

Devotional Tools: SeniorWalk



In the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, several day laborers agree on a daily wage and are hired to work in the vineyard. As the day progresses, the landowner gathers more day laborers, who also come to work. Even as the day nears the end, the landowner finds additional laborers who are available and sends them to work.

At the end of the day all are paid, starting with the last hired and ending with the first hired. This reversal of order sets up the dynamics of the story. Each worker receives the same wage, regardless of how long they worked. The first workers become angry at this “inequity,” and jealousy breaks out. What is the offense?

The landowner’s generosity becomes an issue. It is clear that the amount paid doesn’t reflect the hours worked. Instead, everyone receives what they need to feed their families, no matter how late in the day they were brought in to work. We are told that the Kingdom of heaven is like this, and Jesus repeats his lesson of reversals: “the last shall be first, and the first last.”

Who do you identify with in this story? Have you dealt with issues of jealousy in your family relationships? When jealousy has been an issue, how has it affected family relationships and family dynamics?

Is generosity a cause for jealousy in families today? What beliefs underlie jealousy? If the Kingdom of God is like this generous landowner, it means that God is generous to people who we may not think deserve it. What does someone have to do to deserve God’s generosity, according to this parable?

It appears that the Kingdom of God comes to upset the order of expectations. The last get paid first and the first get paid last. What do you make of this reversal theme that Jesus uses in his parables?

According to Biblical scholars, this parable teaches us that we do not enter into God’s Kingdom by our works. The ruling principle is God’s generous grace, sufficient for all. Is God’s grace fair? Do some people get more than they deserve? Are we jealous of the “unworthy” ones? What happens to the family dynamics when everyone gets the same generous wage?

Lord you are generous; we are jealous. You extend your grace; we resent those who didn’t earn it. We keep score; you forgive sins and don’t count our sins against us. Forgive us. Amen.