

“When I get to Heaven I shall see three wonders there. The first will be to see many people there whom I did not expect to see, the second wonder will be to miss many people whom I did expect to see, and the third and greatest wonder of all, will be to find myself there” John Newton.

The great hymn writer understood that it is all about grace, the unmerited favor of God shown to those who believe in the name of Jesus for salvation.

We love grace when applied to ourselves, but sometimes, when we see grace applied to others, it offends us. The Kingdom of heaven is counter-intuitive and even offensive to our fallen human reasoning.

Grace Extended

In this parable, Jesus talks about a master who hires laborers to work in his vineyard. During the first century Roman empire, these day laborers may have been foreigners who were offered little to no protection from the Roman labor law. They were vulnerable and often abused.

The master agreed to pay those hired at the break of dawn, a denarius for their day’s wages. This would have been an acceptable wage at the time.

The laborers go to work in the vineyard, but then the master decides to hire more laborers. He hires people at five different times during the day; 6am, 9am, 12pm, 3pm and 5pm.

When it came time to pay the laborers at the end of the day, those hired at 6am were shocked to discover that everyone received the same payment, even though they had toiled for many more hours than the others. It didn’t seem fair.

Grumbling at Grace

The hard-working laborers began grumbling (see Matthew 20:11-12).

Grumbling is a sin that is often overlooked in our churches and homes. We tend to look at grumbling as less than desirable, but not really sinful. This is because grumbling is so easy to do, it is second nature. When we are troubled by something we struggle to keep quiet about it to those around us.

But what does the Bible say about grumbling?

A classic biblical example of grumbling is found in the children of Israel in the wilderness, they grumbled a lot even after God performed so many miracles on their behalf (see Exodus 16:8). But grumbling is also addressed in the New Testament (see James 5:9, Philippians 2:14).

Albert Mohler writes, *“To grumble is to complain about the goodness of God. In this sense, grumbling is the consummate act of ingratitude.”*

We like to justify our grumbling, but grumbling doesn't fix anything, it usually leads to gossip.

Grumbling is a sign of weakness; it takes courage to sit down with someone and humbly share your offence or disagreement and constructively seek to grow in understanding and love for one another.

The laborers in the parable were grumbling because they felt that the decision of the master was unjust. But the master has every right to do what he wants with his resources (see Matthew 20:14-15).

This parable speaks to us about the sovereignty of God. His decision to show grace to whomever He chooses. We sometimes struggle with this, because we don't have a right perspective of the holiness and the sovereignty of God. The creator has every right to bless His creation as He chooses.

God's Grace

Just like the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, we struggle with what seems to us to be an injustice if we are honest with ourselves (see Matthew 25:28-29).

We are so closely tied to the religion of humanism that we struggle with the concept of God's grace when it is applied to people that we have determined are beyond God's favor.

Grace seldom seems fair, but fairness is subjective at best. Fairness works well when handing out cookies to children on a playground but doesn't come close to understanding what is at stake with our sinful state before an all-holy God.

If God dealt with us fairly, we all deserve the punishment of hell.

But grace is God's free gift to all who repent and put their faith in Jesus. Grace goes against the pride and arrogance of our fallen human nature.

Are you saved by grace? (see Ephesians 2:8-9). Have you encountered Jesus Christ, as your savior, repented of your sins and received his free gift of salvation? Maybe you need to respond to Jesus today for salvation.

Grace that Offends

But maybe you are offended by the grace of God? As you think about your life and the people that have hurt you or even those that you have heard of who have done terrible things to others. Who have you determined is beyond the grace of God?

The words of the master in the parable apply here, "*Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?*" Matthew 20:15"

When we refuse to forgive someone for their past, that they have repented of before the Lord, we are not offended at them, we are offended at God.

If you are offended at God, you need to repent and bring that sinful attitude to the cross of Jesus today.

Do you really know the gift of grace?