets, and running to catch a bus, etc..

Now, the lesson on "first come, first served" is to evolve our lives around God, recognising He is the source of all things. We must believe and trust God's existence and goodness. With a humble and grateful heart we are able to work and live obediently as God wishes for us.

Strength and courage will be with us as God's love is with us:

Isaiah 41:10:

"Do not be afraid - I am with you!
I am your God - let nothing terrify you!
I will make you strong and help you;
I will protect and save you."