

Sermon: The Uncommon Sense of Grace

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[0 : 00] Hey, faith family, if you have your Bible, please turn to Matthew chapter 20.

Matthew chapter 20 will be our passage today. We started a new series last week called Uncommon Sense. And what we're doing is we're looking at the teaching of Jesus and how uncommon it is in the way we tend to think, the way the world tends to think.

In fact, Paul talks about that what is wisdom to the world is foolishness to God. And what is the wisdom of God is often foolishness to the world.

And so what we as believers need is not common sense. We need more uncommon sense so that we can navigate life according to the values and the principles of the kingdom of God.

And our next example of this, of this uncommon sense that Jesus teaches, is found here in Matthew chapter 20. Matthew chapter 20 and beginning in verse 1.

[1 : 05] Scripture says, So they went.

And going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. And about the eleventh hour, he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, Why do you stand here idle all day?

And they said to him, Because no one has hired us. And he said to them, You go into the vineyard too. And when the evening came, The owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, Call the laborers and pay them their wages, Beginning with the last, Up to the first.

And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, Each of them received a denarius. Now when those hired first came, They thought they would receive more.

But each of them also received a denarius. And on receiving it, They grumbled at the master of the house, Saying, These last worked only one hour.

[2 : 27] And you have made them equal to us, Who have borne the burden of the day, And the scorching heat. But he replied to one of them, Friend, Am I doing you no wrong?

Am I doing you no wrong? Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go. I chose to give this last worker as I give to you.

Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity? So the last will be first, And the first last.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for our time now in your word. Thank you for the uncommon sense that Jesus teaches us. And pray that you would guide us into truth, And help us be filled with uncommon sense.

Lord, that we would approach life, And think about life the way you have called us to. So open our eyes to see, Our minds to understand, Our hearts to receive your truth.

[3 : 32] And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Oh.

Hey. Oh. Hey. Clark, what's wrong? Honey. It's bigger than you expected?

Smaller? What is it? It's a one-year membership in the Jelly of the Month Club.

Clark, that's the gift that keeps on giving the whole year. That it is, Edward. That it is indeed. Faith family, you are either from another planet or you've never turned on your television at Christmastime if you've not seen that famous clip from Christmas Vacation.

You remember it? Clark has been waiting for quite some time on his Christmas bonus, filled with anticipation, already planning to put in a swimming pool with the money, and then that night finally arrives and he receives the bonus.

[4 : 49] His family is excited, but they open it up only to discover that it's not what they thought they would get. Instead of receiving a bonus, they received the Jelly of the Month Club, to which famous cousin Eddie replies, Clark, that's the gift that keeps on giving.

Now, most of us can relate to that scene. We can relate to the emotion of that moment. We know what it's like to feel the same kind of disappointment that Clark feels in that moment.

Every one of us has felt that in one way or the other. All of us have had that feeling of, wait just a minute here. I put more time in than her.

Wait just a minute here. I'm a far more obedient kid than my brother. Wait, wait, wait a minute. I paid a lot more taxes than that person did.

Wait a minute. I've lived a far healthier life than he did. I studied a lot harder than she did. Wait a minute.

[5 : 58] I served God more faithfully than that heathen, and yet this happened to me. The truth is, Faith Family, all of us know that experience when the paychecks of life get handed out, and we feel like we were left with the equivalent of the jelly of the month club.

That what we thought we should have received, that what we thought we earned, is not what we were given. I can relate just even to a situation I've been going through this week, feeling like it's entirely unfair, and yet it's something you have to deal with.

All of us know that feeling, like Clark felt in that scene, the feeling of disappointment, that it just didn't quite make sense.

And the reason that's the case is because you and I tend to approach life with, you'll notice this on the screen, the common sense that people who do more ought to get more.

The people who do more ought to get more. If you work more, you ought to get paid more. If you put in more hours, you ought to have more of an advantage.

[7 : 24] That's the common sense approach that most of us have towards life. And that's true to the common sense of the world, but that is not true to the uncommon sense of the kingdom of God.

And it is precisely what Jesus exposes in the parable that we just read. Now let's go back and pick up the context from which Jesus does this teaching, the context from which He shares this story.

Go back into chapter 19 and look at verse 27. It says, Then Peter said in reply, See, we have left everything and followed you.

What then will we have? Now that question that the Apostle Peter is asking is not coming out of thin air. It's coming out of a context.

You see, this exchange comes off the heels of the encounter with the rich young ruler. You remember the man who was not willing to sacrifice what he had.

[8 : 33] He wasn't willing to give up his possessions and received nothing. So Peter looks at that and he begins to do some common sense math.

He begins to think, Now wait a minute. If he wasn't willing to sacrifice anything and therefore received nothing, and we have sacrificed a lot to follow Jesus, can you even imagine what we're going to get?

Can you imagine what we're going to receive? That just makes sense. It's the common sense math of the world.

Peter's like the parent. Did you ever have one of those parents that constantly reminded you of all the sacrifices they made for your education? Or that athlete that's constantly reminding the coach, Do you know how many points I score and therefore I ought to get more playing time?

That's exactly what Peter is doing here. His common sense approach to life is that the greater the sacrifice should equal greater reward.

[9 : 46] That's common sense. So Jesus has to teach Peter, and consequently us, the uncommon sense of the kingdom.

Look at this story that he tells beginning in verse 1. Matthew 20 verse 1. For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.

After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard and going out about the third hour, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace.

And to them he said, You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right, I will give it to you. Now, this kind of story, this kind of an example, would have been very, very common in the ancient Near East.

Extremely common. Basically what's happening here is you've got, because there's no unions in those days, there's no long-term work contracts in those days, it's simply that at the marketplace, men would gather every morning to be hired for that day.

[10 : 59] And someone would come along, a landowner, a vineyard worker, someone would come along and would hire them for a day's wage to come and work on their land.

And what happens in this particular story is the owner and these workers agree to what they will be paid. And so it's expected that this is what I'm going to pay you, and this is what you're going to work, and at the end of the day, you'll get what I promised, in this case, a denarius, which in those days was about a day's wage.

But the thing is, then you would be back to unemployment again. The next day, you would have to do this over and over again. So here the landowner goes back throughout the day at 6 a.m., 9 a.m., noon, 3 in the afternoon, and 5 in the afternoon, and he hires different people at different times of the day, but he only tells those people, I'll pay you what is right.

Now notice what happens at the end of the day. Look at verse 8. And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, those that were hired later in the day, up to the first, those that were hired at the beginning of the day.

And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. So what happens is, the landowner here calls first the last group of the day, those that were hired at 5 o'clock in the afternoon.

[12 : 38] They worked the shortest amount of time. They worked in the easiest part of the day. They weren't working in the ancient Near East during the hot part of the day.

And what are they given? They are given a denarius. In other words, they're given what they need to survive another day. Because again, a denarius was a day's wage.

And so the landowner gives them what they need to survive. Now remember, in this context, these people are living as, give us this day, our daily bread.

Because they don't know if they will get bread tomorrow. They are dependent every day to be able to survive. And so this landowner is clearly generous.

He cares more about these people than he does his own profit. And so he gives them a denarius. Now watch what happens next. Verse 10.

[13 : 35] Now when those hired first, so at the beginning of the day, came, they thought they would receive more. But each of them also received a denarius.

The news got out. It tends to get out. And the news that got out was, did you hear that the group that got hired at five in the afternoon got a denarius?

Well, if they got a denarius, can you imagine what we're going to get who worked all day long in the scorching heat?

Can you imagine the bonus that we're going to receive? These individuals are already dreaming about their houseboat at the Sea of Galilee.

They are already dreaming and they have these envisions of the bonus that they're going to get. And so they can't wait to get this paycheck.

[14 : 42] They're much like Peter. Common sense would say that we will get paid more. And yet watch what happens.

Verse 11. And on receiving it, that is the denarius, they grumbled at the master of the house. Oh, these guys, when they realize that they have only now been given a denarius, are not happy at all.

Now, why are they not happy? They're not happy because in their minds, they worked longer. They worked harder.

Because, quite frankly, it's not fair. It's not fair that they worked more and yet received the same thing. I mean, can you imagine the protest beginning to break out?

And yet, if you and I were to sit here and think, you know, these ungrateful individuals, how could they be so upset with the landowner? Well, you'd be upset too.

[15 : 56] You know you would. I would be too. If you'd been at the company for 25 years and they hired a college student at the same salary that you were at, you'd be upset.

If you were a four-year senior and a freshman got the same amount of playing time as you, you'd be upset. If you've been a Christian all your life and someone just seems to trust Jesus on their deathbed, sometimes, you know, we don't say it out loud, but it's like that just kind of bothers us.

It doesn't seem to make sense at all. And as I was studying this passage, I couldn't help but think about the video that I showed about the monkeys back when we were going through the Hebrew series.

It reminded me very much of this passage, how unfair it is you feel like that you're being treated. So she gives a rock to us, that's the task, and we give her a piece of cucumber and she eats it.

The other one needs to give a rock to us, and that's what she does, and she gets a grape, and she eats it. The other one sees that, she gives a rock to us now, gets again, cucumber.

[17 : 19] She tests the rock now against the wall. She needs to give it to us.

And she gets cucumber again. That is one upset monkey.

I love that clip. Every time I watch it, it makes me laugh, and it's because we can all relate to that. That feeling of, how come they got that and I'm stuck with this?

It doesn't make any sense. It's not fair. It's exactly how those in this story feel who were hired at the beginning of the day. Yet notice how the landowner responds to them in verse 13.

But he replied to one of them, Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go.

[18 : 28] I chose to give to this last worker as I give to you. In other words, the landowner is saying, I didn't treat you in any unfair way. I wasn't unjust to you.

I gave you exactly what I promised I would give you. What I told you I would do at the beginning of the day is what I did at the end of the day.

You didn't deserve my generosity of hiring you at all. And yet, I fulfilled my promise. Now that's, that's what the story means.

That's the story that Jesus tells here. Peter asked a question using common sense math. The rich young ruler didn't give up anything and therefore he got nothing.

So based on all that we've sacrificed, won't we receive a lot? Now what does Jesus, what's he teaching here? What's he really getting at?

[19 : 23] What's the uncommon sense of this story? Well, there's been a lot of different interpretations as to what this story means. Some have said that you shouldn't pay people fairly.

But that's, that's not the context here at all. Not what Jesus is teaching here. Some have said there's equal access into heaven. So whether you come to faith at 10 years old or you come to faith at 80 years old, everybody gets equal access to heaven.

Well, that's true. But that's not what this story is teaching at all. In order to really get at what this story is teaching, you have to go back to the context of the question that Peter is asking.

Namely, since we have sacrificed much, what should we expect to get? How much more should we receive?

And at the heart of that question is a motivation. motivation. And it's that motivation that Jesus is trying to unpack in Peter's life.

[20 : 26] Namely, the question is for Peter and the question is for us, why are you following me? What's the fundamental motivation as to why you are following Jesus?

And the answer here in this particular passage, notice it on the screen, is that Peter is motivated by personal gain rather than humble gratitude.

Peter is motivated by personal gain. What am I going to get rather than humble gratitude? I can't believe I'm even allowed in the kingdom.

And that's the difference here, faith family. You see, common sense of the world is you work and you gain. But the uncommon sense of the kingdom is you work from gratitude.

Common sense of the world is you work and you gain. But in the kingdom it's you work or you serve not for gain but from gratitude.

[21 : 28] Faith family, look right here. These workers had lost sight of the fundamental generosity given to them by the owner that gave them work in the first place.

it is a privilege to be allowed to serve God. There is nothing in us that deserves that or has earned that right.

It is given to us by the gracious hand of God. Faith family, it is possible to sacrifice much for God with the wrong motive like Peter and gain nothing.

it is possible to give and serve and do all these things in the name of service to God but to do it with the wrong motive and yet it gains nothing.

Is this not what the apostle Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 3 and verse 3? 1 Corinthians 13 verse 3 says if I give away all that I have if I deliver up my body to be burned so if I sacrifice in all those ways but I have not love I gain nothing.

[22 : 52] That's the heart issue. What is your motivation for serving God? Do we serve God out of gratitude or do we serve God out of gain?

I know that there are many of you going through this season of life who are struggling maybe you're struggling financially you're struggling economically there's other things relationally going on in your life and my question for you is even in difficult times have you lost the common sense of being grateful to God that every day you get to serve Him that you get to be a part of His plan and His purposes in the world even when times are difficult and we might say now wait just a minute as a Christian look at all I've sacrificed for God why are my circumstances not better why I haven't gained more and when you think that way you're thinking just like Peter you're thinking in terms of the common sense of the world rather than the uncommon sense of the kingdom that reminds us it is only by

God's grace that we are in His kingdom at all now what does this mean for our life we've looked at the kind of outlining the story and walking through the text and we've looked at what Jesus is actually trying to expose particularly in Peter's heart the gain versus gratitude now what does this mean for us what's the significance of this or maybe ask it this way how do you and I avoid serving God with the wrong motivation serving God with an entitlement mentality with this sense of fairness in other words how do we not be like Peter two things that I want to point out in this passage as we wrap things up number one is you got to remember the reality of grace and number two is you've got to remember the character of God you've got to remember the reality of grace and the character of God if you'll remember those two things you won't be like

Peter you won't pursue this life with the common sense of well if I work I to gain rather if you think about God's grace and you think about God's character you'll approach this life with the uncommon sense of gratitude for the service and opportunities that God has given you let's take those two first the reality of grace the reality of grace I take this from verse 15 it says am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me now notice this next question or do you begrudge my generosity do you begrudge my generosity that is my grace part of what Jesus is teaching Peter here and us is the uncommon sense of grace because grace really doesn't make any sense at all the moment you think you understand grace is the moment you realize you don't understand grace because it goes against the human mindset but the grace of

God here is what Peter needs to remember three things the grace of God removes! consuming heart grace removes the consuming heart the fundamental issue of these workers was we didn't get enough we didn't get enough we think we should have been given more we think we should have been paid more if they were paid a days we should have been paid two days this idea of what we were given was not enough and that's happened in Peter's life and it can!

[26 : 50] happen in ours! Remember Peter went from a fisherman to a disciple of Jesus Christ and now he wants to know how many crowns he gets in heaven in other words how quickly you slip into this consumer mentality of what am I going to get because you have forgotten you don't deserve a stinking thing you don't deserve anything you don't deserve to be hired you don't deserve to be in the kingdom of God but it is by God's grace that you're in and when you really understand that grace and you live in that grace your heart is not one of consumption these workers went from unemployed to questioning the very generosity of the one that hired them they went from poor at the start of the day to prideful at the end of the day all because they forgot the uncommon sense of grace notice this on the screen faith family grace reminds us that in

God's kingdom we are not bargainers we are beggars we are not bargainers we are beggars God is not obligated to give us anything yet he has graciously given us all things and so as we remember the grace of God it will prevent us from being like what is often common sense in the world which is more more more a consumer driven mentality here's the second thing is notice that grace removes the competitive heart grace removes that is the grace of God removes the competitive heart there wasn't a problem in this story until they heard what someone else made isn't that true there wasn't a problem at all they were perfectly content with the denarius that they were going to be given they were perfectly content they thought that was entirely fair until they heard about the grace of this land owner in someone else's life in other words once they took their eyes off the grace in their life and put it on the grace of

God in someone else's life they started to grumble and complain they were just like those monkeys in that video they were perfectly fine with the cucumber until they realized someone else got grapes what that is not just a consuming heart that is a competitive heart I gotta have what they have I got to if they were given that I gotta be just as good as that or just as rewarded as they have been it's a heart that's driven by competition and of course this was ultimately the downfall of King Saul was it not do you remember in 1st Samuel 18 this is 1st Samuel 18 6 through 9 it says as they were coming home when David returned from striking down the Philistine the women came out of all the cities of Israel singing and dancing to meet

King Saul with tambourines with songs of joy with musical instruments and the women sang to one another as they celebrated Saul has struck down his thousands that's impressive that's that's honorable that's a pretty good resume but it goes on to say and David his ten thousands and watch in verse eight and Saul was very angry and this saying displeased him and he said they have ascribed to David ten thousands and to me they have ascribed thousands and what more can he have but the kingdom and saw eyed David from that day on it's a competitive heart it's a wait a minute I've worked they've worked but how come they have more and it's so easy for us to think that way why can't

I sing like they do why can't I make the money that they make why can't I have the family that she has notice this on the screen faith family when you're consumed with God's grace in someone else's life you will miss God's grace in your own when you're consumed with God's grace in someone else's life you'll miss God's grace in yours notice thirdly that grace not only removes the consuming heart we didn't get enough it not only removes the competitive heart how come they got something that we didn't get and then thirdly grace removes the complaining heart what you notice in this passage is that they started grumbling they started complaining against the land owner grumbling means that you've gone from the worker who didn't deserve to be hired to the one who thinks he knows how to manage the field more than the land owner like I said earlier it's going from poor at the beginning of the day to prideful at the end of the day and you begin to gripe and you begin to complain and you begin to say it's not fair and this isn't right if I were in charge of this field

[32 : 54] I would give a better benefit package and you begin to think that you know better than God Paul says in Philippians chapter 2 in verse 14 do all things without grumbling or disputing that you may be blameless and innocent children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation among whom you shine as lights in the world what a testimony it would be to approach life with the uncommon sense of the kingdom no watch this common sense of the world is I work and I ought to get I ought to gain and then when that doesn't happen what happens you grumble and you complain and you woe is me and this is unfair and I can't believe that boss and I can't believe God and all but imagine the light you would be imagine how you would shine as Paul talks about here if you approach life with the uncommon sense of the kingdom which is

I work and I serve and I approach life out of gratitude to God not out of gain for me and if you would approach life with that kind of uncommon sense you wouldn't have you wouldn't grumble you wouldn't complain because your heart would be overflowing with gratitude and you would shine as lights in the world faith family what is it that you think God owes you what is it that you think God owes you you go to church you raise your kids right you shouldn't have to be dealing with fill in the blank what is that for you my encouragement to you today is to this notice it on the screen stop and count your blessings before your heart turns bitter stop and count your blessings you don't belong in the field in the first place but God has graciously invited you in before your heart like that first group turns bitter and complaining and grumbling you you

Christian have the kingdom regardless of what you get in this life you've already been given the kingdom of God what else is it that you desire to gain and by the way just quickly as we about to wrap this up you notice here the difference between the gospel and religion this is a beautiful example of the difference between the gospel and religion the gospel produces gratitude why because you know God owes you nothing it produces gratitude because you realize in light of my sin I do not deserve anything from God but religion produces ingratitude because you think God owes you something after all look at what I did look look after all I lived up to the rules or I at least lived up to most of them or at least I lived up to more than she did and religion approaching

God in that way leads to you owe me something but the gospel the gospel of grace reminds us God owes us nothing and we are grateful for everything that's the grace of God that is seen in this passage that helps us approach life with the uncommon sense of the kingdom now the last one is not just the grace of God but the character of God the character of God look at verse 13!

But he replied to one of them friend I am doing you no wrong did you not agree with me for a denarius take what belongs to you and go I choose to give this last worker as I give to you am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me or do you begrudge my generosity so the last will be first and the!

[37:17] last now what what do those verses teach us about the character of God just a few things very quickly first of all is the gentleness of God the gentleness of God you notice that the owner's response to these ungrateful workers was friend friend am I doing you wrong friend have I not given you what I promised I would that is not the common sense response the common sense response is you ungrateful piece of you know what you're fired out of here you're never working for me again if I see you in the marketplace I will pass you over to hire someone far more grateful than you that be the common sense approach but the gentleness of God here the character of God is seen here when he comes to these ungrateful workers and says friend God is approachable even when we feel like we've been treated unfairly we can come to him he's not going to look at you and say you ungrateful child of mine

Peter I can't believe that you're even asking that question next no he meets Peter right where he is the land owner meets these grumpy complaining workers right where they are because at the heart of God's character is a gentle and kind father the second thing is the godness of God the godness of God namely notice the phrase where it says can I not do what I want or as Paul puts it the potter has the right to do with the clay whatever he chooses here's the reminder fate family this life is not your field this life is not my field the field belongs to the land owner it belongs to God and he has the right to do with it whatever he wants to do the point here notice it on the screen the point of life is not the gain of

Peter it's the glory of God the point of life is not the gain of Peter it's the glory of God this is his field this is his money he can give it however he wants because he's God what we see here when we look at God's character is not just his gentleness but we see his sovereignty we see that it all belongs to him and that the point of it is not what I get out of it but does he get glory for it all and notice thirdly the grand design of God the grand design of God I mention this because the phrase of the first will be last and the last will be first Jesus here is preparing Peter and the rest of the disciples for something huge in redemptive history think of it this way if you're a

Jew like Peter was you know that the first group that got hired back in Genesis were the Jews those were the chosen people of God when he called out Abraham and birthed a nation from him they were the first ones on the scene when it comes to the redemptive people of God God made them a promise and God hired them at the beginning of the day but what is in redemptive history about to happen just shortly after this moment where Jesus is teaching Peter what's going to happen is Gentiles tax collectors convicts prostitutes pig eating Gentiles and rednecks from Tennessee are going to enter into the people of

God with the same benefits of the Jewish people and Peter needs to learn this lesson now or he won't be ready for the mission then God is doing something where he's going to bring people in in redemptive history at five o'clock in the afternoon they weren't there at six a.m.

[42 : 06] in the morning but they'll be brought in to God's plan at five in the afternoon and they will have access to the same kingdom as Peter will the last will be first and the first will be last and so Peter needs to learn not just that God is gentle and not just that God is God he also needs to learn that this landowner has a plan for his vineyard and it will come to pass!

be there they shouldn't be there I shouldn't be in God's kingdom you shouldn't be in God's kingdom and yet when you look at the character of God he is gentle he is God he has a plan and he is gracious to let even you in no matter who you are no matter what you've done no matter where you've been you are welcome in the kingdom of God that is how gracious our God truly is so my question faith family today is this are you living according to the uncommon sense of the world are you living according to the common sense of the world and the common sense of the world is this the more you serve the more you succeed the more you work the more you gain or are you living according to the uncommon sense of the kingdom namely this that service to

God is not to get more rewards serving God is the reward reward that service to God is not to get more rewards serving God is the reward after all faith family you and I don't want the paycheck that we deserve the Bible says the wages of sin is death that's the paycheck we deserve but praise God that Jesus paid that in full why he did so so that we could receive the generous gift of God that is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord and that faith family truly is the gift that keeps on giving let's pray he