

The Rev. Jay Lawlor delivers sermon on God's generosity and grace

The Rev. Jay Lawlor preached at Holy Family Episcopal Church in Fishers, Indiana on the 16th Sunday After Pentecost - September 24, 2017.

INDIANAPOLIS, IN, US, February 12, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- "God made all deserving of God's generosity and equally receiving of God's grace," said [the Rev. Jay Lawlor](#) in his sermon titled "[Generosity and Grace](#)." He preached the sermon for the 16th Sunday After Pentecost Year A - September 24, 2017, at Holy Family Episcopal Church in Fishers, Indiana. A video recording of the Rev. Lawlor's sermon has been posted by Holy Family Productions and on the Rev. Jay Lawlor's website. Following are excerpts from the sermon transcript:



The Rev. Jay Lawlor preaching on the 16th Sunday After Pentecost Proper 19 Year A, September 24, 2017 at Holy Family Episcopal Church in Fishers, IN.

Day laborers in Roman Palestine were near the bottom of the economic ladder – usually landless peasants traveling from city to city, village to village, in hopes of finding work. Within in this context Jesus tells the parable as recorded in Matthew's Gospel. It begins with: Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.” (Matthew 20:1) Whenever Jesus said “the kingdom of heaven is like...” he meant “living with God is like the following scenario,” or “this is the way things should be.” It is instruction as to how God views a situation and in the way followers of Jesus are to respond.

In the parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard, Jesus speaks of a landowner who pays all the hired workers according to the agreed upon daily wage. This proves him to be an honorable landowner who pays what he says he will pay. Nothing more, nothing less. To pay above an agreed daily wage typically required a previous patron-client relationship.

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Jesus challenges the notion that there are those less deserving of generosity or undeserving of grace. [...] God made all deserving of God's generosity and equally receiving of God's grace.”

The Rev. Jay Lawlor

There is no prior relationship between the landowner and the day laborers. Each time he goes out into the marketplace he finds laborers still waiting to be asked to work. And each time he sends them into his vineyard to work, promising to pay what is right for the labor they will provide. It was likely assumed this meant they would be paid proportional to the time they worked.

This makes what the landowner did so extraordinary. When it comes time to pay the laborers at the end of the day, the landowner instructs his manager to pay all of the workers the full daily wage – starting with those who were sent into the field last.

It's not that the last hired earned a full day's wage which bothered those first hired, it's that they did not receive more than the already agreed upon full day's wage. Jesus includes this in the parable: Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more. They expected more than they agreed to because the landowner chose to be generous to those hired last and show grace by paying them a full day's wage.

It was certainly an act of generosity on the part of the landowner. He didn't need to pay more than for the actual time worked. It was grace because he recognized those hired last would have welcomed being asked to work at the beginning of the day, and, after having labored all day, receive the agreed upon daily wage.

As the landowner points out to those first hired, he did no wrong by them. He honored his agreement to pay them a daily wage. He exercised generosity and grace to those not fortunate enough to be invited to work earlier in the day.

Jesus teaches of God having a different set of values than those of Roman Palestine. Values where God shows abundant generosity and grace equally to all. This is what living with God is like – it is what following Jesus means.

The laborers picked first are envious. Had they been picked last and still paid the full day's wage, they would have readily accepted it for the generous and grace-filled offering that it was. Instead they show envy and cry foul. What they failed to recognize is that equality for others did not mean less for them. It wasn't pie.

As Jesus makes clear in the parable, generosity and grace are at the heart of God. Jesus challenges the notion that there are those less deserving of generosity or undeserving of grace. But God through Christ has made all deserving of God's generosity and equally receiving of God's grace.

This should have a profound influence on how we, as disciples of Jesus, view the world. Do we choose to live into God's abundant generosity and grace for all, or flawed human constructs? Saint Paul encourages Christians in Philippi to: "...live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ . . . standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel..." In other words, be generous as God is generous and be grace-filled as God has shown us grace.

The entire sermon can be viewed at <https://www.therevjaylawlor.com/generosity-grace-sermon-revjaylawlor-sep242017-video/>

Visit [Sermons Video Series](#) page on the Rev. Jay Lawlor's website for all six of the sermons the Rev. Lawlor preached at Holy Family.

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