

Pastor's Message
Matthew 20:1-16
September 24, 2017

From the time we're children, we are taught to be fair. And kids get very early in life do they not? It's not long before little Johnny will say of his parent's treatment of sister Sally, who gets to stay up a bit later than him on school nights ; "*that's not fair.*" We want kids to learn fair and unfair suppose, notwithstanding that in the moment little Johnny is being more than a little aggravating.

Fairness is about honesty, justice and sympathy - it denotes being equitable, impartial, non-discriminatory - all qualities we'd want to see in ourselves. And yet, as our lesson from Matthew suggests, God is not fair. Good thing too - our salvation is predicated on the forgiveness of our sins and not being treated by God as we've treated God and those neighbors of ours God cares about. Jesus is not being all that "fair" in our lesson today - being called a child of God is possible only because God is merciful.

The workers in the vineyard in this parable include every person in this room today. But there are some workers that our guests today, Roger and Dave have special concern for, and I'm glad they do. Their concern is for those workers who have been called by workers like you for the work of ministry. Try as we might, the workers in God's vineyard, the church, are not always one happy family - honest and sympathetic and, well, fair. Sometimes congregations and their pastors, to put it mildly, don't see eye to eye.

I'm humbled and grateful to be a pastor, especially here, at Calvary. But the work of ministry is unique – not, Luther maintained superior to other work - expect perhaps that the work of the pastor concerns the precious Gospel of Jesus Christ. Beyond that pastors and their families are just fellow workers. But as you can see from our lesson today we workers can at times be a testy lot. Dave and Roger are here today to tell you about a ministry to pastors and their families called Shepherd's Canyon. Marcella and I have attended a SC retreat – when we were in the midst of a flood in the city of Minot in 2012 and life, as they say, was not being real fair.

We received two weeks of wonderful spiritual care at that retreat because of Dave and Roger and a whole lot of other SC folks who have a heart for pastors. It may not have been our salvation, but it was an awfully soul soothing time away from the pressures we were under at the time. SC exists for the sake of the ministry of the whole church - not just the church's pastors. Jesus wants harmony and unity in his body, and in telling the parable of the vineyard it is quite evident that our Lord knew such could be elusive – we workers are all sinners after all.

When as sinners and fellow workers we may succumb to the temptation to grumble and not be fair with one another, SC is a ministry that seeks to harbor and heal the workers that Jesus is sending out all the time into his vineyard. I'm thankful for them and their presence with us this weekend, and urge you to lend Dave your ear and this ministry your prayers and support.