

Parables: Jesus the Storyteller

Lesson 17 - Not Fair!

Warm up –

1. What's the worst thing that has ever happened to you at work (either a paid job or the work you do around the house for your parents?)
2. How do you react if someone who hasn't worked nearly as hard as you have gets as much (or more) praise as you do from your boss?
 - upset
 - not a big deal
 - what happens to the other person doesn't affect me
 - other :

Lesson -

Maybe you've been working for a year or more slinging burgers at the local Burger Barn or bagging groceries at Food mart. Or maybe you're just thinking about signing on somewhere one of these days. Either way, you probably have some ideas about what kind of boss you'd like to have. If you're already pulling in a paycheck, you've discovered that a kind and generous boss is better than a mean and stingy one. It's a concept most of us can relate to.

Jesus' disciples were kind and proud of themselves that they left everything to follow Jesus. But they also wanted to know what they'd get out of the deal. Peter, never one to mince words, popped the questions. "Tell us, Jesus, what's in it for us?" (Matt. 19:27). In response, Jesus told the story of the boss and the workers in the vineyard.

The bottom line of the parable? At the end of the day, when it's time to pay up, the boss chooses to be generous to everyone. He gives the same amount of money to everybody who worked for him. Those who barely had time to work up a sweat because they started an hour from quitting time got as much as those who slaved all day under the scorching sun. Not surprisingly, that doesn't go over big with the all-day workers.

But think about it. Do any of us deserve God's grace? Have we really "earned" the right to heaven? Isn't it only because God generously chooses to reward us - not according to what we've done but according to his grace - that we receive the ultimate prize, eternal life?

So instead of whining when someone else gets the same reward - someone we think less deserving than ourselves - we can be grateful. God isn't fair. Instead, he's gracious and compassionate.

Read Matthew 20: 1-6

1. As you read this, figure out how many hours each of the workers put in.
2. What were the workers complaining about? Did they have a right to complain?
3. How did the landowner respond?
 - angry
 - threatening
 - understanding
 - compassionate
 - other
4. Was the landlord ever untrue to his word? Did he treat the workers fairly?
5. "So the last will be first and the first will be last." What did Jesus mean by this? Who are the "first" and the "last"?
6. What does God's generosity to us teach you about what life is supposed to be like in the kingdom of God? Resolve to carry out what you've learned in the weeks ahead.
7. Why do we always want to be treated better than others (we want the best seat, the best parking spot, the first place in line, the biggest piece of chocolate cake)?
8. Doesn't being a follower of Jesus mean we need to practice the opposite attitude? Discuss as a group how to conquer some of these selfish motives.