

Matthew 20:1-15

An Ujamaa Centre
Contextual Bible Study

CBS: What is it?

- To read the Bible from the perspective of the poor, working-class, and marginalised
- To read the Bible corporately and collaboratively, in community
- To read the Bible critically, using tools from both the academy and the community
- To read the Bible for individual and social transformation
- **The 4 Cs:** context, community, criticality, and change!

Contextual Bible Study analysis

- Facilitation
 - This form of Bible study requires a leadership style that facilitates/animates
 - What are the features of facilitation/animation?
- The primary purpose of facilitation is to create a sacred and safe site in which all can participate

■ See – Judge – Act framework

- See: do social analysis 'from below', which guides the choice of a theme
- Judge: bring theme into dialogue with biblical and theological resources through Bible study
- Act: respond to the engagement between the theme and the Bible study by formulating an action plan

■ Discerning an appropriate biblical text

- Select a biblical text that has the potential 'to speak into' the theme
- Draw on your training in biblical studies to engage with the whole Bible

CBS methodology

- Contextual Bible study uses two basic types of questions:
 - Questions focussing on the experiences and resources of the community
 - Questions focussing on the dimensions of the text
- The Contextual Bible study is 'framed' by community consciousness questions, with critical consciousness questions in-between

The CBS 'Sandwich'

Bread

Contextual Bible Study
Begins with the
Reality, experience and resources of the community ...

SEE

Meat/jam

In-between
We re-read the Bible,
Slowly, carefully and closely
Using the resources of biblical scholarship

JUDGE

Bread

... and ends with the
Reality, experience and resources of the community.

ACT

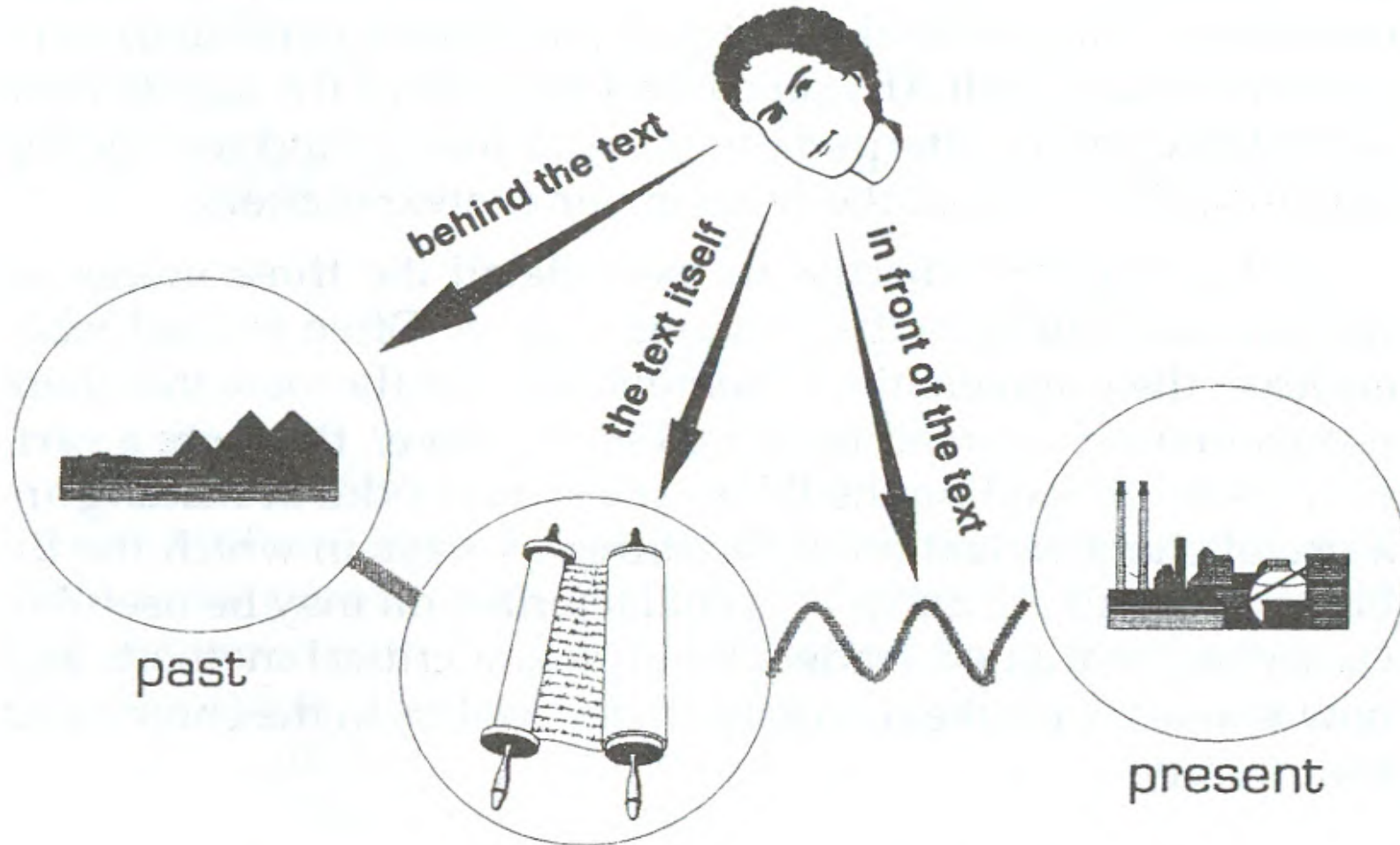
- 1. What is the text about?
- 2. What was agreed upon as a day's wage?
- 3. How do v3-7 describe the socio-economic conditions of the time?
- 4. Why is the landowner so concerned about people not working (6b)?
- 5. Why did the landowner ask them to join others in the vineyard (7b)?

- 6. Who in your context needs to go to the 'vineyard'? Why?
- 7. Who in your context needs a 'full days wage' (9)? Why?
- 8. What is 'fair' or 'unfair', 'just' or 'unjust' about the landowner's conduct towards the workers (11-15)?
- 9. What will you do to ensure that economic justice prevails in your context?

- Context
'community consciousness'
- Text
'critical consciousness'

- Context

3 kinds of critical consciousness



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 - 5. Why did the landowner ask them to join others in the vineyard (7b)?
 - 6. Who in your context needs to go to the 'vineyard'? Why?
 - 7. Who in your context needs a 'full days wage' (9)? Why?
 - 8. What is 'fair' or 'unfair', 'just' or 'unjust' about the landowner's conduct towards the workers (11-15)?
 - 9. What will you do to ensure that economic justice prevails in your context?
- In front of the text
 - On the text
 - On the text and behind the text
 - In front of the text

Constructing your own CBS?

- We want you to begin to build your resources for Friday's work
- Use basic building-blocks of CBS
- But be creative!

- 1. What is the text about?
- 2. Who are the characters in this text and what is their relationship to each other?

- *Reportback in plenary*

- **Input to plenary**

- In the time of Jesus many peasant farmers had been forced off their land through the tributary mode of production, and its debt trap (see 1 Sam 8). Those who lost their land became day-labourers.
- There are two very different ways of reading this text:
 - 1. This text can be read as presenting the egalitarian socialist vision of Jesus and the early Jesus movement (Acts 4:32-35). As Karl Marx said, "From each according to their ability to each according to their need". From this perspective, we might read the parable as a utopian vision of a socialist society.
 - 2. This text can also be read as a critique by Jesus of the arbitrary and discriminating practices of 'capitalist' landowners, who hire when they like and pay what they like. From this perspective, the workers do not receive a just wage, they receive the exact exploitative daily rate, and no more.

- **Group questions**

- ***Group 1***

- 3. If the landowner represents the egalitarian socialist vision of Jesus and the kingdom of God, what is the relationship between the landowner and the workers in this text?
- 4. Under what conditions would this be a possible option in the Southern African context?

- ***Group 2***

- 3. If the landowner represents the exploitative ruling elite in the first century, what is the relationship between the landowner and the workers in this text?
- 4. What aspects of this parable are relevant to the current contexts of unemployment in Southern Africa?

- *Reportback from each group to the plenary*

- **Common questions**

- 5. Which of these interpretations do you think is Matthew's?
- 6. What do each of these two different readings say to our context?
- 7. What actions will we take in response to these readings?

More Ujamaa resources

- The *Manual*
- The website: www.ujamaa.org.za