

Word notes Sunday 13/9/09 – Tony Hodge
Grace

Summary (read this bit out to remind cell members what was said on Sunday)

Key Text: Matthew 20:1-16 Luke 15:11-32

In the first parable those who had worked the longest complained that they only received the same wages as those who had only worked an hour. In the second the father restores the prodigal son to full sonship status and throws a party. The parables illustrate Father God's choice not to deal with us as we deserve (Justice) nor merely to put aside our punishment (Mercy) but to restore us and reward or bless us with more than we might have expected (Grace).

- If God were only just we'd only have our just deserts to look forward to, struggling under the weight of the Law trying always to please and get it right.
- If God were only merciful we'd be living in fear of the day His mercy ran out.
- Since we are recipients of God's grace we know that whatever we deserve we can receive a full blessing from God through Jesus.

What about "works"? Instead of slavishly trying to buy our way into heaven or gain merit with God, under Grace we are liberated to share His love and do works out of spontaneous gratitude. Hence meeting a neighbour's need is not our good deed for the day to get into heaven but the result of heaven getting into us and bursting out.

If all this seems too good to be true remember that it was bought with a price – Jesus had to take our debt to God and pay it in full that we might be redeemed. It's only when we put our faith in Jesus, surrender our lives to Him and received His Spirit that we can walk in God's way rather than our own.

Application (this is the bit where cell members get to participate. Lead discussions around these points)

We've probably all expressed the "It's not fair" reaction of the all-day workers or the elder brother at one time or another.

- How would you describe their feelings and what case did they have to complain?
- Ask one or two to share any recent situations where 'natural justice' had not happened for them and how they felt about this, if none come to mind what about attitudes any have come across in everyday life (for example clock-watching at work, being obstructive solely because you're in the right).
- What is God's word into those situations?

Can we receive more Grace and hence live more God's way? (Hint - 2 Pet 3:5-9 & 17-18). In practical terms how can each do this?

Witness (this is the bit where the cell talks and prays about how to share the Good News)

It's the start of a new school term and often a time to plan events from now till Christmas. What might the Cell do to reach out to non-Christian friends, neighbours etc? Start to pray and plan.