

## *Ordinary 25A 2014*

### *It's All about Grace*

The gospel we just heard is one of those parables that leaves us puzzled. It seems so unfair. Why does the landowner pay those who have worked only a few hours the same wage that he pays those who have borne the heat of the day?

The answer is found in the way Jesus introduces this parable: “The kingdom of heaven is *like* a landowner who went out to hire laborers for his vineyard.” But how is the kingdom of heaven *like* this parable, and why does Jesus use this parable to explain what he means by the kingdom of heaven?

The kingdom of heaven is God’s gracious gift to us. It is not something we earn. It is not something we gain by the fruit of our labor. It is God’s gracious gift of salvation. This is why the last workers receive the same wage as those who have borne the heat of day. The owner of the vineyard represents God, and the workers of the vineyard represent us. Although we have been called to God’s vineyard at different moments in our lives, and although some seem to have done more than others, we all receive the same gift of God’s grace.

But it stills seems so unfair. Shouldn’t I get more if I have done more? Shouldn’t I get more if I have been called earlier? This, of course, is the way we live and think in the workplace: equal pay for equal work; extra reward for extra effort. But our relationship with God is different. Our relationship with God is

always a relationship of grace, mercy, and forgiveness. Our salvation is not something we earn but something freely and graciously given to us in Jesus Christ. And because our salvation is such a free and gracious gift we can and ought to live in an entirely new way that expresses our gratitude to God.

Because God has freely given us the gift of his saving grace in Jesus Christ, we can and should extend mercy and forgiveness to each other. Because God has freely given us the gift of his saving grace in Jesus Christ, there is no need for us to be anxious and afraid. Because God has given us the gift of his saving grace, we live in an entirely new way that those who have not experienced God's grace will not understand until they have experienced God's grace. And because we have experienced this grace, we ought to invite others to the new life we have received in Jesus Christ.

My life, like yours, gets rather busy and hectic at times. And at such moments I fall into the pernicious trap of thinking that I am what I do and accomplish. At such moments I act as if everything depends on me. At such moments I am more interested in what I do than in what I have received. But then I read this parable and I remember that it is not all about me; it is all about God's grace: from start to finish all is grace, God gracious grace.