

Fifth Sunday in Lent

Lectionary title 16: **The Mystery of the Messianic Grace**

Nursery/Kindergarten/Younger Elementary Levels

God Is Gracious

(Based on Matthew 20:1-16)



A landowner hires helpers to work on his farm that grows grapes.

He hires some workers in the morning. He offers them their daily pay and they accept it.



He hires some more workers in the afternoon. He offers them the same daily pay and they accept it.

Then before the end of the day' work, he still hires workers who still need the job. He offers them the same daily pay and they accept it.

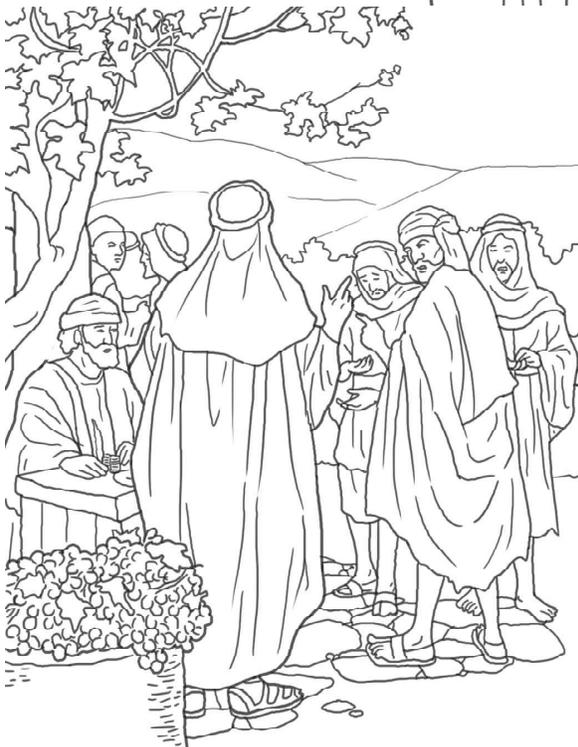
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At the end of the day, everyone receives the same daily pay.

The workers who worked longer hours complained, "Why did you give the same pay to everyone when we worked longer than the others?"



The man answered, "Did you not accept my offer of daily wage? You take what is yours and leave. Are you angry because you are envious or because I am generous?"

The last shall be first and the first shall be last."

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Middle Elementary/Older Elementary Levels

After reading the story, Answer these questions.

1. What is a vineyard?

2. How can you describe the landowner and the workers?

3. How were the workers hired?

4. What did the landowner offer the workers who came at different times of the day?

5. What happened at the end of the day's work?

6. Who among the workers got angry? Why did they complain?

7. Do you agree with these workers?

8. How do pride and envy reflected in the story? Explain your answer.

9. How can envy affect relationships at home or in school?

10. How can you show respect and tolerance for others?

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Middle Elementary/Older Elementary Levels

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6. Who among the workers got angry? Why did they complain?

7. Do you agree with these workers?

8. How do pride and envy reflected in the story? Explain your answer.

9. How can envy affect relationships in the church?

10. How can you humble yourself when serving others?

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Youth Level

Read the passages and write them in your own words.

Isaiah 58:6-12

6-7 Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

8-9 Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator² shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rearguard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,

10-12 if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

Matthew 20:1-16

1-2 For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard.

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Youth Level

3-4 When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." So they went.

5-7 When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And 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?" They said to him, "Because no one has hired us." He said to them, "You also go into the vineyard."

8 When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, "Call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first."

9-10 When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage.* Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage.

11-12 And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, "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."

13-16 But he replied to one of them, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous? So the last will be first, and the first will be last.

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Adult Level

First Group. Discuss Isaiah 58:6-12 by emphasizing the following:

1. Importance of true fasting: Sacrificial giving to the poor and weak by sharing food and clothes
2. God's provision to people who care for the poor, the helpless, and the weak
3. The foretelling of the coming of the Lord

Second Group. Discuss Matthew 20:1-16 by emphasizing the following:

1. The landowner giving work and same pay to all workers even beyond legal considerations and God's grace by offering everyone with the gift of salvation
2. The workers accepting the work offer and the people receiving the gift of salvation
3. The workers who got stuck with envy and missed the gracious intention of the landowner and the submission to God's will by the believers
4. The inclusive grace of God by giving equal chances to people who heard the Good News in the past, at present, and in the future

Answer these questions orally.

1. Why do you think God is pleased with fasting that involves sacrificial giving to the poor, helpless, and weak? (See Isaiah 58:6-7)
2. How can we make the following work for us today?
 - a. Your light coming out like the dawn
 - b. Your quick healing
 - c. God answering whenever you call on Him
 - d. God guiding you always
 - e. God satisfying your needs
3. How did the landowner show God's grace among his workers?
4. How can you define God's grace based on this story?