

Wednesday, July 22, 2020 Bible Study Notes
Cedarville United Presbyterian Church Facebook Live
Fruit of the Spirit Series: Generosity
Text: Matthew 20:1-16

Summer Series: Fruit of the Spirit

- Love – what does it mean to love God, love our neighbor, love our enemy, love ourselves?
- Joy – “rejoice always”; “the joy of the Lord is my strength”
- Peace – seek peace and pursue it... dig around for it because it doesn’t come naturally
- Patience – how do we become satisfied with what Christ offers?
- Kindness – kindness of Christ when talking with the woman caught in adultery, and kindness when dealing with our own sin; kindness when restoring Peter, we can all be restored
- Goodness – we put our own definition of “good” and “bad” on God
- Sunday – generosity toward God and each other

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ² He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. ³ “About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. ⁴ He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ ⁵ So they went. “He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. ⁶ About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’ ⁷ “‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered. “He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

- Landowner = represents God
- Denarius = regular day’s wage (generally given for a full day’s work)
- First workers agreed to work for a day’s wage – when people come to faith in Christ early, they understand that the reward is eternal life with Christ in heaven and abundant life on earth
- Others agreed to work for “what is right”
- Last workers = “no one has hired us” – we have not accepted Christ, no one had shared the gospel with us, etc. In the time of the parable, it would have been the more vulnerable population (elderly, disabled, people overlooked as hard workers)

⁸ “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’ ⁹ “The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. ¹⁰ So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. ¹¹ When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ¹² ‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’

- Those hired last were thrilled to receive “a day’s pay” – landowner was extremely generous and they were grateful

- Others expected more, though they'd agreed to the denarius
- The first workers got exactly what they had agreed to – they were angry at what they considered to be an injustice – “You have made the one-hour workers equal to us.”
- By dealing generously with a group of people that no one else in town considered worthy of hiring, the landowner has shown their value and worth. The first ones hired may have felt superior because they were stronger, younger, etc. The landowner, in his actions, showed this wasn't true.
- God showed special generosity to those who were more vulnerable, those often overlooked by society

¹³ “But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius?’ ¹⁴ Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. ¹⁵ Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ ¹⁶ “So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

- The employer has the right to do what he wishes with his money = God has the right to give grace to those whom He pleases
- *Jesus' story makes no economic sense, and that was his intent. He was giving us a parable about grace, which cannot be calculated like a day's wages. The employer in Jesus' story did not cheat the full-day workers. No, the full-day workers got what they were promised. Their discontent comes from the scandalous mathematics of grace. They would not accept that their employer had the right to do what he wanted with his money when it meant paying scoundrels twelve times what they deserved. Significantly, many Christians who study this parable identify with the employees who put in a full day's work, rather than the add-ons at the end of the day. We like to think of ourselves as responsible workers, and the employer's strange behavior baffles us as it did the original hearers. We risk missing the story's point: that God dispenses gifts, not wages. None of us gets paid according to merit, for none of us comes close to satisfying God's requirements for a perfect life. If paid on the basis of fairness, we would all end up in hell.* (Philip Yancey, *What's So Amazing About Grace?*)