

First Baptist Church Smiths Falls

September 16, 2018

Scripture Readings: Matthew 20:1-16

1 ¶ "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. 2 He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. 3 "About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. 4 He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' 5 So they went. "He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing. 6 About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?' 7 "Because no one has hired us,' they answered. "He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.' 8 "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.' 9 "The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. 10 So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. 11 When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. 12 'These men 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.' 13 "But he answered one of them, 'Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? 14 Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. 15 Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?' 16 "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

Prayer of Illumination: Dear Lord, may the truth of Your word, the power of your Spirit, and the full assurance of your love Minister to us through your Holy Word. AMEN Congregational Prayer: "Our Father" Our Father, Which Art In Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom Come. Thy Will Be Done, On Earth As It Is In Heaven. Give Us This Day, Our Daily Bread, And Forgive Us Our Trespasses, As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us. And Lead Us Not Into

Temptation, But Deliver Us From Evil. For Thine Is The Kingdom, The Power And The Glory. Forever And Ever. Amen

Message: "Fairer than Fair - Grace"

- Our marvellous pastor from our youth grew up in Scotland, and retold this story many times to explain to us what grace means.- the soccer ball through the window story. - playing soccer in the yard - the front yard - many people playing, whole neighbourhood - Bill kicked the ball - perfect shot - just like those times that you are closing the car door, realise the keys are still in the ignition - give the order to your hand to close the door, but also say no - or you start to step a certain way, and realise that there is ice, but cannot stop yourself - same feeling as the ball went directly for the large front picture window - you know, it's a funny feeling when you hope against hope, and you hope that the impossible will still happen - and so, as that ball went toward that window, he hoped - but it shattered to pieces - before he could turn around - friends gone - vanished like a good meal - he too felt like running, but went inside - courage - father - I broke the window - silence - looked at the scene - father did not speak - reached into pocket, found a small coin - put it into son's hand - father was proud he told the truth - he still had to work to pay for the window - but this was a gift - and it

was grace - he did not deserve it - it was a gift of love

- That is grace - an undeserved favour or merit - a gift without reason:
And it is the gift of the grace of Jesus Christ that makes Christians so joyful, Sin may be great, but God's grace is greater, as we shall talk about today.

Part 1: Grace - The Manna

- Read Exodus 16:1-5. They were slaves, they were not used to foraging for food in a desert - they were recently set free - and they were not sure what to do. They have a feeling of bewilderment, a result of change - they were hungry, and the local Independent Grocer Store was not available - Remember the faith they had to have - they left their homes, and they were sent to wander - told to follow one man who had the plan - but who was also simply taking one step at a time - AND then they got hungry. So God fed them as a s act of grace. Deserve? Act of love.
- We have all received times that we have been given "Manna" - times when we too have been given a gift from God for our help in times of need, and in times of want - many of us here today understand God feeding us His "Manna" - a God-sent gift of love and peace in a time of conflict - The gift of God's grace that came to us like Manna!

- God sent the people food - a gift which touches us all - a gift which says that God is not JUST interested in our Spiritual lives, but also in our bodies - and it was grace - God did not have to feed them in this way, but instead gave them everything they needed, all the time. Not all of those people loved and served God. Not all praised God. Not all thanked God. But they all received the same gift of manna, of God's grace in His lavish gift of food - for 40 years. Is that fair?

Part 2: Grace - The Parable - Matthew 20:1-16

- This is a strange parable, because it deliberately is set up in a contrast - not only are the last people to be hire, paid the same amount as those who were hired early in the morning and those who spent the entire day in the fields, BUT the first people who were hired ALSO saw the others who were hired late get paid first - We have all had times when we think that others are being treated better than us - times when we do not think things are fair - but the last person to get paid, the one who worked the longest, got paid exactly what he was told he was going to get for the days work - one denarii - if those first workers were paid first, the parable might be easier to understand. What is fair?
- The secret of this parable is not to look at the one paid for 12 hours of

work, BUT it is to look at the one who is paid for one - the owner of the vineyard was not being mean to the first workers - he was being gracious to the ones who came last - he loving and graciously pays them for an entire day of work for only an hour. It was grace. Undeserved.

Part 3: Grace

- Buses, trains, airplanes - all get to the destination at the same time. Is that fair?
- God is a loving God who gives to those whom He loves – that is Grace. Grace is not fair. Grace is grace.
- Grace is not deserved. Earned. Bought. Tricked or demanded
- PLAY VIDEO: “What Is Grace?”
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUQ58RO6ve4>)
- God is a God of grace. He gives lavishly to His precious people (you and I). God has grace for all. God gives His grace to all. And the ultimate in God's grace - is life - Abundant life here on earth, and eternal life to come.
- Do you have life in all its abundance? God’s Grace is open to all people. God is waiting for us - many people believe that they are waiting for God - but God waits for all his creatures to turn towards him - no matter

how late they wait - He will accept us all. Just as Jesus accepted the man dying on the cross beside Him (Luke 23), a man who, in his dying breaths, turned his life over to Jesus. And he received the gift of God’s grace. To each of us, God waits with his gift

- It’s a free gift. No one deserves God’s gift of life. Grace is not fair. If God was fair we would all merit death for eternity. But grace sees us all of worthy of life - life today, and life for eternity.
- Sin may be great, but God’s grace is greater.

Conclusion:

- Fair meant that he should have been killed. After all, that is the same punishment that he inflicted on others. Oh, he did it in the name of God. He also did it to the approval, in fact the loving approval, of the people and especially with the approval of the religious leaders who set the rules. In fact he was on his way to another city to let his reign of terror become even worse (Acts 9). He already had a reputation as a merciless killer - but after he was done in this next city, he would be a legend - he rounded-up his band of mercenaries, and set off for Damascus - a place where he knew he would find plenty of prey - believers in Jesus Christ. He was almost there, - a righteous murderer - and then God stopped him

- God stopped him in his tracks. Using the same ideal of fairness that we use here on earth, God should have had one punishment for him - It would have made a great story - the one who killed in the name of religion - the one who killed Christians in the name of Jesus would also be killed - and this time this killer of God's people in the name of religion would himself be killed by God - by God himself - IT might have made a great story, BUT God's idea of Justice, mercy, righteousness AND GRACE kept that man alive, allowed him to see the way, and he became a follower of Jesus himself - because of grace he became the world's greatest believer in Jesus Christ. His name was Paul. And he wrote almost 2/3 of the New Testament about how to live in God's grace. Paul's sin may be great, but God's grace is greater. Paul accepted God's grace and had life. What about you?