



Grain

“Charity wins awards and applause, but joining the poor gets you killed. People do not get crucified for charity. People are crucified for living out a love that disrupts the social order, that calls forth a new world. People are not crucified for helping poor people. People are crucified for joining them.” –Shane Claiborne

Field

[Jesus said,] “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o’clock, he saw others standing idle in the market-place; and he said to them, “You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.” So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o’clock, he did the same. And about five o’clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, “Why are you standing here idle all day?” They said to him, “Because no one has hired us.” He said to them, “You also go into the vineyard.” When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, “Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.” When those hired about five o’clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, “These last worked only one hour, 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, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?” So the last will be first, and the first will be last.” Mt. 20: 1-16

Thoughts written by Rev. Josh Fite, Green Bay, WI

It’s easy to hear these words about “the kingdom of heaven” and think about living up in the sky after we die. Sure, it’s a little discomfoting to think that some jerk who lived their whole life without any thought of their own sinfulness, or reconciliation, or faith, would get to pass through the pearly gates... but hey, we get to go too. No harm, no foul...right? But what of Jesus’ words that the kingdom of heaven...*has come near*. What if Jesus is actually talking about wages for work, wages that go toward housing, food, and health care? Now Jesus words may start to get under our skin. In fact, the more we dwell on the idea, the more scandalous Jesus’ words become.

Wouldn’t it be better if those who only worked an hour got a little money? They would at least be able to take care of part of their bills. More importantly, they’d see that they’ve got to get on the ball and work harder if they want a better life. And the rest of the community—you and me—can give a little of our abundance to help them out a bit until they’re really on their feet, and we can rest well knowing that we’ve helped. That’s not what the kingdom of heaven looks like. The kingdom of heaven looks like an economy and community where everyone—Everyone—closes their eyes on the day in safety, without want, without anxiety about the burdens of tomorrow.

This broken world will resist that kingdom with everything it’s got. It will claim such a kingdom is unfair, a scandal even. It will even kill. Jesus Christ was nailed to a cross for proclaiming that such a kingdom has come near. Those nails could not stop the truth that the kingdom has, indeed, come near. We pray that it even come through us. Watch out, dear ones. Bringing that kingdom may cost us everything. Fear not, Jesus has new kingdom life to give, even in the face of death. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Josh