

Choices Matter: The Laws of Consequences

Lesson 5

Matthew 20:1-16

May 17, 2020

God Graciously Gives Us Better Than We Deserve

Introduction

Over the last few years, interest has declined for people to become referees and umpires in professional sports. Why? One, the rule books are more complicated and subjective, so they are based more on judgment rather than objective standards. Two, because of the public outcry and frustration with bad calls, and the terrible treatment these people endure from players and fans. What might be perceived as injustice or unfairness by the player or fan, was merely unseen or viewed differently by the referee. Yet, the protests persist, and the referees continue to be maligned. Who would want that job?

As humans, we have an innate sense of moral rightness placed within us because we are made in the image of God. However, God sees things differently than we do. He doesn't see things in fairness or unfairness terms but through the radical generosity of His grace. His primary desire is to show compassion, grace, mercy, love, etc. to those who least deserve it. Yet, we forget that sometimes and cry foul when someone we perceive does not deserve it, receives it. By doing that, we fail to remember the depth of the grace shown to us while we were still sinners. The offer is the same to all who would believe, no matter when they first believe.

Memory verse: "Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea."—Micah 7:18-19

Pray and read Matthew 20:1-16. What questions or observations do you have about these passages?

What does the passage say?

1. Like what is the kingdom of heaven? (Matthew 20:1)
2. How much did the landowner agree to pay the early morning workers? (Matthew 20:2)
3. What did the landowner do for those he found a little later? (Matthew 20:3-5a)
4. And those even later? (Matthew 20:5b-7)
5. Who was paid first? How much was each group paid? (Matthew 20:8-10)
6. What was the reaction of those who were hired first? (Matthew 20:11-12)
7. What was the landowner's response? (Matthew 20:13-15)

8. Fill in the blank: So the _____ will be _____, and the _____ will be _____. (Matthew 20:16)

What does the passage mean?

1. Following the passage of time, the first workers started at 6 am, the next wave joined around 9 am, then noon, 3 pm, and 5 pm. The workday ended at 6 pm, yet all were paid the same wage. This seems unfair. However, who ultimately decides the rewards we receive for our work for the Lord? (Proverbs 16:33; Isaiah 45:7-9; Lamentations 3:37-39; Matthew 20:15)
2. The denarius was the standard wage for the worker if he worked a 12-hour day. Thus, the workers hired at the start of the day received what they expected. What changed their perspective? How do humans typically react when perceiving unfairness? (Matthew 20:8-12)
3. While this might seem unfair, this story reveals how God gives “unreasonable” generosity. How has God done that towards us? (Romans 5:6-8; 2 Corinthians 8:9; Titus 3:3-7)

4. How is God categorized regarding those who do not deserve His grace? (Exodus, 34:6-7; Ezekiel 33:11; Micah 7:18-19; 2 Peter 3:9)

5. Look at Matthew 19:30 and Matthew 20:16. Jesus repeats this statement for a purpose. What is the purpose, and what does it mean? (Matthew 18:1-5; Philippians 2:3-4)

Applying the passage

1. Look at how Jesus reacted to situations happening to him that were unfair. Jesus knew that what was happening was unfair, but He knew what would result. How could you act like Jesus in those times rather than how you typically react? (Mark 15:3-5; Acts 2:23; James 1:2-4)

2. Ultimately, this story is about trusting the sovereignty of God to save those who least deserve it because of His generous grace. Who is there in your life or the world that you might perceive as undeserving of His grace? How could you show them the love of Jesus this week?

3. Take a moment to remember where you were when Jesus saved you. How deep were you in sin? How far from Him were you? Write down a prayer thanking and praising God for Him saving you by His kindness and grace, not because you were worthy of it.