

**Read: Matthew 20:1-16**

## God Is More than Fair

### **Matthew 20:8-15**

“When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’

“The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’

“But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’”

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

In Matthew 20, Jesus tells a story about someone who owned a lot of land and needed workers to work in his vineyard where he planted, grew, and harvested grapes. So he hired workers to work in his vineyard. He began by hiring some for a full day at 6 a.m. They agreed to work for a denarius, the usual pay for a day of work. He continued to hire workers. Some at 9 a.m., others at noon, and still others at 3 p.m. The man promised to pay each of these workers what was fair.

When the workday came to an end at 6 p.m., the man paid all the workers. The workers who worked only a part of the day came first and were paid a day’s wage. When the workers who worked the whole day came to be paid, what do you think they expected? They expected to be paid more than those who only worked a few hours. That is what’s fair, right? But they agreed to a day’s wage. And that is what they were given.

These workers grumbled. “We deserve more! We worked longer than they did! This isn’t fair!” They were angry and jealous that the owner gave everyone equal shares.

The landowner explains he is free to be as generous as he wants. He asks, “Are you envious because I am generous?”

It’s a story about the generosity of God, isn’t it? The owner was more than fair and generous when he paid his workers. Our God is more than fair. He is generous with his grace and gifts. We are all equal because we all have sinned and fallen short. God gives his free grace to those who

were baptized as babies. He gives his salvation to the person in jail. He gives his forgiveness to an 80-year-old who first comes to faith as he is dying. They all receive the same eternal life. It's not fair, it's more than fair. It's the generous grace that comes through faith in the saving work of Jesus our Savior.

*The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.*

### **Questions for the Younger Children**

- Why were the first workers hired at 6 a.m. upset with their pay?
- If the owner got to decide what he wanted to pay his workers, what is the story telling us about God and how he treats us?

### **Questions for Elementary Age Children**

- Recall the last time something happened that felt unfair to you. Did you have a right to feel that way?
- When it comes to who goes to heaven, is God is fair? Is that a good or bad thing? Why?

### **Questions for Middle School and Above**

- Often people struggle with the fact that God forgives murders who come to faith in prison. Why is it important that he does?
- If someone accuses God of being unfair, how would you answer them? Why?

### **Closing Prayer:**

Heavenly Father, we know that you are more than fair. You are overflowing in your generous love and grace. While we often compare ourselves to others, we know our sins make us no worse or better than anyone else. Help us to be thankful for the grace and forgiveness you give us and to others freely. Amen.