

Our society is pretty hung-up on being fair. We even try to legislate fairness, ensuring that housing is fair, education is fair, and employment is fair. “It’s not fair” has become a battle cry within our cultural landscape. Yet our society still doesn’t get it.

- We know that there are still communities that economically “screen” home-buyers.
- That more money and resources are allocated to certain schools and less is made available to others.
- And that many workplaces still have glass-ceilings.
- We are fair to non-smokers by being un-fair to smokers.
- We cry for fairness within our own borders, yet think nothing of saving a few bucks on a piece of clothing made by underpaid laborers in a third-world sweatshop.
- And to hear the news media speak, we are cutting taxes to the rich and over-taxing the poor.
- And that’s not fair, but then neither is our media.
- The truth is, no matter how much we wish it were life just isn’t fair.

And because life isn’t as fair as we would like, this Gospel can make us uncomfortable and might even offend some of us.

## **PAUSE**

Jesus tells his disciples that the kingdom of heaven is like a landlord who hires help at various times through the day - so that some work twelve hours, some nine, some six, and some - the last ones hired - work for only one hour.

At the end of the day, when the boss pays off his workers, those he hired last receive not one hour's pay but a whole day's pay

Is it fair? **NO**, it is not **fair**. Certainly the workers who slaved all day in the heat do not think so, and they grumble and then complain to the landlord.

**‘These last ones worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who bore the day’s burden and the heat.’**

And we, the listeners more easily see the **injustice** done to those who worked all day than we see the **justice** done to the late-arrivers.

(Pause)

Before going on let us remember that the workers who were hired in the morning received everything that was due to them for their labor.

They contracted to do a day's work for a day's wage. Nothing un-fair about that! We might also remember that those workers who were hired first had a great privilege:

- they knew from the very beginning of the day that they had work
- and they knew that they would be paid fairly for it.

Now, let us look at the parable from the point of view of those hired last.

All day they stood around in the unemployment line as landlords came and went, but they were not hired.

At home they had family and nothing to feed them with, hope disappeared for them as the sun cut its course across the sky.

They **longed** to be in the fields under that hot sun **working** for someone and at the end of the day being paid a wage which would feed and cloth their family.

And finally, just as their last hope is about to set with the sun someone comes and hires them and tells them that they will receive whatever is fair.

And they go, and they work with the hope of bringing home something, a small portion of a day's wage, enough - maybe - to survive another day.

**It's tough my friends**, being an outsider, being one who has no hope - or very little hope. And I'm not talking here about unemployment, though I know what that is as well. I'm talking about no *hope*.

And so you can imagine just how those hired last felt when the time to be paid came.

They likely didn't feel very good at all, they knew they were going to get something but:

- Would it really help them all that much?
- Would it be enough to feed their wife and their children?
- Who might have to go without?
- Who could afford to eat less?

But then - the landlord does something completely crazy, completely wild, completely unexpected, completely and totally generous something beyond their wildest dreams...He gives them a full day's wage even though they haven't earned it.

He gives them enough to live on. He gives them their families, their homes, their very lives!

That's incredible isn't it?

And my friends, **that** is what the kingdom of heaven is like.

- the kingdom of heaven works on the basis of God's love, God's justice, God's righteousness and not on the basis of what we deserve.

Our first reading tells us:

**For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts.)**

(Pause)

There is Good News in this parable. It is the Good News of God's love.

God looks at us, and he sees our needs and he meets those needs. And the question in God's mind is never 'how much do these people deserve?' but rather, 'how can I help them? How can I save them before they perish?'

And so - God does something completely crazy, completely wild, completely unexpected, completely and totally generous, something beyond our wildest dreams...He gives us a full day's wage. **(Short Pause)**

How? He sends His only begotten Son, Jesus, to live as one of us, to die instead of us, and to be raised from the dead, so that we might share in that same resurrection. He gives us the incredible gift of the Church and **lavishes** grace and blessings upon us in His Sacraments. He gives us hope. He gives us life.

And that is God's **right** - and God's **pleasure**, to be generous with his love, to give us more than we deserve, to make our hearts glad.

*(If time or occasion allows)*

*It is all grace and blessings my friends.*

*It is grace to be hired in the morning, when our parents bring us forth as infants to the waters of Baptism. It is grace to be hired at noon time, after the rebellion of our youth. And it is a grace to be hired near the end of the day when we have become weary of working so hard at trying to do it all ourselves.*

(Pause)

Brothers and sisters, the parable of the Generous Landlord is offensive, if you believe that God's love is something you earn.

- It is offensive if you weigh and measure other people rather than really try to love them as God loves them.
- It is offensive if you do not cry over the hunger of the unemployed and weep over those who are wasting their lives away in things that do not profit them.
- It is offensive if you are not brought to your knees in prayer for those who have lost hope.
- It is offensive when we sit comfortably, in God's grace and love while there are so many who have never been invited to come into the His vineyard.

**But.....** for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear the parable is glorious news about God's love for us all.