

Sermon Series: "The Darkness and the Dawn"—LOL, Westfield—3/19/2003

Title: "What is fair?"

Text: Luke 23: 39-43 & Matt. 20: 1-16

Intro: *Retelling the story of the parable of Master and Workers in Vineyard*

Theme: Although we might expect what is fair, God in His graces gives what we need.

We demand and expect life to be fair

- Retribution is the law of life
 1. **Ills.: Pay me now or pay me later**
 2. The two Scripture accounts are based upon a system of payment
 - a. The wages of the hired hand
 - b. The crucifixion of the criminals on either side of Jesus for past crimes
 - c. Jesus, asked to make a payment which he did not owe
- Retribution is often what we choose
 1. We don't like a life which seems to operate without "just" rules
 2. Our self-righteous rage twisted into unjust anger
 - a. Jealous when others get ahead or get undeserved favors (*workers—vs. 12*)
 - b. Sinfully lashing out to hurt and deprive others to get back (*evil thief to Jesus*)
 - c. Not content and blaming God (*vs. 11*)
- Retribution is really what we deserve but not what we want
 1. **Ills.: "You ask for justice when what you want is mercy."**(Rosenberg spy trial)
 2. When we unmercifully judge others, we are judging ourselves
 3. "You will be judged by the same standard you use to judge others." *Mt 7:2*
 4. The penitent thief recognized he deserved "justice"; only Jesus could give "mercy"

God upsets our equation by his grace

- God pours out His grace and is not "fair"
 1. Otherwise we would not stand a chance (*If you counted iniquity, who could stand.*)
 2. The thief—no calculated compensation to give but forgiven anyway
 3. Jesus did not throw out justice—He satisfied it
 4. "Jesus brought the sacrifice for the sins of the people once and for all when he sacrificed himself." **Heb 7:27**
- God insists on being gracious to all
 1. Even to the "unworthy" in the waning hours (**Read Mat. 20: 6-9**)
 2. Deleting our thought of works righteousness (*we bore the burden...vs. 12*)
 3. Even to me —**CHIEF OF SINNERS**
- God wants us to be filled up with his mercy (*I desire mercy not sacrifice. Mat 9:13*)
 1. So that we forgive like He does
 2. So that we love, unconditionally, like He does
 3. So that we seek and rejoice over the lost like he does
 4. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."
Luke 15: 10
 5. **Ills.:** Theologian John Newton said, "When I get to heaven I shall see three wonders there. The first wonder will be, to see many people there whom I did not expect to see—the second wonder will be to miss many people whom I did expect to see; and the final and greatest wonder of all, will be to find myself there."

Matthew 20:1-16

¹"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. ²He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. ³"About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. ⁴He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' ⁵So they went. "He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing. ⁶About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?' ⁷" 'Because no one has hired us,' they answered. "He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.' ⁸"When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.' ⁹"The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. ¹⁰So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. ¹¹When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ¹²"These men who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.' ¹³"But he answered one of them, 'Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius?' ¹⁴"Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. ¹⁵"Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?' ¹⁶"So the last will be first, and the first will be last."