

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Pentecost 16 - September 20, 2020

But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong.

Did you not agree with me for a denarius?'

- Matthew 20:13 -

There are certain sermons that really stick with you over the long haul. We hear so many that it's hard to remember most of them, but once in awhile there's a message that gets through and sticks with us. This is the case for me with a sermon that was preached over twenty years ago on this parable.

I was working at a toxicology research laboratory right out of college, making \$7 an hour, which wasn't much even then! I wanted a job in the field of science because that was what my degree was in, but the job was very low paying. I knew I had to get experience in order to find something better later on, but I was young and newly married and we didn't have much money. I had an attitude about the pay which tainted my joy over the opportunity.

My pastor said something to the effect of "agreeing to a certain wage and being satisfied with that." It's hard when we think we are worth more than what we're paid, or when someone new comes in and you find out they are making more than you are and you've been there longer! Can you relate? This doesn't bode well for employee relations at all. Yet there was a truth to his words that I could not shake - I agreed to work for that \$7 an hour. I could have refused the job, and yet I needed to break into the industry somehow. An agreement is an agreement.

I think we can all relate to those first workers in Jesus' parable. They agreed to a certain wage, a fair day's pay, but when they found out that the boss has paid those who worked only one hour the very same wage they received for working a whole day, they were upset. The boss was right though! He didn't cheat them out of anything. He just happened to be very generous with those who showed up at the end of the day. It was his money to give, and those who fussed forgot that part. All of this touches on our sense of fairness and if we are honest, our sense of what we are worth. It also reminds us of God's great generosity and that without his love and mercy we would have nothing. We can never say that God is unfair to us - he gives us that which we do not deserve - forgiveness and new life. Amen.

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