



CORNERSTONE REFLECTION GUIDE

MARCH 22, 2026

Title: God Is Not Fair. God Is Generous!

Preacher: Rev. Dr. Abe Smith

Scripture: Matthew 20:1-16

Research shows, as children, we naturally long for equality in that we want everyone to have the same. But as we grow older, that instinct often shifts toward self-interest, and our concept of “fairness” is defined by what benefits us. This way of thinking shows up in Peter’s question to Jesus in Matthew 19:27: “What’s in it for us?”

In response, Jesus tells the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1–16), where each worker receives the same wage regardless of how long they labored. What initially feels unfair exposes something deeper within us: a resentment and resistance to generosity.

Through this story, Jesus reframes the conversation. The kingdom of God is not built on fairness but on grace. If God operated strictly on fairness, giving each of us exactly what we deserve, none of us would stand. Instead, God is extravagantly generous by offering love, forgiveness, and new life to all, regardless of timing or merit.

With an honest examination of our own lives, we see how quickly we fall into judgment and comparison. Yet as followers of Christ, we are invited into a different way of living that is shaped by gratitude, humility, and grace. Following Jesus is not about calculating what we gain but about receiving a love so generous that it transforms our lives completely.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you about this sermon? Was there an idea that was particularly meaningful or challenging for you?
2. Read Matthew 20:1-16. What emotions do you feel when you hear the vineyard parable—frustration, relief, gratitude, confusion? Why?
3. How does this parable challenge cultural ideas about earning, merit, and reward? Why do you think generosity can sometimes feel offensive or unfair?
4. Have you ever experienced God’s grace in a way that felt undeserved? How did it affect you?
5. What would it look like in our homes, workplaces, or churches to operate from generosity instead of fairness? How might our relationships change if we stopped comparing and started celebrating others?

WEEKLY PRACTICE

[Lent](#), the season between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday, is traditionally a time for self-reflection and examination—for thinking. These 40 days are often marked by a commitment to fast from certain foods, abstain from particular habits, or adopt new spiritual practices, all with the desire to prepare our hearts for the coming of Easter and the promise of new life.

Week Five: No Negative Talk

Just as gratitude has the power to change how we see and perceive the world, so does engaging regularly in negative talk. This week, cut out all forms of negative talk—complaining, cursing, gossiping, and cutting remarks—both toward others and yourself. If you want to take it a step further, make a concerted effort each day this week to give one person a sincere, thoughtful compliment. In other words, choose to speak life into them, where you might normally use harmful or destructive words. At the end of the week, reflect on your experience: *What did you learn about your own tendency toward negative talk? Did you notice a difference in your outlook and positivity by cutting negative talk out of your conversations and self-reflection?*