

## **It's All The Same In The End**

by JRW Dubois

Since we were children, we've had a sense of what seems fair and what's seems unfair, in our children's eyes. What seems fair changes as we grow and mature, but the sense of fairness remains.

Let's be honest here. When we say this or that seems fair or unfair, we really mean it seems fair or unfair to us, from our perspective, at this stage of our lives. Other people could easily think something is fair when we know that it is unfair and vice versa.

In the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 20, verses 1-16A, Jesus tells us the parable of the landowner who pays all workers the same day's wage whether they worked one hour or twelve hours in his vineyard. From Jesus' parable, we know that a landowner goes out to hire workers for his vineyard, hiring them at different times during the day. Then, at the close of the workday, he pays each worker the same wage. When those hired earlier in the day complain, the landowner replies, "Am I not free to do as I wish with my own money? Are you envious because I am generous?", from today's Gospel.

Perhaps there is some envy or jealousy, just like in the story of the life-long criminal who wholeheartedly repents on his deathbed to a priest and receives absolution and forgiveness. It just doesn't seem fair – in our children's eyes.

The children don't understand the Father, nor His ways. "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts.", from Isaiah 55-9, today's first reading. What seems fair changes as we grow and mature, so imagine maturing and growing to know everything that God knows. Of course, we can't know all that God knows, so we can't understand why things seem unfair, even if God explains it to us.

In truth, fairness is not the point. The reward is the point. What do I mean? Well, each worker works for a reward, which is called a wage in this instance. The parable uses a wage as an analogy for the reward referred to in the parable. In the parable the vineyard is heaven, the workers are working for heaven and, the reward at the end of their work is heaven.

The reward is not equal to the work done to achieve the reward. It is so much more. The reward is heaven, all of heaven, not just a tiny bit. You can't work too much, or too little, while working for heaven. Once you're in heaven, you won't care if you had to work one day or one thousand days to get there, you've made it!

It's like winning the lottery. Imagine, you've been buying lottery tickets for several years without winning. Then, one day you win \$500. You might go to your friend to show him your winning ticket. Instead, your friend tells you, he just bought his first lottery ticket ever, and he just won \$50,000. Would you be jealous of him? Would you phone the lottery company to complain?

The Love of God is for everybody, just like the lottery. Anybody can win the lottery, if they have even a single ticket. But, even if you buy thousands of lottery tickets, you might not win anything. Is that fair? Again, it's not about what's fair or unfair to the winners of the lottery. It's all about the beneficiaries and the benefactors of the lottery.

Imagine you're in charge of raising money to build a new children's hospital and you host a lottery. Each lottery ticket costs \$5.00 and the grand prize is \$50,000.00. Now imagine the two winners; one who buys tickets every week for several years and finally wins \$500.00, and the one who buys his first ever lottery ticket and wins \$50,000.00. To you – who needs to build a hospital – the real hero is the one who bought tickets for several years, not the lucky guy who buys one ticket.

The lucky guy took money from the children's hospital while the hero gave money to the children's hospital. Who really wins, in this situation, is the children. That's why the lottery is held in the first place. If you bought a lottery ticket to support the children's hospital and you won \$50,000.00, would you give the money back to the hospital so the children can benefit even more? Of course not. Just as the workers who were 'supposedly' overpaid should not have to give their wages back, because other workers object. Those guys won a bigger prize in the lottery, that's all. Their not cheating anyone and no one has shortchanged the smaller lottery winners.

You work a little, you work a lot, you buy one lottery ticket or you buy a thousand, you get a small wage or you get a huge wage – none of that matters. Jesus is saying, it's all the same in the end. He's bringing His reward, to all believers in heaven.