**Sunday 24th September 2023: Matthew 20: 1-16**

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. **2**He agreed to pay them a denarius[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+20%3A+1-16&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23795a)] for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

**3**“About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. **4**He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ **5**So they went.

“He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. **6**About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’

**7**“‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered.

“He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

**8**“When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’

**9**“The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. **10**So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. **11**When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. **12**‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’

**13**“But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? **14**Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. **15**Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’

**16**“So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

**Notes**

This is a strange passage from which to speak about generosity, with its rhetorical question: “Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Of course you do. And let it be said right at the beginning, no one should ever compel or coerce you to give money, certainly not to the Church.

This passage is actually about fairness. Or lack of it. As such it can be difficult to understand. We expect and **want** God to be fair. There’s something incredibly unfair if I give some money away but the person standing next to me, who is richer than me, still has more. And likewise, unfair if after I give, another person still has less. It’s also unfair if I give generously to my local parish Church but I know for a fact that another person is not giving. Why should I give if other people do not?

And there’s something incredibly unfair about the fact that through whatever chain of circumstances has brought it about, whether it be my parents, my upbringing, people I’ve met, experiences I’ve had, that I’ve come to a position of finding faith whereas my neighbour may not, as yet.

There is something about generosity that trumps fairness. When we discover that God is overwhelmingly generous, and specifically generous to me, we are released from comparing ourselves to others, and always expecting to have the same. We are also released to be generous ourselves, as our personal response and expression of gratitude to God, regardless of what others may be doing.

**End**