

Week of January 22-28

## **IT'S NOT FAIR!**

**Scripture Reading:** Read Matthew chapter 20

If you have ever been a parent, you've probably heard the phrase, "it's not fair," leap out of the mouths of your children. "How come my brother gets to stay up later? It's not fair." "How come my sister gets the last piece of pie? It's not fair." "My friends get to watch that show but I can't. It's not fair." Over and over, the refrain is repeated, "It's not fair." Inside of each of us, there seems to be a detection meter that is constantly measuring whether something is fair or not.

In today's chapter, Jesus opens with another parable. This one is often known as the "Parable of the Workers and the Vineyard." It could have been called the "Parable of It's Not Fair" if we wanted to be facetious. In the story, Jesus speaks of workers who were hired by a landowner to work in his vineyard. They agreed to be paid a day's wage for their work. Throughout the day, the landowner continued to hire more workers. At the end of the day, the owner of the vineyard paid his workers, beginning with those who were hired last. He paid them a day's wage for an hour's work. When he got to the group who was hired first, they expected to be paid more for their work. The owner paid them the agreed upon wage and they grumbled against him. You can almost hear it now, "IT'S NOT FAIR!"

Now, we can argue that they did agree to the day's wage so the landowner was being fair to what was promised but, in a way, they were right. It wasn't fair. They worked all day and they received the same wage as those who worked but an hour. The response of the landowner to the complaints of "it's not fair," is to raise the question, "*Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?*" What the workers failed to understand and what Jesus illustrates is the amazing generosity of the Father. Welcome to grace!

According to the apostle Paul, "*the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" Grace is a gift from God, not based on what we do or don't do, not based on what we have earned or merited, but simply out of his abundant mercy because of the sacrifice of Jesus his Son on the cross. As a friend of mine once remarked, God saves from the guttermost to the uttermost...and it's all by grace! Therefore, it's not fair in the sense of being distributed to the undeserving. But, in another sense, it is fair, because God has a right to distribute his grace as extravagantly and as generously as he desires. So, the next time you feel tempted to say, "it's not fair," just remember God's grace that was shared with you.

**Action Step:** Take a moment to sing the hymn, "Amazing Grace." Better yet, rent the movie, "Amazing Grace" and let the Lord surprise you with his grace.

**Prayer Focus:** Pray through Ephesians 3:16-19 that you might better grasp the grace of God.

**Take-a-way:** *Expensively purchased and freely given...they call it amazing grace for a reason.*