



# 'Worship at home'

## Sunday September 24<sup>th</sup> 2023

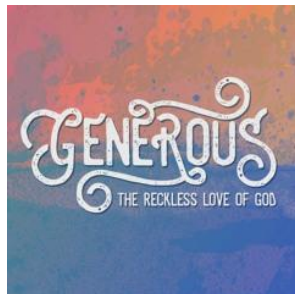


We come to worship God  
who is generous beyond all measure,  
in whom we find grace, mercy and love.

### Opening

Give thanks to the Lord,  
proclaim his greatness;  
tell the nations what he has done.  
Sing praise to the Lord;  
tell the wonderful things he has done.  
Be glad that we belong to him;  
let all who worship him rejoice.

*Psalm 105:1-3*



### Matthew 20:1-16

*"The Kingdom of heaven is like this. Once there was a man who went out early in the morning to hire some men to work in his vineyard. He agreed to pay them the regular wage, a silver coin a day, and sent them to work in his vineyard. He went out again to the marketplace at nine o'clock and saw some men standing there doing nothing, so he told them, "You also go and work in the vineyard, and I will pay you a fair wage." So they went. Then at twelve o'clock and again at three o'clock he did the same thing.*

*It was nearly five o'clock when he went to the marketplace and saw some other men still standing there. "Why are you wasting the whole day here doing nothing?" he asked them.*

*"No one hired us," they answered. "Well, then, you go and work in the vineyard," he told them.*

*"When evening came, the owner told his foreman, "Call the workers and pay them their wages, starting with those who were hired last and ending with those who were hired first." The men who had begun to work at five o'clock were paid a silver*

coin each. So when the men who were the first to be hired came to be paid, they thought they would get more; but they too were given a silver coin each. They took their money and started grumbling against the employer. "These men who were hired last worked only one hour," they said, "while we put up with a whole day's work in the hot sun - yet you paid them the same as you paid us!" "Listen, friend," the owner answered one of

them, "I have not cheated you. After all, you agreed to do a day's work for one silver coin. Now take your pay and go home. I want to give this man who was hired last as much as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do as I wish with my own money? Or are you jealous because I am generous?" And Jesus concluded, "So those who are last will be first, and those who are first will be last."

*Good News Bible*

Life is not fair! Every child who feels they have received the smaller portion will tell you this: life is not fair! Do you recall asking one child to cut the cake in half for the other to choose her piece, just to try to make it seem fair?

Life is not fair! We know that. Whether we feel we warrant more, or less, we do not receive what we deserve. Just like the servants in this parable: some feel they should receive more, others are humbled by the generosity of the landowner.

*"Are you jealous because I am generous?"*

Too often we are envious of the blessings of others. Perhaps it highlights our own insecurity, as we assess our lives not through their abundance but by what we feel we lack. We compare and define ourselves over and against others, comparing and begrudging their good fortune.

*"God's love is not like a pie that leaves less for me every time God gives someone else a slice and more like a joke that gets funnier every time another person joins the laughing."*

[worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com](http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com)

**Where do you place yourself in this story?**

**Would you have been one of the diligent early workers,  
earning every bit of what you received?**

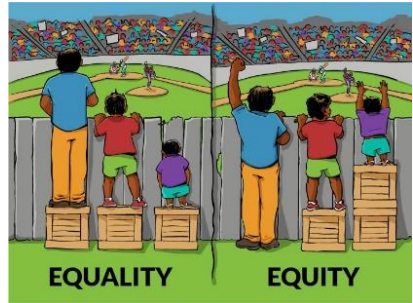
**Or would you have been a late-comer,  
blessed by unmerited and unexpected generosity?**

*If the way that God works was fair, we would be in a heap of trouble. If the way God works was fair, we would find ourselves lost and alone with no clear direction of where to go. If the way God works was fair, we wouldn't have a Christ who was executed though innocent. It ain't fair. And, I, for one, am so very thankful that it isn't.*

*Miriam's Tambourine*

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Life is not fair! Equal pay for unequal work is not fair. Just as unequal pay for equal work is not fair. The high proportion of black deaths in custody is not fair. The inequity of health, or education, or financial opportunities across different sections of our society is not fair. Our society values fairness and equality, but there are times when we might need to give up our rights for the needs of others in order for life to be fair. Jesus reminds us that we are called to put the last first, and give preferential treatment to those who are most in need.



*Interaction Institute for Social Change*

*Artist: Angus Maguire*

God doesn't show favour to the first in line, the hardest workers, or those with white privilege. God is not concerned with what we earn or deserve. God's grace comes generously, unmerited, and unexpected, not as a reward, but a gift which is freely and widely available for all.

***Generosity with strings is not generosity, it's a deal.***

*Marya Mannes*

God's grace cannot be measured, nor accounted for. There is nothing we can do to repay God's grace. Nor is there anything we can do to make God love us more... or less. This is God's generous, abundant, unconditional love and grace.

*True generosity is an offering; given freely and out of pure love. No strings attached. No expectations.*

*Suze Orman*

God,  
you are  
bighearted  
with no limitation.



You overgive and overpay,  
handing us not only the rewards due us,  
but heaping on us the fortunes of everlasting life and love.

We thank you that heaven is not just like our earth,  
that grace does not abide by our rules

We are grateful that  
our little ways  
open out  
when we  
listen to you.

*Generosity*

Lavish your spirit of kindness upon us.  
Help us give and never  
count the cost.

*A Osdieck*

*The Center for Liturgy at Saint Louis University*

**Pray for:**

\* Workers – in health, emergency and social services, education, retail, trades, hospitality and small business; those without work or unable to work;

\* Injustice and inequality – across culture, race, social privilege, financial position, educational opportunity, especially leading up to the referendum on the Voice to Parliament

**Closing:** Go as workers in God's surprising kingdom, where the last are first and the first are last, where needs are met in miraculous ways, and there is abundant grace for all!