



Theme: Summer Stories with Jesus
“Unfair Grace”

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber, July 2-3, 2022, at Summit Church, Durango

Weekly Memory Verse:

¹⁶ “So those who are last now will be first then, and those who are first will be last.” – Matthew 20:16

VIDEO Sermon Starter

I was pretty fortunate to have all of my grandparents alive until I was in my 20’s. I may have shared with you before that my dad’s mom, Ida D’Ambrosia, was born in Durango at Mercy Hospital. She grew up in this area as her family had immigrated from Italy to Hesperus in the early 1900’s. Her family later moved to Denver, and I knew her as Grandma Huber. We didn’t get to visit her often, but one of my vivid memories is of her growing a garden, and especially the carrots. I can remember pulling gardens out of the ground at her house and being fascinated and marveled by this amazing orange vegetable that tasted amazing compared to what we got in the grocery store!

GRAPHIC Jeff and Grandma Huber

I found myself thinking about Grandma Huber’s garden this week

as we continue in this series of the stories of Jesus because I didn't do any of the work to get those carrots. I just got to eat them. I had no idea when went into planting them, caring for them, or growing them. I just got to pull them out of the ground and be blessed by their gift of nutrition and wonderful taste.

The story we are going to focus on today is very similar in many ways to that experience. Sometimes we receive a gift we don't deserve, and Jesus is going to use this story about workers in the vineyard to help us make sense of things we don't understand and help us see a profound truth. Jesus understood that stories help us be a part of something bigger than ourselves. Stories bring together a community. Stories capture our imagination. Stories invite us into a new understanding of the world around us. Stories can change our perspective and in turn, change our world.

SLIDE **parable = "to throw along beside"**

I remind you that the word parable means to, "Throw alongside," by extension meaning comparison, illustration, or analogy. It was the name given by Greeks to an illusion in the form of a brief fictional narrative. Jesus would tell brief stories and invite us to throw them alongside of the Kingdom of God because he knew that these stories would help us see more deeply who we are and whose we are. We are meant to enter the stories to help see God and ourselves more fully. The gospel of Mark describes Jesus' life with these words in Mark 4.

BIBLE

² He taught them by telling many stories in the form of parables...

Jesus told more than 40 different stories and it comprises 35% of the Gospel of Mark, 52% of Luke's gospel, and 45% of Matthew's gospel. These stories are seen as the most authentic of the words of Jesus that we have in the Scriptures, and through them we have a chance to meet, know, and follow Jesus. If we want to be the presence

of Jesus Christ in the world, as we say in our mission statement in this church, we must know these stories and what they mean for our lives. I remind you of several things we must remember as we read these stories.

SLIDE Stories have layers

It's easy to get stuck looking at the surface of a story, especially when it's short and succinct, but every one of the stories of Jesus has multiple layers that are meant to make us think and lead to a deeper truth. Today, we are going to hear a story Jesus tells about laborers who work in a field and how they get paid. Since this is a Family Worship Weekend, we have invited our Summit Kids to read the scripture as we also hear about our gardening ministry that our kids and many of you are part of here at Summit Church.

VIDEO Giving Garden and Scripture (00:00 to 01:11)

Let's be honest, this story seems unfair. The people who worked for one hour got paid the same as people who got paid for working 12 hours. Does that seem fair to you! This seems incomprehensible and certainly Un-American, and that is what the works thought. Here is what they had to say in the next few verses.

BIBLE

¹⁰ When those hired first came to get their pay, they assumed they would receive more. But they, too, were paid a day's wage. ¹¹ When they received their pay, they protested to the owner, ¹² 'Those people worked only one hour, and yet you've paid them just as much as you paid us who worked all day in the scorching heat.'

Not only was it hard work, but it was also scorching hot! Have you ever thought something was unfair? Have you ever compared something you got to something someone else got, and thought it was unfair because they got more? Have you ever thought that something

was unfair because you got something that someone else did NOT get...like COVID?! This story reminds us of something else we must remember as we read parables that Jesus tells.

SLIDE These are not timid stories

The parables of Jesus should shock us and surprise us and sometimes offend us. They did not put Jesus to death on a cross because he told nice bedtime stories. These stories turned the world of the first century upside down, and I would argue that if we read them carefully, they do the same for us today. We like the parables to be nice and neat and tidy, which I don't think Jesus intended, and that for sure would have been the case with this parable given those who were listening. This points to another important thing to remember when reading the parables of Jesus, and it's especially true in this story because is the LAST parable Jesus tells in Matthew's gospel, before he enters Jerusalem where he will go to the cross.

SLIDE We can't separate the stories from Jesus

Remember that this is a story, a parable, with layers of meaning. This is NOT about economics or how to run a business. This story is about how the master, God, and the foreman, Jesus, see each of us. Jesus went to a cross and on that cross forgave the criminal on the cross next to him. That seems crazy to us! Jesus forgave the people who put him on the cross. That seems even crazier! This idea is captured at the end of this story where we read these words.

BIBLE

¹³ “He answered one of them, ‘Friend, I haven’t been unfair! Didn’t you agree to work all day for the usual wage? ¹⁴ Take your money and go. I wanted to pay this last worker the same as you. ¹⁵ Is it against the law for me to do what I want with my money? Should you be jealous because I am kind to others?’

Should we be jealous because God is kind to others? This story is

meant to make us think deeply about the fact that God is generous, and we are then invited to be generous as we seek to be the presence of Jesus in the world. One of the ways you have been generous and offered grace as a congregation is through the giving Garden, which has grown from this little space behind our church to place that now feeds over 100 families. Let's take a listen.

VIDEO Giving Garden and Scripture (01:11 to end)

BIBLE

¹⁶ “So those who are last now will be first then, and those who are first will be last.”

This is our scripture memory verse for this week. Will you say it together we may shout loud? This scripture captures a deep truth for us who are seeking to follow Jesus. What seems unfair to us, because we are human, is called grace by God. **At its core, grace seems unfair.** That is actually the definition of grace.

SLIDE Grace is love we don't earn, or even deserve.

The promise from God through this parable is not that everything will seem fair in this life, but that God's grace will show up, even in the midst of circumstances that seem unfair. We are blessed today to have Joe and Dasha Reimers with us. As the war in Ukraine broke out, we connected with them as Joe is from Bayfield and I have come to know his father Dennis as he leads our Good News Jail and Prison Ministry here in La Plata County. Dasha and her family are from Mariupol and she and Joe have been teaching for several years in a school that ended up in the heart of the war zone. You all gave a special offering to support them and when they arrived here in the area they offered to come and speak with us, and I was delighted and honored to have them do so today.

I asked if they would share with us how they have seen God's grace in the midst of a very unfair war.

INTERVIEW with Joe and Dasha

GRAPHICS from Joe and Dasha

SLIDE

Communion

July 30-31 Order

1. Ely welcomes people and says, **“Today we continue looking at stories Jesus, seeing how these stories point to grace that is extravagant, and even seems unfair, as God offers to love us in radical ways.”**
2. Two Songs
3. Jeff welcomes and invites people to greet each other however they are comfortable and be seated.
4. Ashleigh do Announcements (Check News Section on Website)
 - a. Help with Eagle Lake Camp
 - b. Drinks with the Pastor in two weeks on August 11
 - c. Worship Night at Rotary Park
5. Invite congregation to prepare their hearts for the message.
6. Sermon
7. Prayer
8. Two Songs
9. Prayer and Lord’s Prayer
10. Offering SLIDE and Focus (Giving Garden and Ukraine School)
11. Care Ministers (If any are present)
12. Prayers and Closing Thoughts
 - i. Prayer focus August is Education
13. Closing Prayer