

MomenToUs



Season 06.Episode 09

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Welcome to MomenToUs! I am Pastor Rebecca Grate, the Pastor Mission Developer for MomenToUs.

At MomenToUs, we believe that God is present with us in each and every single one of our moments.

We believe that our stories are connected to God's story and to one another's stories.

We believe that this connection and relationship changes our lives and our entire world.

Before we begin, I invite you to take a deep breath in, hold it while you count to three, and then slowly release that breath.

In our last episode, we focused on a couple of stories that called us to look at our relationship with all of our material possessions, especially money. We took a hard look at how we look to all of those things to give

us a sense of stability and security, even to the point where we begin to think that we have a higher status than someone else who does not have as much or doesn't have this specific thing. It is a vulnerable thing to recognize that our relationship with God is based on our relationship with God and not how rich we are or how much we own.

In this episode, we're continuing to look at God's upside down kingdom where the last will be first and the first will be last. And, we're sort of coming at it through the lens of money again, but in a very different way this time.

The story from Scripture we're looking at only shows up in the Gospel according to Matthew and it shows up immediately following the story from our last episode about the rich man who wanted to follow Jesus and was eventually told to sell everything he owned and share it with others. Jesus immediately begins to tell the story about a landowner who went out to hire several workers for the day.

When Jesus tells a story, it's almost always a parable. Parables aren't just regular stories that are told; they are specifically about the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven and they're meant to tell us either a single truth or multiple truths about what that kingdom looks like.

They often challenge our typical ways of living together by pointing to a different way of living.

In this parable, a landowner needs to hire workers for his vineyard so that all of the work for that day can be completed. He goes out early in the work day, hires a group of people, they all agree on the wage for the day, and off the workers go to get started. A few hours later, the landowner goes to hire more workers, telling them he will pay them whatever is right. He does the same thing a few hours later and a few hours later.

Then, when it's almost the end of the day, the landowner goes to the workers who were still waiting to be hired and asks them why they weren't working. They respond, "Because no one has hired us." So, the landowner tells them to go into the vineyard to work.

When it got to the end of the day, everyone lined up to receive their pay from the steward or caretaker. The landowner instructs them to be paid in the reverse order from their hiring order, so those who were hired near the end of the day would be paid first.

That group received a full day's wages.

The group that had worked a few more hours also received a full day's wages.

The group that had worked a few more hours also received a full day's wages.

And so on until the group who had worked for the entire day came up to get paid and they also received a full day's wages. And they are outraged because when they saw that those who had only worked for an hour received a full day's pay, they believed they would receive more because they had worked for the entire day, not just an hour.

The landowner replies and tells them that he is paying them the exact amount they agreed to when they were hired and it is his prerogative to do with his money what he wants. If he wants to share it in this way he can. And then he questions why they are so set against his generosity. And the parable ends with a reminder that calls back to the previous story and connects them together: the last will be first and the first will be last.

When we look at parables there are times where it's not fully clear cut on which person or thing in the parable is supposed to represent God and which is supposed to represent humanity, but this parable is one where I think it's mostly clean cut. Because most of us would have also been arguing with the landowner that we should not all have been paid the same, regardless of the agreement; we should be paid based on the

number of hours we worked. And if we couldn't argue or negotiate our way on this, we will have learned to advocate for hourly pay rather than salary pay for the next job we're hired on.

Even though this parable specifically uses the example of money, I think it does that because it's a direct response to the previous story which focused so heavily on money and possessions. But, if parables are talking about the kingdom of God and trying to tell us a truth about it, then I think money in this parable is really a metaphor for God's grace and mercy. When we look at this parable through that lens, then of course the workers who had been ushered into this vineyard to work would have received the same pay because God's grace and mercy simply is; it's not possible to have more of it. It simply exists. We don't earn more or less of it because we were more or less faithful; it is simply given and we receive it.

In this story, it's also important to note that by the end of the work day, which we could interpret as the concept of time, every single worker is brought into the vineyard to help share in tending the work. There is no one who is left outside, uncalled and unemployed; there is no one who will return home that evening without payment that will help provide for their families. Every single one of them received God's grace and mercy. And, I

bet they told others about it on the way home, after they got home, and as they were preparing for work the next day. When you have received generosity and love, you share that good news with others.

And all of this sounds wonderful, but we'll bristle at it, some of the time at least, when we experience it out in the world. The past several stories we've covered in the most recent episodes have all reminded us that we are very prone to judging and condemning other people or other groups of people as not being as lovable, as important, as valuable as we are. We typically think we are more deserving of God's grace or that we are the ones who are guaranteed to receive God's grace; they, whoever they are, are obviously not. We are so prone to comparison and jealousy and envy that I think reminds us that this parable isn't telling us specifics about financial resources, but a continual call to evaluate how we view our relationship with God and with others. Do we really and fully trust that God's mercy and grace are so abundant that we don't have to fight and claw for it? Or, are we still scared that somehow it will pass us by and we will not receive it?

There's a lot of shame-based scarcity thinking present in how we interact with one another. We've touched on that for the past few episodes and it's creeping into this one, too. But I invite you to take a

breath and to spend some time with this parable, viewing it in light of God's grace and mercy being given to all. There are many other things that can be talked about with money, and equitable and fair pay, with economic justice, and all would be wonderful conversations. But, for this time visiting this parable, focus on what it was initially shared to do: to tell the good news of the kingdom of heaven that calls every single one of us in, fills our arms and pockets with grace and mercy, and sends us back on our way home to tell others about this generous and loving God.

Holy God,

We are Seeing Red at how Scripture is being twisted and distorted to support harming others, nearby and across the world. We confess that:

We compare ourselves to others instead of trusting in your abundant grace.

We still live as though your grace and mercy must be earned.

We mistake fairness for generosity and equality for equity.

We have grumbled at your generosity instead of saying thank you.

We are sorry. We want to do better. Reinvigorate us with your Holy Spirit, that we can follow in the footsteps of Jesus' way of mercy, love, and hope.

Thank you for joining us for this MomenToUs podcast episode. You are part of the MomenToUs community and we are so glad you are here.

Thank you to our Mission Partners, the [Southern Ohio Synod](#) and the [Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#), as well as our Partner Congregations throughout the Southern Ohio Synod and across the ELCA. Your prayers, support, and generosity are an enormous part of what has helped our community continue to grow and thrive.

In our next episode, we are looking at how Jesus responds to flagrant hypocrisy happening within the worship spaces. This is one of the few stories that shows up in all four of the Gospels, so you know it's an important one. And, we'll also look at another story that's a metaphor that really drives home the point about how Jesus views inauthentic behavior from those who have been entrusted with leading God's people. Make sure you're subscribed so you don't miss that episode when it drops!

We have lots of opportunities for us to gather coming up, so make sure to check out our website calendar & social media pages for more information so you can join us!

If you are interested in cozy video game streams and talking about theology, join us for one of our Deconstruction Streams on our Twitch

channel. You don't have to have a Twitch account to watch, but if you'd like to join the conversation, you will need to sign up for a free Twitch account.

If you're in the Metro Columbus area, we have two regular gatherings: One Step at a Time hike & prays at local parks and to make no-sew fleece blankets for My Very Own Blanket, which provides blankets for youth and children in foster care. There are ways to participate if you live elsewhere. Check out [our website](#) for more information!

If you'd like to stay in the loop on our upcoming events, you can always visit our website OR you can [sign up for our weekly email](#). There is a link to do that on our website and in the transcript for today's episode. If you need help getting signed up, send us a DM on one of our social media accounts or you can email me at dailymomentous@gmail.com.

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Until our next podcast, remember to breathe deeply and that God is present with you every single moment.

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