

Grace, Week 3:
Pastor Peter Smith
Exciting First Church of God, 11-17-13

Matthew 20:1-16: The Laborers in the Vineyard

According to [Matthew 20:1–16](#) Jesus says that any "laborer" who accepts the invitation to the work in the vineyard (said by Jesus to represent the [Kingdom of Heaven](#)), no matter how late in the day, will receive an equal reward with those who have been faithful the longest.

Altogether, 4 groups of workers are hired:

- Early morning, 6 AM
- 9 AM
- Noon
- 5 PM

The 1st group would get 1 denarius, the rate of pay for a Roman soldier (Today, \$60).

The last group only worked 1 hour. They get paid the full days wages. The early group and others all get mad. Yet they agreed to get paid \$60. But it doesn't seem fair. And it isn't!!!

The story illustrates the grace and mercy of God!

God wants all people to be saved!

“God wants everyone to be saved and to fully understand the truth.” **-1 Timothy 2:4, NIV**

- Some respond early in life,
- some when death knocks on their door
- those who decided early on cannot complain to God!
- God will have mercy on whom he wants and when he wants to

God said to Moses,

“For God said to Moses, “I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose.”

-Romans 9:15, New Living Translation

There is no special treatment in God’s Kingdom

“the last will be first, and the first last”

- no matter how long or how hard a believer works during his lifetime, the reward of eternal life will be the same given to all
- The thief on the cross ([Luke 23:39-43](#)),

“One of the criminals hanging there also insulted Jesus by saying, “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and save us!” But the other criminal told the first one off, “Don’t you fear God? Aren’t you getting the same punishment as this man? We got what was coming to us, but he didn’t do anything wrong.” Then he said to Jesus, “Remember me when you come into power!” Jesus replied, “I promise that today you will be with me in paradise.” -Luke 23:39-43, CEV

- He rec’d the same gift promised to the Apostles, those that were living daily a life given over to God, to those who worshipped every week, prayed all the time, did the things Jesus said to do.....
- He would not live a life now of witnessing, worshipping, and self denial. It was over for him
- But his life would be talked about forever!

God is generous to everybody equally! (grace)

- We are all undeserving: no one is 1st or last in order-achievements, status quo, economic standing all have nothing to do with it
- He is merciful, not giving us what we deserve (punishment for our sins—Jesus!)
- Another important fact about God: He is fair, just

What do we do with Grace shown to others?

- People who accept Jesus late in life, near death, in jail, due to circumstances....it doesn't seem fair!!!

It's been said, 'If you want to be miserable, compare what you have to someone else.' Invariably there will be someone who has done better than you for some reason or the other.

It speaks to churches, to those of us who have committed our ways to Jesus:

- Surely God favors us *a little more* than those new people!
- We said yes 15 yrs ago.....
- We have been serving you Jesus with our whole heart mind soul and strength!
- God's grace is extended not only to us but to those who have not rec'd it yet!

Have you rec'd God's grace, meaning His love, into your life yet? Would you consider today accepting to be true the story of Jesus:

- His life
- His death
- His resurrection
- His call to repent / turn to God?

It's not too late, He is waiting for you.