

Generosity of Grace Twentieth Week in Ordinary Time Wednesday, August 17, 2016
8:15 AM Ez 34:1-11; **Mt 20:1-16** (Salvation is about God bearing the day's burden and the heat in Christ, and the rest of us doing what we can.)

“He said to one of them in reply, ‘My friend, I am not cheating you.’”

Now **parables** are all forms of figures of speech; they are metaphors; they are comparisons; they are exaggerations. They **are extended proverbs**, if you will. And the point of this particular teaching is that God's generosity exceeds justice, fairness, and equity, as we understand it. It is very important that we understand this, that God does not deal with us according to our deserts. That's the first point we could make from this, that **God is far more generous and gives us much more than we ever earn**. But then there is another very hidden hook in this story and that has to do with people's illusions.

Who are those, for example, who have borne the day's burden and the heat? After all, this is not about vineyards. This is about salvation. **This is about the inclusion of the many into the kingdom**. And this is about the objection that some have because they believe that they have an exclusive right that others do not to the membership in the kingdom of God. And that is what Jesus heard in his day. **There were those who thought that they had a right or a divinely sanctioned privilege to participate in something other people did not** have a right to participate in or to which others did not really belong.

Now this mentality is still with us, this exclusivity, this idea by following certain rules we have a right to grace, which is absurd. Grace is something you can't have a right to. **Grace is always gift**. That's the whole problem when people start thinking that somehow they are the ones who really deserve, whereas others really don't. The fact is **no one has borne the day's burden or the heat except Christ himself. And he is very happy to include others in what he has gained for humanity**.

The interesting thing about this story is no one really corresponds to the first group except Jesus himself. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. Only he has been with the creation from the beginning. Only he bears the day's burden and the heat. Only he suffered on the cross. Others have suffered, some have suffered death, but no one has suffered what he did. So all of us are beneficiaries of the benevolence and the generosity of God, but we may not realize it. We may think we are the ones, as some people in Jesus' day thought they were the ones that were really bearing the burden because they were carrying the Law, the Torah, on their shoulders, and putting it on other people's shoulders. But this is not what salvation is about.

Salvation is about God bearing the day's burden and the heat in Christ, in the humanity of Christ, and the rest of us doing what we can.

But whatever it is we are receiving is way more than we have earned, even if we have done everything, even if we have given our lives, it's still more than we have earned. Even our life is nothing in comparison to eternal life, the life of God. **The life of a creature is not proportionate to the life of the Creator.** This is what this is about. It's something we have to actually think about because our natural way of thinking is all wrong. That's another point all the parables make: **our natural way of thinking is all wrong.** Our natural way of feeling about things is off. It isn't rooted in what is real. It's rooted in what is imaginary. **Do we realize how much we are fed imaginary information all the time?** You know if you turn on the television, you get different takes on the news of the day. All those different takes are forms of imagination. **They are slants, interpretations, editing.** We have this wonderful Internet that is full of worldwide global data, but much of it is nothing but misinformation or slanted viewpoints. **We are supposed to wake up to that. That's what a parable is for,** so that we realize "the last will be first"—what a shock to the chosen people of God—"and the first will be last."