

**Icebreaker:**

What was your first real job and how much money did you make?

**Read this week's scripture and discuss:**

1. Author James Bryan Smith asks about this parable, "If this is the only story you heard about God, what would you conclude?"
2. In the parable, how would you characterize the landowner? Thinking from the perspectives of the workers, how would you feel?
3. The landowner says in verse 13, "Friend, I am doing no wrong." Another translation says the owner is "not being unfair." Each worker receives the same wage. Is the owner unfair? Is God's grace fair? Is being generous fair?
4. The workers hired later are paid the same (one denarius) for less work. Do you rejoice when others benefit and you do not?
5. The landowner is generous. Is it possible to be too generous? Why or why not?
6. When author Dale Bruner reflects on this parable, he says judgment day will be a day of surprises. Does that make you excited, sad, or nervous?

**Prayer:**

As you pray for one another, please pray for the following needs in our church family:

## prayer requests

- > We celebrate with Tim, Marissa, and Hunter Cope in the birth of Everett Ralph and with Betsy and Michal Howden in the birth of their granddaughter Winifred Jean Ellison.
  - > Prayers of healing for Regina Franks, Greg Mahler, and Robert Neal.
- [The following are from ZPC's prayer calendar, which is available at the Welcome Center or at [zpc.org/prayer](http://zpc.org/prayer).]
- > Pray for missionaries Alfredo and Tamero as they expand their ministry across North Africa.
  - > Pray for the women attending the Great Banquet this weekend and for the team serving them.

God's generosity is God's grace. The parable in Matthew 20 is not so much about wages and work, but about God's grace and God's generosity. God's gift of salvation is free to all those who ask. No one deserves eternal life, we are all receivers of God's great grace, whether we accept it at a young age or later in life. Instead of grumbling or being envious, we are called to be thankful for what we have and to be generous to others.

1. We might learn these things about God: God is not caught up in feelings the way we are. God is honest – the landowner promised to pay one denarius and that is what he paid. God is relentlessly coming after us - the landowner goes out to find the ones standing around not working; he does not wait on them to come. God is generous – the landowner generously gives of his money to the workers.
2. The landowner is probably not like business owners today – the workers are not paid by the hour or for the amount of work. But the landowner is certainly generous. For the workers, we would probably react as they did, grumbling at those who worked less but received the same pay. If we worked the last hour, we would be incredibly grateful. We should be grateful to God for his salvation; it is truly a gift of grace, not earned.
3. The owner is being fair in that he is paying what he agreed to at the first of the day. He is not being fair as far as paying the same amount for different amounts of work. God's grace is not fair. It is unmerited favor. Being generous is not fair. If I give to one person in need and not the other, is it fair? But any gift to someone in need is generous. God is generous and we need to have eyes open to see where we can be generous.
4. As humans, it is hard to be excited when someone else gets something that we don't get. If we can step outside of ourselves, and mentally and emotionally put the other person first, we can be genuinely excited when someone else benefits.
5. 2 Corinthians 9:7 says, "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." We are to decide in our hearts what to give and to be cheerful about it. If we are too generous, we can make relationships uneven or awkward, where someone is dependent on us. Over-giving can be used to gain influence or friends, and can lead us to not taking care of our own needs or our family's needs.
6. Judgment day may be full of surprises if we see that God chooses to save people we didn't expect: people who hurt us or others, people who made "deathbed" conversions, and people who don't look like us, sound like us, act like us (excited and nervous). There might be people missing who were friendly but chose to reject God (sad). May we humbly choose to accept God's grace in our own lives now (so that we won't be nervous)!