

Proper 20 A  
St. Matthew 20:1-16  
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St. George's Bolton  
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## Not Fair?

*“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.’”*

It just doesn't seem fair! I work as hard or harder than many other people at my day job, and yet I make about the same amount of money as they do! Really? I deserve better.

And what about all those slackers on welfare? Why should I work hard so they can sit around and live off my tax dollars? It just doesn't seem fair!

When I was little, I used to get invited to my friend's birthday parties. I would always get them a nice gift—something I would have wanted myself. But I would always get the same stupid party gift on the table as everybody else. Really? I spent more time playing with my friend Eddie than the rest of them did. I really deserved better than I got—a plastic cowboy figure wrapped up in a toilet paper tube! Really?

Thinking of the Parish Autumn Craft Fair yesterday, I think I deserve a little more than the standard *“Thank you to all our volunteers who worked at the church fair yesterday”* by Senior Warden Betty Caruso in the church bulletin this morning! Surely I deserve to be called to the front of the church at

announcement time and given special thanks, by name, by Betty! I mean. Come on! It's not fair! I actually got there ahead of Will Hughes, and worked an hour and a half more than he did, I at least deserve to be recognized more than him, I mean really, I deserve it! Why should he get all the attention and the same thanks as me, when I was there early, parking cars, in the heat of the day?

Surely If I stay longer working at the Autumn Craft Fair next year, I will get a better seat, no, a better room with all the amenities in heaven, would you think? I want one overlooking a lake, no, maybe a beach with some palm trees. And not too far from the dining room either! And speaking of that, in the dining room, I think I deserve a good table, somewhere near the head table, because I have worked hard as a priest all my life. Maybe I should have a seat with Mother Theresa and Martin Luther King Jr., you know, somewhere befitting of my status because of all my good deeds and hard work. I have been a priest for 39 years this year, surely I deserve a better table in heaven than those late comers working in the Diocese now, who have only worked 10 or 15 years since they were ordained. I mean come on! Fair is fair!

Speaking of which, I think Bishop Ian should give me a bigger more prestigious church than this one, you know, because I am one of the hardest and longest working priests he has working for him here in Connecticut. Something befitting my status! I at least deserve that, don't I?

It just doesn't seem fair, does it? Who determines what is fair? And why am I so deprived that I need more? What is my fair share? Don't you agree that I deserve it?

If you think God thinks and works the way we do, you are sadly mistaken. Our God is a *radical God*, at least when compared to human terms, a God who loves the little lost sheep who strayed away from the flock for a long time as much as God loves the sheep that remained in the flock with God all along, doing what God desired of them. God loves the sinner *along with* the saint. God does not award love according to a point system, so that those who do more, work longer, are more heroic and humble like me, get any more love than anyone else. I am not sure that you can really love someone more than anyone else. I think either you love them or you don't.

I seem to always want more than I have. I find that no matter how much money or stuff I have it is never enough to satisfy my wants and desires. If I dream of getting a little larger salary next year, if I get the extra money, it somehow is never enough money to get what I think I want or need. So I dream of getting more money someday, to do and have the things I want. If we're honest, don't most of us?

I have been envious of others who have more than me. I ponder what it must be like to be them, and have that nice Wolf brand stove in the kitchen, or the Sub-zero fridge. Maybe it would be nice to drive one of those \$80,000.00 *King Ranch* Ford F-150 pickup trucks with the moon roof and heated leather seats!

I must confess I also have Lottery dreams...what I would do with the money if I won the lottery. I think a lot of us ponder that question secretly. One person told me at work I should talk to God to get God to help our Lottery pool at work win. (*we call it the Millionaire's Club- actually made up of 8 or 9 sorry paupers!*) She told me that she surely felt, I had better chances of getting God to do so than the rest of my co-

workers, given my status as an ordained person, holier than the rest of us, thereby showing how little she knows me! Indeed, there are many who suppose God listens to my prayers as if I have a direct line in to the Big Boss.

It would seem that the accumulation of more money and things is the goal of life, and that it should be based on a just, fair merit system, so that the harder you work, the more you get. Many call that *The American Dream*.

The *radical Jesus* looks at our ponderings, musings and prayers, and says, how about appreciating what you already have, isn't that enough? When is enough, enough?

It seems to me that the Gospel this morning is suggesting that God is like the sun (*No, I am not saying that the sun is God*). God can't give you more sunlight than everybody else. The sun shines equally on those that imagine they are rich and those that think they are poor. The sun shines equally on the good Christian people and the sinners. There is no resenting this, only accepting that this is the way things are. Resent it, and you will remain unhappy. Be thankful for the sunlight and you may find a reason for happiness today.

God is like a big heart that loves everyone. God loves your hard work, but God loves each of us equally, no matter how hard we work, or even if we can't work. You may think you can love someone more than others in your love circle, but either you love others or you don't. Love is not a quantifiable emotion. Just because I spend more time working with someone in the parish doesn't mean I love them more than someone who needs no help from me.

Back to the Church Fair yesterday... I suppose there are many who worked it because they enjoy doing so each year and have a good time doing so. The reward is in the doing, the action, not the recognition later on. No one could thank the many people who work long hours at the fair, thank them enough to equal their efforts on our behalf. And didn't that *radical Jesus* say, when you give, or do something nice, do so privately, because if you seek recognition, you will already have received your reward? The reward is in the loving transaction itself, not in some delayed recognition, award or gratification.

You see, loving and doing good are ways of *being* in the world. The reward is the happiness and solace that living this way brings.

*And God said, "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."*

There are no such things as good seats in heaven. There is only bliss beyond imagination. And when you love someone, if you truly love them, you can't love them more than others. You simply love them. As Sean Spicer would say, "*you simply love them, period!*" AMEN.