

GRACE, NOT DESERVING

Matthew 20:1-16

In today's parable of the labourers in the vineyard, the behaviour of the owner of the vineyard would have been considered very strange and even foolish in Jesus' time; he gave a day's wages to labourers who only worked one hour. Grace is the central theme of this parable. In it, we meet a group of laborers (those hired at daybreak) whose master wasn't very happy with. "*My friend, I am not being unjust to you, did we not agree one denarius?*" Of course, Jesus is using the word friend ironically because they failed to recognise the grace behind the actions of the master. We can identify three reasons those hired at daybreak are prevented from operating from the viewpoint of grace.

a) The spirit of judgement

Those hired at daybreak decided the latecomers didn't deserve a full day's wage. It was none of their business! Jesus was obviously pointing his finger at Pharisees who judged others while pretending to be spiritual powerhouses. We easily can walk around judging our own brothers and sisters. Judgement can prevent us from recognising God's grace in our midst.

b) The Spirit of Competition

It's interesting because those hired at daybreak were not offended by what they received but by what was given to others. In the world there's competition. The church is not free from this. It is so easy to be ruled by competition.

c) The spirit of rebellion

Those hired at daybreak verbally rebelled against the master simply because his actions seemed very unfair to them. Even as people of faith we can be obscured from grace and become rebellious, thinking we are fighting injustice.

Jesus seems to be saying that God does not ask us to be deserving but to be receptive and share with each other what we receive from him.