

What is God's Fairness?

Sermon Notes for Sept 24, 2017 at Brentwood

Ps 145:1-8 (569) & Matthew 20:1-16 (899)



**The last will be first, and the first will be last.
(Matt 20:16)**

Provocative Ponderings that Call Forth Our Potential in Christ

- On Thurs night, Will Willimon, a prominent American preacher, gave the Somerville Lecture at Vancouver School of Theology – he talked about Jesus being a disruptive, destabilizing force in our lives – just look at how Saul became Paul, Willimon said
- The question we are confronted with in our text this morning is how God's sense of fairness disrupts and dislodges ours – we tend to think of fairness as a matter of equal opportunity, of balance within a respected legal framework – we get equal portions of what is good – then along comes Jesus and his way of seeing things recorded in the gospels – workers who only work an hour getting the same wages as those who have toiled in the fields all day – really bad people forgiven with no conditions, with simply an invitation to live differently in the future – and this section of Jesus' teaching in Matthew – culminating in our text this morning – “The last will be first, and the first will be last.”
- What, then, do we make of this different way of dealing with our fellow human beings? – what does it do to our ideal of balanced fairness? – in the end, I think, it throws the reality of God's mercy and grace onto the scales and that changes the whole equation
- But how? – how does God mess with our sense of fairness? - consider this – God is not interested in fairness, as we have come to understand it – rather, God is interested in mercy and forgiveness – these are the qualities of soul that will restore all humanity to its full dignity and worth – that dignity and worth are expressed as we contribute to the wellbeing of God's creation, becoming agents of God's purpose – just like God called Saul to become Paul and spread the influence of his mercy and forgiveness to the Gentile world in his day - God wants to reclaim and reconcile us all to his original intention for us – and he wants us to be companions and friends in this mission, doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with the Holy Trinity as they expand the influence of their love into every place we go in our lives – its important to notice in our text that wherever you may be on whatever scale is being used, everyone is still included – everyone is equally loved by God and drawn into the mission of Jesus Christ by that love

So, what are we going to do with this ...

In many ways, this is a call to give up our sense of superiority – that sense takes many forms – wealth, knowledge, power, virtue, faithfulness – the God we discover in Jesus disrupts every sense of superiority and converts us to a sense of service – of being with and for all those who God loves – so, let's especially be aware this week of the changes God is working within us and through us to make us more faithful servants of God's mercy and forgiveness, of God's very different and disruptive sense of fairness

Notes for a sermon preached by Brian Fraser,
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