

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ!

The usual daily wage in Jesus' time was a denarius a day, so picture this landowner hiring some laborers for his vineyard to work for the day at the prevailing wage.

Hiring early in the morning would have been daybreak or about 6 a.m., then he goes back out at 9, noon, 3 and again about 5. Now note that with these later additions to the vineyard force, he simply tells them "I will pay you whatever is right." He must be a reputable guy since the workers trust him to make a fair determination as to "whatever is right" is.

Those who started later in the day were paid first, they each received a denarius. Those who were hired first saw that and expected to be paid even more, but they were also paid a denarius for the work of the day.

"Well that's not fair! You have no right to be generous to these other people who didn't do the amount of work that I did!"

So the real complaint isn't about the landowner's fairness, even if he did honor the agreement he made with the earliest workers, no, the real complaint is the landowner's generosity. The landowner paid what he thought was right, his money, his vineyard, his prerogative.

"For the kingdom of heaven is like..." the landowner, like God, is lavish in his generosity, even extravagant in his generosity. Of course this is what it looks like to me, perhaps to you, but then it may be that my expectations, our expectations, were too low to begin with. But this is the norm with the kingdom of heaven.

We come to church, to scripture, to our Bible studies with our preconceived notions of what mercy, what divine generosity, what grace look like. After all, aren't our ideas a reasonable approximation of how God actually works? But then we see a kingdom of God that isn't like anything we can imagine. God has decided to "pay you whatever is right." And God's divine economy isn't according to the standards of the world or our standards either, whether we understand it or not.

It's evidence of our own sinfulness that instead of appreciating that we are called to serve and live for such a gracious, generous God, that we get distracted and start to compare what we've been given with what others have been given. Or what we think they've been given, because the truth is we don't even have a clue as to the extent of our own blessings much less those of someone else. Still we want to compare for fear that we're somehow being short-changed or left out of something.

Good thing for us that none of us get what we deserve, rather, by grace through faith we get what God thinks is right. From our ELW (p 230) "Pour out your Holy Spirit, the power of your living Word, that those who are washed in the waters of baptism may be given new life." The baptism service continues with "We give you thanks, O

God, that through water and the Holy Spirit you give your daughters and sons new birth, cleanse them from sin, and raise them up to eternal life.”

And in a few more minutes you will again hear how Jesus gave his body and blood for you. Now we are individuals, each of us is different from the other, and this unfolds differently for each of us, but the truth is it's all done for us through God's grace and generosity.

When we think of others and their blessings we would be best served if we simply thank God for them and ask God's mercy upon them. Otherwise keep your eye on the cross, focused on Christ, asking that God help us to live as best we are able in the grace he has given us, not because we deserve it but because in God's mercy he will give us what he feels is right.

AMEN