

Aim:**Refer:****Resources:** Pictures of Pilgrims Progress are available here: <http://www.bunyanministries.org/>

Discuss: What do the different things in the parable of the vineyard workers represent?

- The owner? (God)
- The vineyard work? (Working for God on earth)
- The first group of workers? (People who become Christians and work for God their whole life)
- The workers who came later? (People who become Christians later in life)
- The workers who came last? (People who become Christians at the end of their life)
- The pay? (Heaven & eternal life etc)

Discuss: What can we learn from this parable?

If doing the Signs, Signals and Symbols Pathfinder Honour, discuss how this parable could be told in a modern setting.

Jesus told another story about a vineyard in Matthew 21:33-41

Read or tell the story or take turns reading a verse each.

In summary: the landowner makes a vineyard and rents it out. But when the harvest is complete and the rent is due, the renters beat and kill the servants sent to collect it. When the owner sends his son, they also kill him.

Read Jesus conclusion in verse 43 & 45

Discuss:

- Who is the owner? (God)
- Who are the renters? (The Jewish leaders?)
- Who are the servants sent to collect the rent? (God's prophets)
- Who is the owner's son? (Jesus)

Pilgrim's Progress continues:

So I saw in my dream that they went on together, until they came in sight of the gate. Now, I further saw, that between them and the gate was a river, but there was no bridge to go over and the river was very deep. At the sight, therefore, of this river, the Pilgrims were much stunned, but the men that went with them said, "You must go through, or you cannot come at the gate."

The Pilgrims then began to inquire if there was no other way to the gate; to which they answered, "Yes; but there hath not any, except Enoch and Elijah, been permitted to tread that path, since the foundation of the world, nor shall there be, until the last trumpet shall sound. The Pilgrims asked the men the depth of the waters. They said, "You shall find it deeper or shallower, as you believe in the King of the place."

What special thing happened to Enoch and Elijah? (They went to heaven without dying. 2 King 2:11, Hebrews 11:5)
So what does the river represent?

They then addressed themselves to the water; and entering, Christian began to sink, and crying out to his good friend Hopeful, he said, "I sink in deep waters; all the waves go over me!"

Then said the other, "Be of good cheer, my brother, I feel the bottom, and it is good." Then, said Christian, "Ah! my friend, the sorrows of death have surrounded me. I shall not see the land that flows with milk and honey." And with that a great darkness and horror fell upon Christian, so that he could not see before him. Also here he could neither remember, nor talk of any of those sweet refreshments that he had met with in the way of his pilgrimage, and he was much in troublesome thoughts of the sins that he had committed, both since and before he began to be a pilgrim.

Hopeful, therefore, here had much ado to keep his brother's head above water; yea, sometimes he would be quite gone down, and then, ere awhile, he would rise up again half dead. Hopeful also would endeavour to comfort him, saying, "Brother, I see the gate, and men standing by to receive us."

But Christian would answer, "It is you they wait for; you have been Hopeful ever since I knew you."

"And so have you," said he to Christian.

"Ah, brother!" said Christian, "Surely if I were right, He would now arise to help me; but for my sins He hath brought me into the snare, and hath left me."

Then said Hopeful, "My brother, you have quite forgot the text, where it is said of the wicked, 'There are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men (Psalm 73:4, 5). These troubles and distresses that you go through in these waters are no sign that God hath forsaken you; but are sent to try you, whether you will call to mind that which heretofore you have received of His goodness and live upon Him in your distresses."

Then I saw in my dream, that Christian thought awhile. And Hopeful added this word, "Be of good cheer, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." And with that Christian brake out with a loud voice, "O! I see Him again, and He tells me, 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.'"

Then they both took courage, and the enemy was after that as still as a stone, until they were gone over. Christian therefore presently found ground to stand upon, and so it followed that the rest of the river was shallow.

Thus they got over.

Was Hopeful's crossing of the river, which represents dying, and the resurrection at the second coming, easy or hard?

What about Christians?

The same is true in real life, for some people death is easy, and for others, as death approaches, they have doubts and fears, this is more likely to happen if the person suffers from sickness, or from depression.

Discuss: When a friend is discouraged, or feeling unwell, or sad what can we do for them?

(Pray for them, pray with them, listen to them, encourage them, remind them of the things that God has done in the past.)