**A LESSON ON JUSTICE & GRACE**

**MATTHEW 20:1-16**

*1 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. 2 After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3 And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, 4 and to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.’ 5 So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. 6 And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ 7 They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’ 8 And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.’ 9 And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. 10 Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. 11 And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, 12 saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ 13 But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? 14 Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. 15 Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?’ 16 So the last will be first, and the first last.”*

**A PROFESSOR ONCE GAVE A VERY DIFFICULT TEST.**

The scores were low, even though the class seemed talented and diligent.

To complicate matters, he had vowed never to give a general curve to his classes.

Yet he suspected the test had been too hard, so he had to do something.

He thought and thought....

At last he decided to give all the FEMALES in the class a twenty point bonus

And He would give all the males whatever score they had earned.

In this way he kept his vow and also raised the average grade to a suitable level.

And all the women said....

*“Thank you, O wondrous professor,”*

and all the men said,

*“That’s not fair!”*

*That’s not fair* is the...

cry of children,

cry of students,

cry of all who believe the authorities have not granted them the same beneficence they granted someone else.

In fact, the complaints are sometimes true.

Authorities do sometimes give more to one person or cause than to another.

It is unfair.

**My sister (who was older than me) would often cry *“That’s not fair.”***

She would fuss because there were things our parents would let me know do – that she wasn’t allowed to do.

To which I would typically remind her...

*“I get to do it – cause I’m better than you.”*

Truth was I wasn’t better than her...

I JUST LEARNED FROM HER MISTAKES

**In Matthew 20 – Jesus gives us this parable of the Vineyard Workers...**

Jesus is giving us a profound truth:

He is NOT advocating for fair Labor laws

He is NOT advocating for minimum wage

He is NOT saying *“Every Kid gets a trophy”*

**Jesus is describing how GRACE works in our lives**

Today we hear a lot about justice – right?

Justice for WOMEN!

Justice for IMMIGRANTS

Justice for LBGT COMMUNITY!

But you know what I’ve discovered...

The justice being advocated for today – ONLY FLOWS ONE WAY.

Everyone wants to stand up for LGBT Rights

But very few want to stand up for the rights of UNBORN CHILDREN.

We live in a world that cries out for justice...

But the last thing we really want it justice.

Truth is – If we all got what we deserved

**We would all go to Hell!**

Here – Jesus is helping us understand how grace works in upside-down world.

**To understand that we must take notice of the CONTEXT of the story:**

In Matthew 19 – Jesus is talking about entrance into the Kingdom.

He uses to story of the Rich Young Ruler to prove a point

Entering into the Kingdom means GIVING UP EVERYTHING TO FOLLOW JESUS.

The Rich Young Ruler refused

Yet the disciples had indeed giving up all to follow Jesus.

Then Peter askes a stupid question (typical Peter)...

**Matthew 19:27 *—*** *27 Then Peter said in reply, “See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?”*

See – Peter was a fisherman – which meant...

He was a little looney tunes (too many lonely nights at see)

He was self-made business man.

Peter was asking the business question...

If that Rich Man refused to give up all and follow Jesus

Do we get something extra for follow you??

Jesus responds to Peter’s question...

**Matthew 19:28–29 *—*** *28 Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.*

Jesus’ response is simple:

Those who give up all to follow Jesus will **GAIN FAR MORE IN RETURN** than they gave up in following Jesus.

Then, Jesus gives a warning...

**Matthew 19:30 *—*** *30 But many who are first will be last, and the last first.*

Jesus also repeats the phrase in verse 16 – but what’s He talking about?

**To explain the meaning – He gives us this parable of the VINEYARD WORKERS...**

Early in the morning (6:00 AM) – a vineyard owner hires laborers to work for an agreed wage(a denarius – a generous day’s wage).

He goes back at different hours of the day to get more workers

9:00 AM

Noon

3:00 PM

He also does the unthinkable...

He goes back at 5:00 PM to hire more workers.

Quitting time was at 6:00 PM

At 6:00 PM – The Landowner pays them for the day’s work

He starts with the worker who came at 5.

He pays them a denarius.

The 6 AM workers get excited

But they get a denarius too.

Immediately – the 6 AM workers begin to object...

They began to grumble about the owners generosity

They say – *“We have done all the work – we should get paid more.”*

The Vineyard owner responds to their complaining in v.13....

**Matthew 20:13–16 *—*** *13 But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? 14 Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. 15 Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?’ 16 So the last will be first, and the first last.”*

**Jesus uses this parable to picture God’s saving grace...**

Each character is symbolic:

The landowner represents God

The vineyard is Kingdom of God

The laborers are believers – who work for the King

The day of work is their lifetime.

The denarius represents eternal life.

The point of the parable is:

If you are a genuine believer – you receive the full benefits of God’s immeasurable grace – just like everyone else.

Your place in heaven is not a TIMESHARE

Your access to Heaven is NOT determined by the length of service you’ve spent doing the Lord’s work.

Salvation is NOT dispensed based your personal achievements.

Forgiveness is NOT measure by weighing your good deeds against your bad deeds.

Everyone who enters the Kingdom receive the full abundance of God’s grace and forgiveness.

*So what does this mean for you and me? (3 things)...*

**GOD’S GRACE IS SURPRISING**

This stories illustrates us that God showers his saving grace in UNPREDICTABLE WAYS.

All throughout the scripture – God used unusual people.

And even today – God uses some unusual people.

**God calls all kinds of people to faith in all walks of life.**

God doesn’t save based on your **age**.

God can save YOUNG people

God can save OLD people

God can save ANYONE IN THE MIDDLE

God doesn’t save based on your **race**

God save WHITE people

God saves BLACK people

God saves HISPANIC people

God saves ORIENTAL people

God even saves MUSLIM people.

God doesn’t save based on your **social status**

God saves INFLUENTIAL people

God saves UNINFLUENTIAL people

God saves RICH people

God saves POOR people.

God can save a DRUG DEALER just as easily as He can save a CAR DEALER.

God can save a PROSTITUTE just as easily as He can save a PRESIDENT OF A BANK.

Paul said it this way...

**1 Corinthians 1:27 *—*** *27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;*

God works in unpredictable ways – because the unpredictability proclaims the glory of God’s grace.

*God’s grace is surprising...*

**GOD’S GRACE IS SUFFICIENT**

This parable shows us – no matter how early or how late in the game we follow Jesus...

He’s grace is still enough to save us and cleanse us of our sins.

Sure the 6:00 AM wanted to complain.

But what they received was more than enough for them.

Paul said it this way...

**2 Corinthians 12:9 *—*** *9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

It doesn’t matter who you were before you came to Jesus

It doesn’t matter what time in life you came.

**God’s grace is more than enough to save you.**

But God’s grace is also sufficient to change your life...

In Baptist circles – we love to talk about God’s SAVING grace.

But we sometime forget...

God doesn’t just save us by His grace.

God also CHANGES US by his grace.

You cannot have one without the other.

*God’s grace is sufficient to SAVE us and to CHANGE us...*

**GOD’S GRACE CRUSHES SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS**

This parable also show us there is no room in the Kingdom of Christ for an envious spirit.

I found something to be true in CHURCH...

**The longer you serve Jesus – The easier it is to come envious of others around you.**

**There will always be people who can do what you do better.**

I was talking to Darrell Edgington on Wednesday night.

His daughter, Dara, sang at Packey Wilson’s funeral this week.

I told him – I think she sings that song better than you do.

I remember what He said – “Amen!”

We should praise the Lord for moments like that.

It reminds us that God still changes people.

It also reminds us that God keeps His church going by raising up people behind us.

**Friend – A person who is envious of another person...**

Is a person who has forgotten the nature of God’s grace to us.

Truth is we are all undeserving sinners.

We all deserved Hell.

But God gave us a place in His Kingdom.

**Every time I look at this parable – I think back of just how undesevering I was to receive God’s saving grace.**

I’m gonna say something – that you may not agree with...

It may be totally wrong.

I believe the point of this parable is remind everyone of us that we are all 5 o’clock workers.

**We all got into God’s Kingdom by the skin of our teeth.**

Not because He did something to earn it.

But that God freely gave it to us.

Friend – God can give it to you...

If you simple surrender all to Him!

**There is Modern Song that I absolutely love**

One verse goes like this:

I have what you need,   
But you keep on searchin,   
I've done all the work,   
But you keep on workin,   
When you're runnin on empty,   
And you can't find the remedy,   
Just come to the well.  
  
You can spend your whole life,   
Chasin what's missing,   
But that empty inside,   
It just ain't gonna listen.  
When nothing can satisfy,   
And the world leaves you high and dry,   
Just come to the well

Friend – Jesus has want you need

**All you have to do is come to the well to get it!**