

Rev. Randall Hubbard  
Isaiah 55:6-9  
Philippians 1:20c-24, 27a  
Matthew 20:1-16a

25<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME  
September 17-18, 2011

On occasion you will hear someone say, “Oh it just isn’t fair.” It just isn’t fair about any number of things. When it comes to fairness, fairness is fairly relative, don’t you think? Each one of us has our own standards by which we determine something is fair or unfair. It’s sort of like, it is so unfair that U of L won last night. So unfair. Or we can put it this way. It is so unfair that UK lost last night. It’s so unfair. It really is. But anyway, the point is is that fairness can be relative.

But we all at some point have a degree of agreement on life issues that there is fairness, and what is unfair; what is just, what is unjust; what is right, what is wrong; what is good, what is bad. And that common agreement on those things helps us as a people of faith. But nonetheless, there’s always going to be some sense of fairness and unfairness, that things just seem to be so out of kilter, so wrong. And for us it is the challenge that when our sensibilities are confronted about a particular issue, a cause, a passion that we have, that for us it’s a matter of understanding the great generosity of our God. That in the end, regardless of how things fall out – fair, unfair, just, unjust – that in the end the one thing that we can hold onto as a truth is that God loves us all the same. That God is forgiving to all unconditionally. That God is with us each and every one. And that is the truth.

So at times when we get so caught up in our cause, in our issue, in our agenda, in the end what’s important for us is to be able to stretch ourselves beyond our own perspective, our own relative sense of what is fair, what is unfair, what is just, what is unjust to still see that in spite of it all, God loves each and every one of us.

In our gospel account, Jesus makes this point very clear for us as he tells us the parable of the landowner who hired workers throughout the day to go into his vineyard. And at the end of the day, even the group that worked only one hour received the exact same pay as all the others, regardless of what time they began to work in the vineyard.

Now we might say that better business practice is happening there, and that there is a sense of how unfair can that be, just as the first group acknowledged, “We

worked the full 12 hours; we worked in the heat of the day; and this last group came in at the last hour and got compensated the exact same as we did.” There might be that sense of something unfair about that. But when it comes to God’s love, God’s love is so great and so wonderful and so generous that any condition put on it really becomes irrelevant. It’s important for us that yes we have our passions about our issues and our agenda and our concerns and our causes, but not to lose sight of God’s love. Of allowing ourselves to stretch beyond just that focus to see that it is God ultimately that shows each and every one of us love and mercy and forgiveness. That it is God who is with us and that God blesses us.

And as we are reminded in our first reading from the prophet Isaiah, again God speaking to God’s people says, “My ways are higher. My thoughts are higher. They’re different.” We as human beings, we as created beings, do not have that same capacity as our God. But nonetheless, we are called to trust our God, to trust our God’s love, to trust our God’s compassion, to trust our God’s generosity, to trust our God that God truly, in the end, is the determining factor for us. That helps us to still be a people who are aware, in spite of the inequities in life, in spite of the unfairness, the injustices, that we must confront, that we as a people always are aware of that great, generous love of our God that is extended to all, even our adversaries. That God loves all! God is merciful to all! That God is with all!

And so we pray then that we might be that people who places our trust in God’s love that guides us and directs us as a people. That even in the face of inequities, injustice and unfairness, we are aware of God’s love that compels us forth, that gives us the encouragement we need, but also recognizing that it is God who loves all, who is generous, that stretches us beyond so that we can open ourselves to witnessing each of us created in God’s image. And can be that people of love that we profess to be. A love that truly mirrors our God’s love for us.