

Let's take some time today to think about what generosity is and means to us. We understand generosity particularly in the context of money, wages, and payment, as it's such a huge part of how we structure our lives. And being generous with our money is absolutely a spiritually healthy and important thing to do. How we spend our money tells a story of how our lives are lived.

In today's parable, though, the generosity shown by the landowner, who is the kingdom of heaven in metaphor, is beyond what makes any sort of sense for us. Giving people who only worked one hour the same amount of money as those who worked a full day?! That is not a sustainable economic model for any sort of business.

But that's just the thing - God isn't in the business of profit. God is in the business of grace.

This business of grace is not about what we deserve, or what balances out the numbers. It's about what God does for us. God is generous in all things. And God's generosity is abundant, beyond what any measure or count could provide for us. God's love is steadfast, more vast than the night sky full of stars, deeper than the ocean, greater than anything we face. And in the covenants made with Moses, made with us through the new life of Jesus Christ, God promises this generous love to be true.

What an absolutely life-saving gift that business of grace truly is. God's grace and love and life remind us of what is truly important, what we are created for, what life itself is at its absolute root.

We humans are so much more than just how well we perform or maintain or exceed any sort of earthly expectations. It's hard to believe that reality when so much of our time is focused on what we produce rather than who we are. But that's the gift of God, who we find working in our world, who we seek out in prayer, who we encounter in our spiritual practices and worship and praise. God meets us where we are, sins, shortcomings, warts and all,

and loves us with a deep and generous love beyond our comprehension. Seriously, the economy of God begins to make sense only in the relationships we have with one another, when we experience love on that deep, human level. God's love is endless. God's love is always available. God's grace and mercy are given to us every single day, in our daily dying and rising in Christ Jesus, promised to us in baptism. God's gift in the Holy Spirit is the assurance of constant presence, constant new life being created, constant worthiness of praise. Only God is able to provide that constancy of all these things, which tend our spirits, our hearts, our minds, our roots of what it is to be human.

The landowner in today's Gospel story, when confronted about how he paid the harvest workers, his neighbors around him, asks a pointed question. "Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?" When we continue the metaphor of God's kingdom as the landowner, we hear confirmation that God chooses to be generous to us all. All of creation, because we are created by God, sustained by God, loved by God, we also belong to God. God chooses us, over and over again. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, Christ Jesus, so that we may not perish but have eternal life. God gives us reminders of this love, God's choice, throughout the scriptures. This example of the landowner is just one of these reminders. God chooses to be generous with us, not because it's something we necessarily deserve, but because generosity is just part of who God is.

As we continue to think about the landowner and his profound question, I am convinced that his generosity is out of a place of gratitude. Let's think about what it is to harvest crops from a field. I will admit, I am not an expert in farming or gardening, but I am enjoying learning about how food is grown and produced, especially since I live near a bunch of crop fields that I'm about 97% sure are feed corn. Still need to confirm. But there are some basic things about harvesting that are true regardless of crop knowledge. You have a very particular time window in which to gather and preserve

what you have grown and prepare the land for the rest and freeze of winter. This window is usually only a few weeks long, from when the food is picked to when you are able to properly preserve and/or ship it to where it needs to be. So you need to make sure you have enough people working in that short timeframe to make the most of your harvest. And that's what I imagine this landowner doing. He needs people to harvest the food and fast. He needs lots of people to get it done so that he can feed not only the people in his own home, but judging by communal practices of the time this story was written, this food would also nourish the entire community around him too. So this is a community effort, of everyone pitching in when they are able so that people are fed, and the person who owns the field makes the most of his harvest.

Thinking about how crucially important that task of harvesting is makes me empathize with this landowner even more. I would be grateful to anyone who could help me out in getting this huge amount of food gathered so it can properly feed the people around me, even if all they had to spare was an hour. Maybe those people who came late only did so because they had other stuff to do that day, or they didn't hear about the opportunity until right before they made it there. Regardless of the reason, they helped out. They contributed what they could, whether it was a whole day or just an hour, and the landowner was grateful. He used his generosity of pay as a way to express his gratitude. It's not about punishment or what people deserve, it's about living from a place of abundance and sharing what he had with the people who served the land and community with the resulting food. What an absolute gift of the spirit, to share in such a generous way.

And we have the ability to lean into that gift as well. Generosity is absolutely a spiritual gift that we can give to others in a multitude of ways. Financial generosity is a spiritual practice, reflecting our priorities and the story we want to tell about where our money goes. But not all of us are able to share in monetary ways, and that's absolutely okay too. Generosity is a mindset, a way of being and seeing the world through a lens of abundance,

rather than scarcity. We all have gifts to share - our time, our skills, the things we teach, our compassion and listening ears, our ability to pray for one another, among so many others. Every single one of us has gifts of the spirit with which we can be generous, and we gain a sense of peace and joy when we are able to love our neighbors through sharing these gifts. This peace and joy comes because every time we are generous with our neighbors, we bring the kingdom of God even closer. And what a gift that kingdom of God truly is for all people.

The kingdom of God is a place of endless generosity, a reflection of the endless generosity that God gives us, in God's grace and mercy and love. With God, there is an endless abundance of grace to meet us where we are and forgive our sins - so that we may live in the freedom of new life so generously given to us through the dying and rising of Christ Jesus. We live into this new life in Christ by sharing our gifts with our neighbors, and being generous in our love and worship of God our creator. Out of great love and gratitude for God and the business of grace God provides, we give unending thanks and praise. Amen.