

## **Sermon September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

*God's Compassion is Greater Than We Could Ever Imagine*

**The disciples have invested a lot of time and energy...**

into following Jesus.

They want to know...

if they will be rewarded for their hard work.

In response to this request,

Jesus shares a parable...

that challenges them.

Jesus talks about a landowner...

who is willing to compensate the people...

who worked a full day...

the same amount...

as someone who worked only an hour.

When the workers who worked longer hours...

came grumbling,

the landowner said...

I paid you what you agreed to be paid.

If I want to be generous with my money...

to my other workers...

what is it to you?"

Then Jesus goes on to say...

"the first will be last...

and the last will be first."

Or in other words,

"I appreciate all you do for me disciples,

but that doesn't mean...

I am going to treat you better...

than the person...

who chooses to follow me today."

**This parable is hard for us to wrap our heads around.**

We can relate to the workers...

who have put in a full day's work.

Of course,

they are frustrated with someone...

who worked way less than them...

getting the same amount of money.

It seems totally unfair.

**We can relate to the disciples...**

who have given up so much of their lives...

to follow Jesus,

and yet,

are going to be treated the same...

as someone who walks in the door...

for the first time.

It's kind of like your friends and family...

wanting to spend more time with the person...

you are dating...

then with you.

**We can also relate to their frustrations,**

because we were raised to believe...

that we need to earn our way through life.

When we do something well,

we get a gold star...

or a trophy...

or we get a promotion...

or we are able to afford that bigger house...

or people give us more respect.

We are used to getting rewarded for our accomplishments.

For one upping our neighbour.

**Yet, Jesus is standing before us today,**

challenging us to let go of these frustrations.

Challenging us to see...

that we spend way too much time...

focusing on other people in negative ways.

Whether it is what they are doing wrong,

or what they are not doing enough of.

Or what they are receiving...

that we are not.

**If we think of how siblings treat each other.**

Tattle tailing on each other every chance they get...

so they can elevate their status in front of their parents...

while devaluing their sibling's status.

Getting frustrated...

when their sibling gets something that they don't.

We are constantly trying to earn a step up...

on our siblings...

in the eyes of our parents.

**As adults this doesn't change for us.**

We are constantly measuring ourselves up...

to the others around us...

trying to earn that reward.

Trying to gain more status for ourselves.

**Often times this drive for status and power...**

leads us to judge our neighbours.

Judge them for the clothes they wear,

or the type of job they have,

or the amount of possessions they possess,

or the amount of work they do,

or the amount of time they go to church.

**For Jonah,**

God has given him a chance to reconcile...

with those who have hurt...

him and his people.

Jonah after much struggle...

goes to Nineveh...

to call the people to repentance.

When the people hear his call,  
they repent for their wrongdoing.

When God shows compassion for the people.

Jonah gets angry.

Jonah can't understand how...

God can show compassion for people...

who committed so many atrocities...

towards God's people.

Yet, God does.

Jonah can only focus on the bad things these people did,

and not on the redemption...

that is happening...

before his very eyes.

God's compassion...

can really be challenging...

for us to understand and accept.

**So, like Jonah,**

God sets us straight...

through Jesus's teachings.

In God's eyes,

we can do nothing to earn God's love.

Jesus flips the disciple's worldview upside down.

Jesus flips our worldview upside down.

God's world looks different than ours.

God is a compassionate God...

who will show compassion for even those...

who show up at the last minute.

**We look at this parable,**

and we see the unfairness in it.

Jesus is challenging us to look at this parable...

and see that the compassion of God...

is greater than we can ever imagine.

**Because God knows things about people that we don't.**

Often times when we judge people,

we know nothing about who they are...

or what challenges they face in life.

We assume everyone has the same opportunities...

when God knows...

that there are people in our world...

who are disadvantaged.

Who are judged for something as superficial as...

their skin color...

or their gender expression...

or their sexual orientation...

or their monetary value...

or their age...

or what social circles they are apart of.

**God knows...**

that some people...

have faced deep wounded traumas...

in their lives...

that have made it difficult for them to recover.

Impairing their ability to live a functional life.

Whatever that looks like.

Others are dealing with physical or mental health problems...

that interfere with their everyday lives.

**It is easy for us...**

to look at the person...

who shows up an hour before the end of the day...

and judge them for their laziness.

And yet,

as the parable says,

no one would hire them.

I wonder if any of us have ever asked why?

**Now God could judge us harshly.**

God could lock us up and throw away the key.

Yet, according to Jesus,

God chooses to show us compassion.

We might not know much about the person...

we are placing a judgment on,

but we do know a lot about ourselves,

or we hope we do.

We know all the challenges we have faced in our lives.

We know all the bad things we have done.

We know all the things we have left undone.

And yet, God still loves us.

God still welcomes us into God's kingdom.

God still wants us to be Christ's disciples in this world.

Reflecting God's love and compassion to others.

**This parable is about God's compassion,**

and Jesus' invitation for us...

to live out this compassionate love in our world.

To stop judging...

and listen to people's stories.

To hear where they come from,

and why they are struggling.

To be generous as God is generous.

To love people where they are at.

To offer them grace...

and help them see the redemptive love of God...

touching their lives.

**God is a compassionate God...**

who welcomes us...

with all the baggage...

that comes with us.

This is what I hear...

when the words of this parable are spoken.

I don't hear God's unfairness.

I hear a God...

who understands our story,

and shows us compassion.

Even when everyone else...

is pointing the finger at us.

**Let us pray**, compassionate God, open our hearts to listen to people, and to try to understand their challenges. So, that we can help them instead of judge them. Thank you for loving us with compassionate hearts, and always trying to understand where we are coming from. Redeeming us with this compassionate love. **Amen.**