



Wednesday Prayer

17th Sunday after Pentecost – First, Last: Enough for All

“When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.’ When those hired about five o’clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. 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.’ But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? 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.”

Matthew 20:8-16

Life isn’t fair. When did you first learn this harsh reality? Maybe when a parent did something special for a sibling, or someone in your Kindergarten class got extra privileges. Research shows that the concept of fairness is almost innate, with children as young as 12 months demonstrating that they understand when everyone is not treated equally.

As we mature, “fairness” becomes “equality” and eventually “justice,” but it’s all fundamentally how we perceive the distribution of tangible (i.e., money) or intangible (i.e., love) resources. Jesus illustrates our nature so well in this parable. Oh, the grumbling at the unfair treatment! But instead of being sympathetic, Jesus calls out the offended workers’ pettiness. He reminds us that God’s grace is so extravagant that even the last ones to the table partake in the whole banquet.

Amazingly, studies also show that children as young as three years old will give what they have (i.e., pieces of candy) to children who don’t have as much to create fairness. How can we embrace that childlike value and create a more equitable community that offers children opportunities to thrive, no matter the imbalances of their circumstances?

You can advocate for a more “fair” world for the children in our community in so many ways. Use the resources available from Cherish All Children, and invite others to join you. God’s abundance is offered freely and generously to the first and the last.

Gracious God, help us to reflect your kindness and generosity, to celebrate your abundant goodness, and to sing aloud of your righteousness!

Written by Gay Gonnerman, Cherish All Children advisory committee member; member of Lutheran Church of Christ the Redeemer, Minneapolis; and development officer at The Food Group, a Minnesota non-profit focused on hunger and food justice.