

## ***Amazing Grace***

Friends, have you ever felt like life isn't fair?

- Perhaps you've worked harder than someone else, but they received the same reward, or even more.
- As parents, many of us wrestle with what "fairness" truly means when raising our children, striving to treat them equitably, yet knowing that equal treatment isn't always what each child needs.
- We all have an innate sense of justice, a feeling that things should be equitable, that effort should directly correlate with outcome. It's a deeply ingrained part of our human experience to expect fairness.

But what if God's economy, His way of doing things, operates on a different principle than our human understanding of fairness?

- What if His generosity defies our expectations and even challenges our natural sense of what is right?
- Today, we're going to dive into a powerful parable that Jesus told, one that often makes us uncomfortable because it seems to go against everything we believe about equal pay for equal work.
- It's a story about a landowner, his vineyard, and the surprising way he chooses to pay his workers.
- As we open God's Word, I invite you to set aside your preconceived notions of fairness for a moment and consider the profound truth Jesus reveals about God's incredible grace and boundless generosity.

Turn with me to the Gospel of Matthew 20

**Matthew 20:1-7** - "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. <sup>2</sup> Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. <sup>3</sup> And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, <sup>4</sup> and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. <sup>5</sup> Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. <sup>6</sup> And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' <sup>7</sup> They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.'

**Matthew 20:8-16** - <sup>8</sup> "So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them *their* wages, beginning with the last to the first.' <sup>9</sup> And when those came who *were hired* about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. <sup>10</sup> But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. <sup>11</sup> And when they had received *it*, they complained against the landowner, <sup>12</sup> saying, 'These last *men* have worked *only* one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.' <sup>13</sup> But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you

no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? <sup>14</sup> Take *what is yours* and go your way. I wish to give to this last man *the same* as to you. <sup>15</sup> Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good? <sup>16</sup> So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen."

### **Let me set the stage...**

Jesus said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like..." and he tells a story

- We call them parables – *earthy story with a heavenly meaning*.
- Simple and relatable story that illustrates a profound spiritual truth.

Story – a Landowner goes to the marketplace early in the morning...

- Likely before 6 am because that's when normal workdays would begin, he hires some day laborers...goes back to the marketplace at various times during the day – hires more workers ( 9 am, Noon, 3 and then again at 5 )
- At the end of the day, when it was time to pay, he starts with the one who had only worked an hour...to everyone's surprise he gives the guys who only worked an hour a **full days wage**.
- But then to the dismay and distain of all of the workers, he gives 3:00 workers, (12, 9 am, 6 am) workers the same amount

This would have gone against societal norms and probably good business practices

- Jesus did not tell this story to make a point about fair labor laws, minimum wage or equity in business dealings, or any other earthly principle
- John MacArthur said, "He is describing how grace works in the sphere where God rules.

I want us to focus this morning, not as much about our place in this story, but I want to examine this from the King's point of view – What is the king like?

The parable of the landowner in Matthew 20 beautifully illustrates several attributes of God.

### **God's Generosity**

Notice again **Matthew 20:2** - Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

Hiring daily workers was a very common practice during this time – Esp. Harvest

- Landowner would go to Marketplace (Public area, gathering place for unskilled laborers)
- The only hope for employment for these unskilled laborers was the luck, good fortune...You had to hope the right landowner just happening to need a few extra hands...
  - If a man doesn't work, he, nor his family would have food to eat
  - This is why Jesus taught in the Model Prayer to "...give us this day our daily bread."
  - These workers would have been in no position to negotiate – Take the job/pay ... whatever they could get.

Denarius was a day's wage for profession full-time worker (Roman soldier)

- Today's Economy - Temporary Worker – short-term, defined end date (low to mid-teens \$10)
- Skilled Laborer – Range - high 20's-low 30's – Sake of illustration \$30.

- When they should have received \$10, they got \$30
- This illustrates God's Gracious Generosity & Generous Grace
- Grace is Unmerited Favor! Getting what you do not deserve!

### God's Grace is Surprising:

#### **We do not want Fair:**

- We tend to recoil at a story that's all about people not getting what they deserve. It's not fair; and that's the point. God's grace in salvation is, by definition, not fair. D. A. Carson has put it rather candidly: "Do you really want nothing but totally effective, instantaneous justice? Then go to hell" (Carson, *How Long, O Lord*, 161).
- Gratefully, God surprises us with His mercy. He does what we would never expect according to what we could never earn. Once again, we see this underlying truth emerge: God doesn't owe us salvation for something we have done; He gives us salvation despite everything we have done. Salvation is a free gift of divine mercy totally devoid of human merit. God owes us nothing, yet He gives us everything in Christ. (Platt, *Exalting Jesus*, Mt. KL 5079)

### Not only is God's grace surprising, but also God's grace is sovereign.

#### **God's Grace is Sovereign:**

- God is under no obligation to extend forgiveness to sinners like us. He has the right to dispense His mercy as He pleases. This is Paul's point in Romans 9, where he answers the objection that God's mercy is not fair: "But who are you, a mere man, to talk back to God?" (Rom 9:20). Mercy is dispensed as God sees fit. This is actually good news for sinners who are unable to save themselves. We have small minds and small ways, but God's grace is wonderfully surprising and gloriously sovereign. (Platt, *Exalting Jesus: Mt. KL 5085*)

The landowner pays all the workers the same wage, even those who worked for only an hour.

- When confronted, he asks, "Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?" (Matthew 20:15 ESV). ***This highlights God's boundless grace and unmerited favor, where He bestows blessings not based on human merit or effort, but out of His own good will and overflowing kindness (Ephesians 2:8-9).***
- His generosity extends beyond what is strictly deserved, offering salvation and eternal life as a free gift to all who believe, regardless of when they come to Him (Romans 6:23).

God's generosity is evident throughout creation and in His relationship with humanity. From the provision of our daily needs to the ultimate gift of salvation, His nature is one of lavish giving.

- **Creation and Provision:**
  - God generously provides for all living things. He clothes the lilies of the field and feeds the birds of the air, and how much more does He care for His children (Mt 6:26-30)!
  - He gives us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness (Acts 14:17).
- **The Gift of His Son:**

- The greatest demonstration of God's generosity is found in His sending of Jesus Christ. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16)
- This gift is unmerited and overflowing with grace.
- **Abundant Life:**
  - Jesus Himself said, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10 ESV). This abundant life is not necessarily material wealth, but a spiritual richness, peace, and purpose that comes from knowing Him.
- **Spiritual Gifts:**
  - God also generously bestows spiritual gifts upon believers for the building up of the church and for His glory (1 Corinthians 12:4-11).

**So we see God's Generosity in this story, but I want you to see...**

### **God's Sovereignty**

**Matthew 20:1-7** - "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner..."

**Back to the story...At the end of the day, the laborers stand before the landowner**

- He gives them more than what they deserve – **Grace**
- He gives what he desires...because it's all HIS!

**Matthew 20:13-15** - But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? <sup>14</sup> Take *what is yours* and go your way. I wish to give to this last man *the same* as to you. <sup>15</sup> Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?'

**The land is His – The harvest is His! No denying that. There is no debating that!**

- **Genesis 1:1** - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
  - To take that a step further, we were created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27) and bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:19-20), we are his workmanship
  - This twofold ownership—by creation and by redemption—means that our lives, our bodies, our talents, and our very breath are ultimately God's.
- **Haggai 2:8** - 'The silver *is* Mine, and the gold *is* Mine,' says the LORD of hosts.
  - All material possessions, wealth, and natural resources belong to God. This perspective fundamentally changes how we view money, possessions, and even our careers.
  - We are not owners but stewards—managers entrusted with His resources for His purposes.
- **Psalms 24:1-2** - The earth *is* the Lord's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein. <sup>2</sup> For He has founded it upon the seas, And established it upon the waters.
  - Because God owns all, He has ultimate authority over all. His plans and purposes for His creation stand firm (**Proverbs 19:21**).
  - This provides immense comfort, knowing that an all-wise, all-loving God is in control, orchestrating events according to His perfect will, even when we don't understand them.

- **Psalm 103:19** - The Lord has established His throne in heaven, And His kingdom rules over all.
- **Ephesians 1:11** - In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,

In essence, God's sovereign ownership means

- that He is the ultimate Proprietor of all existence, and we exist within His grand design, called to live in submission and service to Him.
- God's sovereignty means that He is the supreme Ruler of the universe, holding absolute power and authority over all things. Nothing happens outside of His knowledge or ultimate control.

**Not only do we see God's Generosity, His Sovereignty in this story, but I want you to see...**

### **God's Fidelity**

Verse 2 – The Landowner agreed to a Denarius – to the others, he said He would do whatever is right

- As you get down to verses 8-11 He gave them their wages
- He did what he said he would do – This demonstrates God's Faithfulness

God's fidelity, or faithfulness, means that He is completely trustworthy, dependable, and always keeps His promises. He does not change and is steadfast in His character and commitments.

- **Unchanging Character:** God is eternally faithful.
  - This is part of what Theologians call his **Immutable Nature** - He is incapable of change, variation, or improvement in his character, purposes, or essence - [Link](#)
  - **Numbers 23:19** - "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"
  - **Hebrews 10:23** - Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful.
- **Keeping His Covenants:** Throughout the Bible, God enters into covenants with His people, and He always fulfills His side of the agreement.
  - From His promise to Noah, to Abraham, to David, and ultimately the New Covenant in Christ, God's faithfulness shines through (Genesis 9:11; Genesis 12:1-3; 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Jeremiah 31:31-34). **See End of Document for more detail**
- **Faithfulness in Salvations and Sanctification**
- **He is Faithful in Provision and Protection**
- **In times of trouble and Trial even in our temptation, God is Faithful**
- **He is Faithful even in our sorrow and suffering:**
- **Faithfulness to Forgive:** When we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).
- **Faithfulness to Complete His Work:** God began a good work in us, and we can be confident that He will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6).

**His Steadfast Love (Hesed):** The Hebrew word "hesed" is often translated as "steadfast love," "mercy," or "lovingkindness," and it is intrinsically linked to God's faithfulness.

- It describes a loyal, committed, covenantal love that God consistently extends to His people. This love is not based on our performance but on His character.

**Lamentations 3:19-24** - Remember my affliction and roaming, The wormwood and the gall. <sup>20</sup> My soul still remembers And sinks within me. <sup>21</sup> This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. <sup>22</sup> Through the Lord's mercies (steadfast love) we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. <sup>23</sup> They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. <sup>24</sup> "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!"

This Parable shows us that we have a God, King, a Father who is Generous, Faithful, & Sovereign

- strengthens our faith, deepens our worship, and provides a sure foundation for living in a world that is constantly changing. We can trust Him fully because He is who He says He is.

Too often, we tend to make these parables about us...Tara Leigh Coble, I'm your Host for The Bible Recap points out

1. *Entitlement has not place in the heart a child of God, We are all undesiring –*
2. *Comparing ourselves to others proves we've lost sight of our own spiritual poverty and God's immense generosity.*
3. *We may be surprised in the end at those who spent their lives in sin, but turned to Jesus just before death. They may not accomplish much on earth for the Kingdom, but they receive the same rescue and the same Kingdom, none the less*

Let us Rejoice in God our Savior – Let us worship and bow down in worship. For He is worthy of all praise – He is worthy of all honor – He is worthy of all glory

We echo what Paul said in ...

**Romans 11:33-36** - Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable *are* His judgments and His ways past finding out! <sup>34</sup> "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?" <sup>35</sup> "Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?" <sup>36</sup> For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen.

Understanding God's generosity, sovereignty, and fidelity

### **So, what is our action step?**

- It is to cross that bridge of trust. To step out in faith, knowing that the God who is boundless in His generosity, absolute in His sovereignty, and unwavering in His fidelity will never fail us.
- When worries threaten to overwhelm, when circumstances seem out of control, or when doubts about His goodness creep in, remember these three pillars of His character. Rest in His generosity, surrender to His sovereignty, and cling to His fidelity.

### ***More on God's Covenants***

- **Noahic Covenant:** God promised never again to destroy the earth by flood, and He set His rainbow as a sign of this eternal covenant (Genesis 9:11-16). He has been faithful to this promise for millennia.
- **Abrahamic Covenant:** He promised Abraham descendants as numerous as the stars, a land, and that through him, all nations would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3). This promise found its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ.
- **Mosaic Covenant:** Though Israel often broke their part of the covenant, God remained faithful, providing warnings, discipline, and opportunities for repentance (Deuteronomy 7:9).
- **Davidic Covenant:** God promised David an eternal kingdom through his lineage (2 Samuel 7:12-16). This covenant finds its perfect and eternal fulfillment in Jesus, the Son of David, whose kingdom will have no end.
- **New Covenant:** Through Christ, God established a New Covenant, promising to put His laws in our minds and write them on our hearts, to be our God, and to forgive our iniquities (Jeremiah 31:33-34). This is the covenant under which believers now live, a testament to His ultimate faithfulness.