

Sermon for Sunday, September 24, 2017 - “A Place for All, Enough for All”

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 24, 2017
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Decorah, Iowa
Rev. Amy Zalk Larson

[Click here to read scripture passages for the day.](#)

Beloved of God, grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus.

Jesus says the kingdom of God is like a vineyard owner who hires workers in the morning and agrees with them on the usual daily wage. Then all day long, the vineyard owner keeps going out to find workers; he hires some that worked just one hour. At the end of the day, he pays them all the same and the workers hired first are furious.

The workers hired first probably would have been very satisfied if they hadn't compared their pay to the that of the workers hired later. They had a full day's work and the usual daily wage. They didn't have to worry all day about whether they'd find work and have enough to eat that night. They probably would've been very content, except that they compared. The comparisons made gratitude and contentment impossible.

This is so often our problem - we compare ourselves to others. And comparison is a thief of gratitude, a thief of joy. We enjoy our family until we see one that really seems to be having fun together. Our vacations and weekend plans rarely live up to the exciting things happening for everyone else - at least according to their social media accounts. The surest way to feel incompetent as a parent is to compare yourself to someone else's parenting, your child to someone else's. We feel good about what we're doing with our lives until we go to the class reunion and learn what everyone else is accomplishing.

Sometimes we do comparisons in the other direction, trying to build ourselves up by tearing people down. We look at their mistakes and think, “good thing I'm smarter than that.” We see someone who is unhappy and decide it must be through some fault of their own.

No joy comes from comparisons, only resentment and bitterness or, sometimes, a superficial pride because we've chosen to make ourselves feel better by looking down on someone else.

When we compare ourselves to others we end up like the workers at the end of this parable - grumbling, envious, and unable to be grateful for what God has given us.

Of course, there's no question this parable *is* jarring. It seems so unfair, so unjust. Except, justice doesn't seem to be the central concern here. Instead, Jesus seems to want to show us God's scandalous generosity and mercy. He seems to want us to see central things about God's kingdom - the kingdom God is bringing from heaven into all the earth.

In God's kingdom, no one will be excluded, left standing idle in the marketplace without a role. Just as the landowner keeps going out to find more people to bring into the vineyard, God continues to go out into the world to draw people into this kingdom. God keeps on giving people a role in the kingdom's work of healing and restoring the world.

Also, in God's kingdom everyone will have enough. The landowner chooses to give each worker the usual daily wage - enough to feed their family that night. Everyone gets what they need. This is God's desire for the world - that everyone has enough and no one goes hungry. God is working to ensure that all people have what they need as the kingdom of heaven comes on earth.

God gives you a place and a role in God's work of healing the world. You have all that you need. The generosity of God's coming kingdom is good news for you, good news for all of us.

Yet, we remain stuck comparing, grumbling, envying.

Rather than rejoicing that there are more people to share in God's work of healing the world, we wonder, "Where were they earlier? Why don't they work as hard as I do? Why don't they do this part of the work that I think is so important?" Rather than giving thanks that there is enough, we grasp and hoard to make sure that we have *more* than enough.

God knows this about us. God could choose to kick us out of the kingdom saying, "Get with the program or get out." God could say, "You know, tomorrow I'm just going to leave you on your own, standing idle in the marketplace, and good luck with that."

Instead, God continues to seek us out and draw us in.

God draws us into community where we practice praising and giving thanks rather than grumbling, where we practice vulnerability rather than competing. We rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. We join our voices praying for daily bread. As we do, we don't say, "Give *me my* daily bread," but "Give *us our* daily bread." We pray for the hunger and the hurt of the whole world. We ask that God would loosen our grip on what we grasp so that there is more for others. We ask to be shaped by the scandalous generosity of God's coming kingdom rather than the ways of the world.

As we practice, praise, give thanks, and pray together, we get a taste of the kingdom God is bringing in our midst. We experience the mercy and the nourishment of God. We take our places and learn our roles in the kingdom's work. Our sinfulness is revealed, but God's mercy is shown to be even stronger.

You have a place, a role in God's kingdom.

You have all that you need.

May you know joy and gratitude in this assurance today.

May you help others to rejoice as well.

Amen.