

➤ ***This is the day*** (verse 1)

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Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

Call to Worship (Psalm 105: 1-6, 43)

O give thanks to the LORD, call on God's name, make known God's deeds among the peoples.

Sing to the Lord, sing praises; tell of all God's wonderful works.

Glory in God's holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.

Seek the strength of the LORD; seek the Lord's presence continually.

Remember the wonderful works God has done, the miracles, and the judgments God has uttered,

O offspring of Abraham, God's servant, children of Jacob, God's chosen ones.

The Lord brought the people out with joy, the chosen ones with singing.

Praise the LORD!

We join our hearts, minds, and voices in worship!

† Prayer

Creator God, we are drawn to worship as a fitting response to your love for us. In our time of worship, hold before us the teachings of Jesus Christ so that they claim us with a gentle power. Remind us how our commitment to Christ integrates worship with the deeds of everyday. In our time of worship, we recognize and confess our weaknesses, discover our strengths, and offer ourselves in service to a world that is both our home and your creation.

Encourage us to love one another with the unselfishness Jesus showed and shared. Encourage us to accept the challenge of reaching toward our own full potentials. Encourage us to confront oppression and hostility with a gospel justice and peace.

Be with us always in Spirit as we boldly pray in Jesus' name... Our Father, who art in heaven – hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come – thy will be done – on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen

Words of Hope

It is God's joy to forgive. It is our joy to offer thanks in response. Praise God!

† Prayer for Illumination

Holy God guide us on our faith journey. Fill us with your Spirit as we seek to hear your Word. Keep us faithful to your Word as we work side by side in Christ's name. Amen

Scripture **Matthew 20: 1-16**

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

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.

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.'

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

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. 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.'

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.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

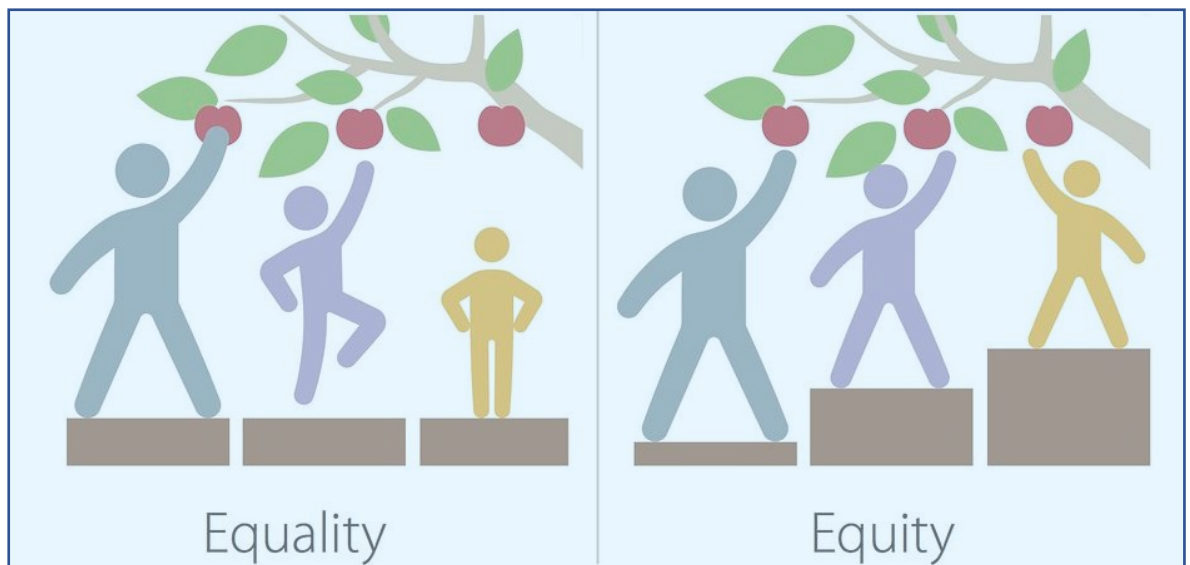
Message **Grace is what we need**

When I taught school, we had a weekly spelling list that every child had to work on – they got the list on Monday and there was a spelling test on Friday. Maybe it was the same when you attended school – maybe it is the same today. For some children this was great – they were naturally good spellers – it came easily to them. For others it was still pretty great because they had been blessed with many opportunities to read books from a young age and had worked hard to learn how to spell. For others it was challenging but they had support from parents or other adults in their lives and could work to master the spelling through the week. For others the weekly spelling lists, and test were akin to torture. They may have had learning disabilities or were coming to spelling in English as a second language. Some had no support in their study or were overwhelmed with other commitments with family or friends and could not devote as much time to studying their spelling words for the week. It didn't seem to be a very fair system since the goal was to encourage all the children to learn to spell and for some it was doing more harm than good.

As I progressed in my teaching career, I eventually came up with a system that suited me better – and I think it served the needs of children better too. I did some preliminary assessment and determined the number of words each student needed to work on each week – 20 for some, 16 for others, and for some 3 or 5 words were enough to tackle in a week. My goal was to build on success. If the child got 100% a few times on their list, they could have a bigger list in subsequent weeks. Certain parents were skeptical, but the children always strove to improve, and it encouraged everyone to engage the spelling task with more enthusiasm.

Some would say the system I devised was not equal – true, but it was somewhat more equitable. This may not be a perfect picture to represent what we are talking about, but it helps – maybe you have seen a similar one...

This is a reminder that fairness is more about everyone getting what they need than it is about everyone getting the same or getting what they deserve.



I think this is what the parable that Jesus is telling in our reading from Matthew's gospel is about too – getting what we need which may be different than what we feel we are entitled to – ***give us this day our daily bread, not all the bread in the basket!***

The disciples have been wondering who will have been deemed most worthy of reward from Jesus when he is in power. So, Jesus tells this parable in response and like many of Jesus' parables, the story of the workers in the vineyard doesn't directly resolve their question. I think it made them, like many listeners today, uncomfortable. It has certainly been making me uncomfortable for more than a week! I really was struggling to connect with it but finally I remembered that this story is offered as an example of what the kingdom of heaven is like – a vision of divine generosity. God responds to our needs and this isn't always comfortable or fair in terms of rational calculations. Grace is given to respond to our deepest needs – grace upon grace...we receive so much more than we deserve.

Imagine how difficult it must be to be a day labourer – no regular employment, just standing in the town square hoping against hope that someone needs extra work done and will hire you. No employment insurance or social services to fall back on – no CERB or rent deferral. If you are healthy and lucky, you'll get work for the day and get a day's wage to provide for your basic needs and those of your family. If you are not so healthy or not so lucky, you'll be passed over – maybe more than once – maybe all day – and return home empty-handed.

In the parable Jesus tells, everyone gets lucky. Some are chosen early, some more in the late morning, at noon, and midafternoon, and some just an hour before quitting time. No doubt these last were overjoyed by their good fortune when they received a full day's wage for an hour of work. Not because they hadn't wanted to work all day. They had been there just the same as the others – ready, willing, and eager – but they had been passed over, time and again, until right near the end.

The landowner shows generosity and grace to those who arrive later to the work, paying them the same as the workers who arrived first. This paints an image of justice and righteousness that differs from conventional wisdom. For many, justice is seen as a reward that reflects worthiness.

However, in this story, all are offered the same reward and those who work longer don't like it – they don't like it one little bit – it just doesn't seem fair! But the landowner reminds them that, in fact, it's totally fair -- they are being paid just what was promised and everyone is getting what they need. If anything, the landowner is being more than fair – generous – to those who were invited late in the day, as well as perfectly fair to those who were fortunate to be called to work early. That's grace. It turns everything on its head. But we don't like it.

Why? Because that's human nature. Through our own insecurity and lack of trust we come to understand and assess our lives not through the abundance we have been given by God but

instead by what we feel we still lack. Because of this gnawing sense of lack, we define ourselves over and against others, comparing and begrudging their good fortune because it wasn't our good fortune. We all want what we believe we are entitled to.

I think Sally Brown sums it up best... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyGHjxsr28o>

We just want what's coming to us – we just want our fair share – because it is our broken human nature to measure everything and keep track of what we are “owed”. Rather than feeling fortunate to have found work for the day, some feel unfortunate at not having received more. Rather than rejoicing that these other workers – who waited all day for the prospect of work – can return home blessed to be able to feed their families, they can only begrudge them, perhaps even curse them, their good fortune. And rather than be grateful to the one who has given them an honest day's wage for an honest day's work, they can only grumble with resentment.

This parable is all about unfairness – the unfairness of God’s grace – because it turns the idea of what is fair on its head. The parable is about God’s grace – about showing up and receiving what we are given with thanksgiving. It is an in-your-face attempt not just to startle us with the scandal of grace but to make us a little mad about it. Our resentment, our squirming – even momentarily – over the apparent unfairness of grace, reveals something about us and lays before each of us a choice. When we look at our lives, do we count our blessings or our misfortunes? Do we pay attention to the areas of plenty in our lives or what we perceive we lack? Do we live by gratitude or envy? Do we look to others in solidarity and compassion or see them only as competition?

We can't be grateful and envious at the same time. We need to let go of our sense of entitlement and embrace instead God’s generous grace – so much more than our fair share or what we deserve – it is exactly the blessing we need. **Amen**



➤ **Amazing grace** (verses 1 – 4)

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† Prayer (adapted from the PCC Worship Planner)

God of Hope – Creator and Sustainer – you have been with us through all our history as individual persons and as people of the church. When the world is bleak and dim, you pierce the shadows with light. You help us see new paths and possibilities.

For hope in times of despair, for clarity when we felt confused, for a way forward when we thought all was lost, we give you thanks. We pray today for those who feel hopeless – for those who are sick or dying – for those who mourn – and for those weighed down by heavy burdens. May each of us know and share your gift of hope.

God of Peace there is conflict all around us: in our world, our communities, our families, even our closest relationships. We thank you for steps toward reconciliation in our lives, our communities, and among peoples of different cultures and histories.

We pray today for places where pain, violence and cruelty seem to have the upper hand. May each of us know and share your gift of peace.

God of Joy we give you thanks for moments of delight and occasions of celebration – for happy gatherings, gentle solitude, pleasure given and received – for laughter, friendship, and love.

We remember those who do not taste such joy – those who are lonely or bitter, hurt, or difficult to love. May each of us know and share your gift of joy.

God of Love, your love was born for us in the human life of Jesus whose love stretched to include outsiders and those rejected by others. We are so grateful to be part of his circle. We pray for our families, those closest to us or and anyone estranged. We pray for friends and acquaintances, strangers, for those quite different from ourselves, and even for our enemies. Help us draw our circles of affection wider, seeing our kinship with all people. May each of us know and share your gift of love.

Hear us now as we pray for those who have come to mind this day – offering the concerns of our own hearts in this time of silence...

As you are with us and within us, O God, give us the strength to live for you as authentic followers of Jesus. **Amen**

➤ ***God of grace and God of glory (verses 1, 3, 5)*** **490**

† Offering and Prayer

Generous God thank you for the opportunity to support your church. May the gifts we offer – by PAR or cash or cheque – be transformed into acts of kindness, expressions of solidarity, and deeds of compassion. As we share these offerings, we also commit ourselves to the courageous task of being your witnesses. All grace and mercy are yours, Almighty God. Amen

Blessing

Freely you have received, freely give. Never forget that God has blessed you. Pray for the grace to treat others as God has treated you. And may your lives be blessed by the abundant grace of God, the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ, and the limitless power of the Holy Spirit.

➤ ***We will go out with joy*** **539 (PCUSA)**