

Storied

The Fair Left Town Last Week- Session #4

Small Group Notes

Introduction:

Have you ever had a job that you feel that you were paid too little for? How did that impact the way that you worked?

One of the struggles that the church faces is consumerism. We live with an inflated sense of our rights as consumers, a trait that is flipped on its head in the kingdom of God. Therefore, as consumers we can often be tempted to think that the grace of God is something that can be purchased or based on us.

In what ways have you seen the influences of consumerism in your own personal life? What are ways that we can bring that attitude into the church?

The love of God that is demonstrated in the gospel is based on grace and not on works. Grace puts us in our place of need. Because we are all in great need, we should be glad God is gracious, grateful, and generous. In today's discussion we are going to see one of the stories that Jesus shares is about the grace of God. It is truly when we understand the basis of God's grace is not upon our works but upon His love, it becomes freeing for us to live in greater fellowship with Him.

Discuss:

1. God's Grace is Never Fair

- Matthew 20:1-8
- John 1:1-5; John 19:28-30

Explain: The first group of workers probably watched each group arrive, growing more surprised by the master's hiring patterns as the day progressed. They likely wondered what each group would receive as compensation for their work. The last workers to arrive, grateful for the work, must have seen the early workers as tired and burdened men who

had served well all day. Though they worked different amounts of time, the one thing all these workers had in common was that the master did not have to hire any of them. Similarly, God isn't bound to invite anyone to be a part of His kingdom. He does so because He wants to. That invitation is purely out of grace, apart from whatever we think we deserve.

Ask:

Think about your own Christian life, particularly your work for the Kingdom. Which group of workers do you most identify with? Why?

Why is it important for us to see that the focus in this parable is on the employer, not the employees? What happens if our focus in the Kingdom is on each other and not on God?

In what ways might we be tempted to think that we deserve to be a part of God's kingdom and work? What happens to our relationship with God and others when we do so?

2. The worst thing about God's grace is that it is not fair

- Matthew 20:9-12

Explain: Instead of marveling at the generosity of the master, the workers were too busy looking at each other to notice. When we start coveting the gifts God gives to others, we start complaining. Instead of being grateful for what God has given us, we start grumbling about what God has given someone else.

Ask:

How have you seen the comparison game ruin lives and friendships? How were these people playing the same type of game when it came to God's grace?

In what ways can we be tempted to step into the place of God as the judge instead of a servant? How can that attitude impact the way that we see others in the church?

3. The best thing about God's grace is that it is not fair

- Matthew 20:13-14

Explain: If God gave us what we deserve, He would punish us for our sins. Then, we would be cut off from a relationship with Him; "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Anytime we think we are not getting something that we deserve, we should remember that we deserve to pay the penalty for our sins, and yet, God demonstrated His love for us by sending Jesus to die for us while we were still sinners (Rom. 5:8). God's love is most profoundly displayed in the grace He offers us through the death of His Son. That grace should radically change the way we love others.

Ask:

What does the generosity of the master teach us about the love of God? How can understanding the grace of God strengthen our worship?

How do you think the disciples (who were primarily uneducated and outcasts from society) felt hearing these words of Jesus? How can this story be used to share the gospel?

4. Life isn't fair but the grace of the King is good.

- Matthew 20: 15-16

- Romans 9:14-16

Explain: The point goes beyond the fact that all have the same reward-going to heaven (where they will have reward in different measure). The point is that God rewards on the principle of grace, and we should therefore expect surprises. He will never be *less* than fair but reserves the right to be *more* than fair as pleases Him. God's grace always operates righteously.

Ask:

How would you explain the principle of the first will be last and the last first in your own words?

Can you think of a particular area in your life that applying the principles from this parable would help?