

Maple Springs Baptist Church

Series: Unsettling Grace

Week 2: Unequal

In the 1st century all kinds of people from all kinds of backgrounds found Jesus and His movement (the church) attractive. There reason people were attracted to Jesus is a single world ... **Grace: Undeserved, unearned, unearnable favor.**

Grace is what we want so that the people we've hurt, the people we've offended see you . . . **as if it never ever happened.**

The experience of Grace requires a relationship. Where there is no relationship, there can be no transfer or experience of Grace. This is why God had to show up. **We would have never known the Grace of God without the Presence of God.**

This is why John wrote . . . **John 1:14.** Jesus was all Grace and all Truth all the time. He wasn't the balance of Grace and Truth. He was All Grace and All Truth All the Time. But it was the Grace part of Jesus that was so unsettling.

Luke 19:1-5. Jesus and the whole entourage made their way and Jesus stopped, and noticed this grown man up in a tree. And Jesus says, "Zacchaeus come down immediately." I think there was a hush that fell all over the crowd. Here's what they thought. "Finally . . . finally somebody is not intimidated. Finally, somebody is going to all this guy out. Finally, somebody has the courage to face this guy down. Finally, somebody is not intimidated. Finally, he's going to get what he deserves." The crowd probably spread out so everyone could get a view. Talk about an awkward moment. The entire town watches as a grown man climbed down from a tree, and they're thinking, "This is it!" And as he makes his way down and pushes through the crowd, Jesus shocks everyone by saying . . . **"I must stay at your house today."**

Luke 19:5

Luke 19:7. It was unsettling to Jesus' disciples, to the crowd that day, to those who would read this story and to us today because we understand the context of the story . . . Because they, because we don't understand the kingdom of God. God's economy. The way that God sees the world. The way that God sees you. The way that God sees me.

Jesus would try to explain the upside down kingdom that He was there to inaugurate, this brand new set of ethics, this brand new way of seeing the world through stories called parables. On one particular occasion, Jesus attempted to explain the new kingdom, this new value system, this Grace people were so unfamiliar with.

Matthew 20:1-5. Now for those who have heard or read this parable before, you know where this goes and it is so unsettling. It is unsettling because it seems so unfair.

Matthew 20:5. One of the things that Jesus did as a storyteller is He took things to the extreme. He took things to such an extreme that everyone in the audience would lean in and try to imagine “where in the world is He going with this.” So, Jesus takes it to the extreme . .

.Matthew 20:6-8. Here’s the twist. Here’s the value system that Jesus is trying to introduce to the world. This is Jesus’ way of saying, “This is what God is like.”

Matthew 20:9-15

Jesus illuminates the absurdity of my resistance to Grace, or your resistance to Grace. Jesus puts the spotlight on my hypocrisy when it comes to the nature and subject of Grace.

Matthew 20:15

In this parable and many others Jesus invites us to see the world differently, and to see people differently, and to see people around us differently and to see our relationship to God differently. Because the kingdom of God is characterized by . . . **Unsettling Generosity**

Jesus is asking us through this parable, “Will you step into a system where the undeserving get exactly what they don’t deserve? Would you be willing to extend to others what they don’t deserve because our heavenly Father has extended to you what exactly you don’t deserve?”

Jesus steps out of the parable and lets us—first hired—early to get there—know what it may feel like ... **Matthew 20:16**

It will feel unfair. It will be unsettling because of how you were raised to measure fair. **We compare to determine fair.**

Here’s the takeaway: **Grace doesn’t compare.** Because Grace in Jesus is always married to truth. And the truth is: we have all fallen short of God’s standard.