



**Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture**

**SERMON TEXT:** Matthew 20:1-16

**KEY POINT:** The true disciple rejoices at the grace of God, regardless of who receive it.

**FOR LEADERS**

- **Winter Sessions:** For 6 weeks, beginning December 9, we will be learning about evangelism—what it is, why to do it, and how to do it more effectively. Sign up at [emergencenj.org/sessions](http://emergencenj.org/sessions).
- **This week’s topic:** This is one of the primary biblical teachings on grace which is absolutely at the heart of what it means to understand God’s love for us.

**GETTING STARTED**

- [1] Communities Video:** Watch this week’s community extras video!
- [2] Icebreaker:** How will you be a channel for God’s grace this year at your Thanksgiving table?
- [3] Opener:** How did your own personal study go in the workbook this week? Was there anything you found particularly eye-opening?

**MISPLACING GRACE**

- [1]** How would you define the grace of God?
- [2]** Ryan began this week by pointing out how easy it is for Christians to “get over” the grace of God—not that we fail to acknowledge it, but rather that it sometimes becomes old hat and loses its place as central to our identity as believers. Have you found this to be true in your own life?
- [3]** Another common way Christians fail to cherish God’s grace is by developing a sense that some of us are more entitled to it than others, perhaps because of the length of time spent walking with Jesus, the work that we’ve done for the Kingdom of God, or our ability to obey some of God’s commandments. What are some other reasons people end up feeling a sense of entitlement when it comes to grace?
- [4]** Why is an attitude of entitlement to God’s grace destructive to our relationships with God?
- [5]** What are some negative ways that these kinds of attitudes impact our ability to be faithful servants of the gospel?

**UNGRATEFUL LABORERS**

**Ask for someone to read Matthew 20:1-16.**

*Leaders: Jesus’ teaching in this parable highlights at least two important facts about God’s grace, as it is presented to us in the Bible: (1) It is, by definition, undeserved (which means it will fly in the face of our impulses regarding fairness); (2) it is motivated by the free expression of God’s goodness, love, and generosity. Most failures to grasp the amazings of grace stem from a neglect of one or both of these truths.*

One important consideration that Ryan highlighted in the sermon is that it is the best, most able-bodied day laborers who tend to be hired first, while others who are, for various reasons, less desirable, are often the ones left waiting until later in the day. In the world of the parable, these workers seem much less

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deserving of a day’s wages than the others. And yet the master delights to bless them, not because they deserve it, but because he is good. These are akin to those to whom God shows extraordinary compassion. The implication is that if we resent God’s decision to also be gracious towards them, we end up resenting those to whom Jesus has been most kind, those who are the most striking examples of God’s grace.

- [6]** Do the actions of the master of the house in this parable strike you as fair or unfair? Explain.
- [7]** One false conclusion that might be drawn from this parable is that some people do, in fact, deserve God’s goodness. After all, in the parable itself, those hired first work all day and receive fair payment. Why is this false?
- [8]** Why is it so easy to fall into the mentality that God is obligated to give us more than we deserve? Do you ever catch yourself feeling this way?
- [9]** What are some of the lies that stand behind the belief that some of us are more entitled to receive God’s grace than others?
- [10]** In the sermon, Ryan pointed out that entitlement tends to arise when we compare ourselves to others. In a society obsessed with ranking people from best to worst, why are such comparisons unhealthy?

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**WHO OWES WHOM?**

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- [11]** Sometimes, people who serve can start to feel as if faithful service puts God in their debt—that he owes them goodness and blessing because they have given so much. This clearly is the attitude of the workers who labored all day. Consider what we read last week in Matthew 19:27–30. How does these verses inform the attitude of laborers who have grown hard-hearted in this way?
- [12]** If the various ways in which we serve God do not earn us favor and blessing, why serve? In other words, what is the true Christian motivation for serving?
- [13]** Ryan also mentioned that entitlement can lead people to not serve, because we perceive some jobs as being beneath us. Are there any forms of service or specific tasks that are beneath anyone in the kingdom of God? More importantly, does the way in which you personally serve (or don’t serve!) line up with your answer to that question?
- [14]** Consider the last words of Jesus in this parable, which were also the same words that ended his teaching about the rich young ruler: “So the last will be first, and the first last.” What does this mean, and why is that a good thing?

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**PRAYER**

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- [1]** Pray that God would remove from you any sense of spiritual entitlement that may exist in your heart.
- [2]** Pray that God would make you eager to become last in the kingdom.