

## Series: Embracing a Radical Faith

VBC

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Matthew 19:27-20:16

November 19-20, 2011

### “The Unfairness of God’s Grace”

Story in Friday’s Wall Street Journal entitled-“A Star Exits”-it’s a piece about Bill Miller

- in the world of mutual fund managers—he has been a sort of icon, a super star
- who helped his clients make thousands of dollars
- showing them where to invest—what to buy and when to sell
  
- for Miller-it wasn’t enough to be the richest person in the room—he aspired to be the *smartest* person
- he demonstrated his shrewdness by buying into businesses other investors overlooked
- bought Amazon.com during the internet bubble
- bought Google in its initial public offering
  
- but like so many others-it turned out Mr. Miller wasn’t so clever
- though he had a PhD in Philosophy
- chairman of a think-tank—followed philosophers and studied under Warren Buffett
- his investments began to take a nose dive
- he misread the times—was blind sighted by the current financial crisis
- the more stocks went down—the more shares he encouraged his investors to buy-*it’s just a matter of time*
- and so they did--into groups like Countrywide Mortgage and Bear Stearns
- that turned out to be empty holes

So where is the smart investment? Where should one place their time and resources?

- that’s what Peter wanted to know-was he a wise investor?-read 19:27
  
- the “then” connects to the story of the rich young ruler last week
- who was offered a way to get really wealthy—but he turned Jesus down
- was not interested in eternal stock options
- but Peter was—and like an investor looking at his portfolio
- *he wanted to know what was his earnings report*

- what is the return for those who—unlike others—have left everything to follow Jesus
- or lost a relationship—or given up a more profitable career
- or have given a significant amount of one's estate for the sake of the kingdom
- has this been a good decision?
  
- people after all—are always looking for something safe to invest in
- a week ago, 60 people gathered in a large home—over 10,000 square ft.
- situated in a gated, wealthy community in LA
- as they nibbled on fruit and croissants
- they checked out the view, peeked into the movie theatre-walked through its seven bedrooms-noted that it once was rented by Brittany Spears
- but what once was worth nearly 11 million—is now on an auction starting at just over 4
  
- investments in this world are not always so sure
- but kingdom investments are read vss. 28-29

-note His point—

### 1-GOD'S GRACE IS OUTRAGEOUSLY GENEROUS

A-those who follow Jesus will be rewarded royally

- will receive breathtaking responsibilities
- will receive the privilege to rule with Me
- the disciples who have given up everything—who are generally disregarded by Israel
- will one day share in His kingship
  
- but this also includes all of us who have chosen to follow Him
- "If we endure, we shall reign with Him"-2 Tim 2:12
- "do you not know that the saints—we who are His trophies of grace will judge the world?"-I Cor. 6:2

- it's more--

- B-those who follow Jesus will be rewarded lavishly
- will receive an amazing return on investment
- though things are turbulent in this world—kingdom investment has a 10,000% rate of interest
- it's a way of saying the rewards will be way out of proportion to what was invested
- like giving a daughter a new car for clearing the table
- an employee a 5 million dollar bonus for landing a 20 dollar account
- *"God's rewards will make yachts look like trinkets placed in Happy Meals"-Hybels*

- Jesus, however, is not finished answering Peter's question - read vs. 30
- one could read it as a confirmation of everything Jesus has said
- there's an upside down principle in God's kingdom—something that goes contrary to this world's kingdoms
- rich people on this earth who are first will be last
- poor people like the disciples will be one day be first
- but that might miss it
- it could be Jesus is actually giving Peter a warning
- that while he might see himself as first in the kingdom
- if he is not careful—he could be last
- for here's something else about My grace—

## 2-GOD'S GRACE IS SHOCKINGLY UNFAIR

- it turns out God's grace may actually be too generous for some—especially those who have received it-read 20:1-16
- the for explains vs. 30
- in God's kingdom-things are upside down
- unlike our tit for tat ungraced world of no pain, no gain/ get what you pay for/ airline change fees
- think of God's world as liked a vineyard
- where a farmer has an urgent job
- he calls his first crew—who are offered a fair wage
- and as the day goes—more harvesters are needed
- maybe the forecast for rain meant it had to get done
- so the foreman returns to the job center several times
- and most likely—these were now the ones not so hireable
- those who showed up later
- those previously passed over—those less promising-with less impressive resumes—less experience—or maybe a history of firing
- but things turn on their head
- (remember-this is about God's kingdom)
- the owner pays those hired last first
- but what is most troubling is that he pays them the same wage as everyone else
- which seems so unfair to them
- and likely—most of us would feel the same
- and maybe Peter is inwardly protesting as well
- so what's the point?

1-Peter is likely connecting the dots that God is the landowner in the parable

- and like this landowner, God graciously provides
- He reserves the right to alter the rules of retribution

2-and maybe Peter is realizing that these undeserving workers are also pretty obvious

- Jesus has this way of always going after the rejects
- after those no one else will

Willimon put it this way—

When Jesus asked—which of you...

- would leave the 99 to beat the bushes to find one lost sheep
- and which of you women would rip up a carpet to look for a lost coin— and call the neighbors and throw a party
- and which of you fathers would throw a party for a son who blew your wealth?
- and which of you would pay workers at the end of the day a lavish wage?
  
- the answer is—none of us would behave so unseemly, so recklessly, so extravagantly
- but God does—He is the searching shepherd, the reckless woman, the extravagant father, the generous landowner
  
- abundance is God's nature
- who goes after a conniving Jacob rather than a dutiful Esau
- confers supernatural strength on a narcissist named Samson
- makes this deeply flawed man by the name of David His king
- likens Himself to a husband going after a prostitute named Gomer
- sends His rain and sun indiscriminately on the just and unjust
- dares to call a motley group like us His bride

3-and maybe Peter is now sorting out who represents the other group—the resentful workers

- who resent generous landowners
  
- like Israel-that couldn't accept that God's grace included the Gentiles
- like the Pharisees who were scandalized by Jesus' love the sinner
- like the older brother in the parable of the prodigal—who couldn't handle the fact the Father gave a lavish party for the restored son
  
- and maybe—it was becoming clear to Peter-and here's the warning
- that Jesus was saying—and maybe like you
- like any of us who receive God's generosity and begin to view it as a result of merit
- begin to be driven by what's in it for us?
- what have we earned?
- and look down on others like the rich young ruler
- or those come later—who have made less sacrifices

- His words through Paul to the Jews in Rom 9:15 apply
- *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy*
- don't be surprised at how big My grace is
- don't be too unnerved by who might end up in heaven
- too shocked that those who got in at the first get in the same way those who come in at the end—by grace
  
- the lasts become first by grace
- and the firsts sometimes become the lasts by pride
- Conc.

Cross Country-awkward runner—coke bottle glasses—a wonder he could find his way—had no business running

- better suited for the photography club—or the chess club
- every race—he was the last guy in
- every work out—we had to circle back for him
- but at the banquet—he got the same letter that we too sewed on our jacket
- the coach gave us what we earned
- we just didn't like the idea those who didn't perform the same were extended the same grace

If we're not careful—God generosity can make us misers

- when we ought to be the most generous people in the world