

MORE GRACE PARABLES...

GOD'S AMAZING, ANNOYING GRACE...two of Jesus' BEST-KNOWN STORIES: the Vineyard Laborers and the Prodigal Son. Both shocked the crowds. The parable of laborers cuts to the bone. Don't we reap what we sow and only get what we deserve? It may be how the world works but it isn't how God works. God's grace is both AMAZING and ANNOYING. God sees us in our WORST MOMENTS but doesn't measure us by them. A vineyard owner hires laborers at different intervals but, come quitting time, he pays all of them the SAME WAGE. Equal pay for equal work is fair. Equal pay for unequal work is not. Treating everyone the same is fair; treating everyone the same, when they are not the same, is unfair. In the world, the LAST HIRED is the FIRST FIRED; with God, the LAST HIRED is the FIRST PAID. When I RECEIVE GRACE, I assume that I somehow earned it; when YOU RECEIVE GRACE, I GRUMBLE. We aren't entitled to anything. We didn't deserve life; it was a gift. We don't earn God's love, merit his attention. Grace tells us that whatever place we have in God's Kingdom is a GIFT.

THE PRODIGAL SON...Pharisees are griping about his dinner companions. Overhearing their complaints, Jesus tells his best story, known as the "Prodigal Son", but it might go by other names.

The "Story of 2 lost sons"-one who strayed and one who stayed. both of whom GET LOST in their own ways, and yet both are still PRECIOUS to the Father

It isn't the tale of ONE FAMILY, but of all HUMANITY. They both sin-one by LAW-BREAKING, other by LAW-KEEPING. What ruined the Prodigal was his wrongdoing; what ruined the elder brother was his righteousness. We are both sons. Yet no matter WHO WE ARE or WHAT WE'VE DONE, we are still LOVED. As Mike suggested, Jesus didn't tell it to DESCRIBE SIN or DIFFERENT WAYS WE GO WRONG but to show us WHAT GOD IS LIKE. Viewed through 1st century eyes, his story is ASBURD on many levels.

A true dysfunctional family with weak patriarch, an absentee wife, two rebellious sons, whom the Father seems unable to control; who shames his honor in the community to keep his family in tack. His honor means nothing to him where relationships are concerned. He will do anything to keep his family together. Driven by love, he approaches both sons urgently yet the Eldest refuses to join the party. What do you think of this Father? What does this story tell us About God's grace?