



Stepping Stones

Matthew 20:1-16 New Revised Standard Version

¹“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ²After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³When he went out about nine o’clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴and he said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went. ⁵When he went out again about noon and about three o’clock, he did the same. ⁶And about five o’clock he went out and found others standing around, and he said to them, ‘Why are you standing here idle all day?’ ⁷They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard.’ ⁸When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.’ ⁹When those hired about five o’clock came, each of them received a denarius. ¹⁰Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. ¹¹And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, ¹²saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ ¹³But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius?’ ¹⁴Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. ¹⁵Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ ¹⁶So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”



“God will not be outdone in generosity.” –St. Ignatius

I’ve said it. You’ve said it. We’ve all heard it countless times: “It’s not fair!” If someone gets a bigger slice of cake, it’s not fair. If someone picks up the last item off of the shelf, it’s not fair. It’s human nature to see things which appear to be working against us and call “foul.” That was the response given by the workers in today’s parable who had been hired by the vineyard owner first thing in the morning.

They had agreed to the usual day’s pay of one denarius and, at the end of the day, they received just that. They weren’t short-changed. They didn’t get a worn-out sandal in place of a coin. The vineyard owner kept his end of the bargain and came through as promised. But, for those workers, there was a much bigger issue at hand.

Their disappointment came not from what they did or didn’t receive, but as a result of others receiving the same thing. Perhaps you can understand their frustration. Work more and receive more would make sense. But, why would the owner give those who worked only a fraction of the time the same day’s pay? Because he was generous.

The kingdom of heaven is like this.

1. Divine grace is the response to a common need.
2. Superiority is blind to the generosity of God’s grace.
3. Grace has room for those who otherwise feel neglected.

Prayer Pebble: Lord, you have more than enough grace to touch this troubled world. Help me to understand it is not a matter of fairness. Amen.