

GENEROSITY + + +

| SETH FLICK

Good morning, King of Kings. We are the kingdom, and isn't that great to see a family that's generous with their time, generous with the way that everybody participates? That is what we would love every family to look like as we all engage together. And it's great to see their family as a part of this community.

But I wanted to start the message off with just kind of like a little bit of a different story, and that's our family story. It's like, have you felt what it feels like when you're surrounded by a bunch of people, but you still feel kind of alone? I'm going to be really honest with you right now. This is how I felt when we moved to this church. Like I'm being really vulnerable and very, very honest. I would shake your hands, and it doesn't matter which campus you're on. I've been to all of your campuses. I'd shake hands, and I'd have a big smile, and it wasn't fake. I really wanted to be happy. I really wanted to be connected, but I just felt like there was a me, and there was a you all, and then that was about it for then. And it took a really long time, because like just for me personally, it takes a long time for me to actually make a connection. It could be because I'm a dude, and that's just like how I'm wired. It takes a lot of exposure to people, to like build that trust, to actually like share life together.

And I would be reminded every time that like the family and I would be talking, and we'd be talking about like you all, and there's we, and you all, we'd be like, you all don't know how to drive and take a corner at speed in Omaha. You all don't know how to do that. We Wisconsinites, we know what's up. Sorry. Sorry, Nebraska, the whole state, you don't know how to drive. I ask for your forgiveness for that statement. But it's through moments like this, you know, where we can share a laugh together, or moments where like we would share time together, where we would be, I don't know, praying together because something really wrong happened, or be in the hospital, and I'll get a chance to visit your grandma, or your wife, or your husband, or I got an opportunity to be in the baptismal tank with your family, or somebody you prayed for. Slowly but surely, this like lonely me got to become more of a we in this kingdom.

And it was great to see my family, who we had a bunch of great roots and friends and everyone else to support us back in Wisconsin, and we moved here. It was great to see the family also getting involved. Like we increased student ministries population by like 10% just by bringing all of these children and we're just going to keep bringing more. This whole line has been filled up before. And slowly but surely, as we serve together and spend time together under Jesus in worship and prayer and service and outreach, we became much more of a family and a kingdom, we.

So that's why I'm honored that I get a chance to like start this new sermon series about our values as a church and how it shapes king of kings in this kingdom, which is why the series is called We the Kingdom, right. And in this kingdom, we serve a king. And it's called We the Kingdom because this church is called King of Kings. And as we study these different values, you're going to find that they're all going to be linked with a parable where Jesus, our king, is teaching king of kings, the kingdom of heaven is like every single week.

Now you may need a little bit of a refresher on what our values are, because I know we've gotten a whole bunch of new faces. We have visitors here today. We've had people that have just started coming to church in the last three months. You've seen them get baptized. And so it's good to go through who we are as a kingdom. So we're going to take our values, and as I was putting this series together, I got excited because I got the opportunity to kind of see something that I don't know if you've seen before. If you take our values in this kingdom, it spells a word that is incredibly powerful to us and to Omaha and to Fremont. And that word is grace.

Because our values are G for? R for? A for? Authentic. And C for courageous. That's right. We deserve a generous God. We have deserved nothing but the wrath of God because of our sinfulness. But Jesus and his generous grace has come down and delivered to you free forgiveness. He is generous. And so we get the opportunity to be known within Nebraska for being a generous people as we reflect the generosity of our King.

We're also reliant. He calls us to prayer. He calls us to worship. We cannot help but have every aspect of our life in this kingdom be framed by worship of him every single day. Because A, we authentically worship him. This is not a pageant. This isn't a performance. This is life in the kingdom. It's following him in the highest of highs and we celebrate and we have joy and we give you candy on sweet Sunday. But we also grieve with those who grieve and we sit with those who have a loss and we pray over those who've lost a job because that's what God's people in this kingdom are called to do, to be authentic, to really follow Jesus of what his words have said and C to be courageous. That we're going to do new things to reach out to new people that haven't heard the gospel yet because that's what our kingdom is known for. Our kingdom is not known for being a keep in the middle of the big old castle. Our kingdom is known for expanding the bounds and transforming lives for Jesus by the power of his spirit. That's what his kingdom is all about.

G R A C and you're like, you can't spell pastor. There's an E at the end of grace and there is, but that little E it's not an extra value. This is our target. Every person, doesn't matter what they look like, what they smell like, who they support, who they vote for, who they don't vote for. Every person should be in this kingdom church. Every where Omaha, Northwest Omaha, Fremont, Guatemala, Chile, every where gets to experience God's kingdom in the king of Kings. When the Lord of Lords comes to visit in his house. And it's not just something that we do as we live authentically when we choose to do so, when it's convenient, when it feels good. No, we are called to this kingdom every single what church day. So let's repeat this. The E is for every person everywhere, every day.

Now let's get into God's word. So we get to be fed by this so we can grow in this and we see the kingdom move in this. So I want you to open up your Bibles to Matthew chapter 20. If you don't have your Bible, you can take out your phone. Every single week in this series, bring your Bible. We are going to study the verses in these scriptures. We're going to start with Matthew chapter 20 verse one. You're going to have a participation part in this as well for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire labors for his vineyard.

Now, it's a pretty amazing thing to think about a king with a kingdom, especially when we don't have a king. So we kind of have to take a few steps back to figure out what Jesus is communicating here. Because we do not have a kingdom. We are not in the first century. So we don't have the same understanding of what that's like for him. But as the king, he is the overseer of all things. He is making

sure that the culture of his kingdom continues to move forward with his characteristics. So he wants his followers, the disciples to know what the kingdom of heaven is like in the here and the now, just like the then and the there.

So he says the kingdom of God is like the master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire labors for his vineyard. And he's about to teach something that is generous about this specific kingdom. All right, so he calls out these labors and I found out this last week that I'm old. So I have to wear readers now when I preach. And so every once in a while, you're going to see me Clark Kenton Superman it up here, and I'm still learning how to do this. But 20 verse two, we're clapping for me being elderly. All right. So, you know, other campuses, that's what goes down here at Millard.

Verse two, after agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. It is interesting here, this word that's used for agreeing. The Greek word is symphony. You know that word. It's a group of musicians, you know, like who come together so that they all sound like they're harmonious. And that's what a kingdom should be. A kingdom should bring harmony as the values of the king are going through the kingdom. And in this way, the owner of the vineyard is creating harmony with the laborers. He says, this is how much I will pay you a denarius a day.

Now just so you know, this was in first century Judaism, in Galilee, in Israel, in the South, all of these areas. This was considered a reasonable wage. This was a daily wage. So for instance, when the disciples would pray, give us this day, our daily bread, this is what they would expect. They would expect the opportunity to work for a denarius. And you can see how much that is valued when you like search through the rest of the scriptures. In Mark 6, 37, there are 5,000 people that are incredibly hungry in the kingdom. And the disciples go to Jesus and they say, Hey, we've got some hungry people here. What are you going to do about it? We have 5,000 people that need to eat. It would take approximately, they say 200 denarius to feed them all. It would take about 200 days of work to feed one meal to these 5,000 people. And Jesus is like, yeah, take care of it.

Later on in the book of Mark, Mary provides a perfume for Jesus. She anoints him and then she's rebuked for it. And the disciples say that perfume was worth 300 denarii, 300 days labor, almost a year's worth of work, 300 days of laboring in a vineyard for smashed oil on the floor. In the gospel of Luke, Jesus uses this as well. When he's telling the parable of the good Samaritan, he says that a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and he was taken upon by robbers. He gets passed by by other religious leaders. The good Samaritan comes, binds up his wounds, put him on his animal, takes him to the innkeeper, and he provides him with how many denarii? You want to guess? Two. Two full days worth of hard toil to care for somebody he didn't even know. One denarii is actually worth a day's worth of work. This is a good wage. This is a fair wage. Verse 2 said they had symphony about this. They agreed upon it. They did the handshake covenant. The Bible doesn't say that. That's in the New Living Old Guy translation. But they agreed on it and there was symphony. And so there's more work to be done in the kingdom. So they go out again. It's 9 o'clock in the morning. He hires more workers. Still more work. He goes out at noon. Still more work needs to be done. So he hires more labor. He goes out at 3 o'clock. There is still more work to be done in the kingdom. So he hires more laborers.

Now listen to this. In verses 6 and 7, about the 11th hour, so it's like 5 o'clock in the afternoon, there might be maybe, maybe two good hours worth of work that's left over. He went out and found out they're standing and he said to them, why do you stand here idle all day? And they said to him, because no one has hired us. He said to them, you go into the vineyard too. Are these people lazy? No.

They were there. They were waiting to be hired. They wanted to participate in the kingdom. But as all of the other vineyard owners would go through, they would pick the best and the brightest and the strongest because they would contribute the most in the agreement. I will pay you a denarii, but I expect a full day's worth of work. I expect you to contribute. And yet this vineyard owner in this kingdom comes to all those who are still there. These are the elderly in the crowd, but they're the overlooked. They're the physically incapable or less capable people of contributing to the kingdom. And yet this vineyard owner invites them to work. They're not lazy. They're not weak. They're just overlooked. And they're just going to go back to verse four to anticipate what they think they should get paid for that. Because in the agreement in verse four, it says that he would be able to give to them whatever he believes is just or righteous, however you want to explain that one. And so they probably thought, well, okay, I might contribute a little and I'll only be there for a little bit of time. So I'll get paid, but probably not a full denarius. It'll probably just be something fractional.

And can you imagine how humiliating that would be when they were out all day? They wanted to work. They were capable to work and yet nobody would pick them. Maybe somebody does. And maybe just, maybe they'd have a couple of mites to rub together and they have to go home to their wife and to their kids and say, the daily bread that I have for you today, it's not a lot because they expected to be paid a wage that would be just. But I think what we're going to learn today is that the owner of the vineyard is just, he is not going to pay just the wages that you and I expect. No. So this is what he does in verse eight. He says, when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, call the laborers and pay them their wages beginning with the last, then pay the first. That doesn't make any sense. Don't you think if you were a good business owner, you would say, I'm going to call in those who have been toiling the hardest, those who have contributed the most. I want to be able to award them first, first and foremost, by taking them from the field so they can be done. But instead he flips the whole script of what anybody would expect. And he calls the last first and the first last, and he makes those who work the longest and the hardest watch as he pays out those who they thought contributed the least.

So we moved to verse 10. Now when those hired first came, they thought they'd receive much more, but each of them also received denarius. So they thought that the wage was all about them. In the same way that the original listeners to this story thought that the story was about them. And it might be that you have heard about this parable taught before, and you might think that this parable is about you. No, this parable is about us. And even better, this parable, it gives us the character of God. Because what we learn about in this parable is that our God will take the overlooked, our God will take the impoverished, our God will take the strong, our God will take the weak, our God will take the good looking, our God will take the not so good looking, our God will take the young, our God will take the old, and he will pay them more than just a just wage. Because we're going to learn something very powerful in this parable, and that's our king is generous. Generous. I'm going to say that, you need to say that again, because this is all about generosity. Our king is generous. Oh, what a wonderful thing to work for a generous king, to work for a generous vineyard owner.

Let's figure out the response to this from these guys. They're probably going to be content and they're going to be gracious when they receive this. And on receiving the denarius, so remember the one they agreed upon, they grumbled at the master of the house. This is a weird word. It's an onomatopoeia. Do you guys know what onomatopoeia means? Some of you do, some of you don't. All right. Onomatopoeia is a word that sounds like the thing it's named after. So here's an example. A bee makes a sound like this, and the word is buzz. So this is what I love about this story. The word for grumble

sounds like grumbling. So like the labor owner was like, here you go, this is what we'd agreed upon. And they were like, yeah, just kidding. They were like, but here's why we need to dial in. This is the same family of word that's used for the Israelites in the wandering in the wilderness stories. In response to a generous God who is taking care of his people, he is giving them a daily provision. He's providing for them manna every single day. He's providing daily bread. He's providing the equivalent of a denarius. He's providing the wage for following him. And how do they respond? Same word. And I'm wondering how close we are with the laborers in the vineyard when the Lord has given us such grace and we respond with a grumble.

They said in verse 12, these last worked only an hour and you've made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day in the scorching heat. Notice, they didn't say you haven't paid a good enough wage. They knew what they had agreed upon. No, their complaint, their grumble was that you have made them that worked even less and probably contributed a lot less in this vineyard. You made them equal to us. Man, this is where we connect because I believe that this is the sentiment that is the opposite of generosity. It's comparison. Man, you know what it's like when you're just sitting in the beginning of the morning, maybe the stillness of the morning or right before stuff starts to set in the evening and it's quiet. Maybe in that morning time, you're just sipping a nice cup of coffee and you're taking in the word and you're just able to say the Lord is good and he is gracious and you feel this like calming. I don't even know how to describe it, like goes down your spine throughout your whole body and you just feel content in the Lord. And then you get in your car and you look at some of the other cars that pull up to work and you're like, why do I have a 99 Honda Accord and everybody else has got a Jaguar or a Grand Wagoneer? Or there's a couple of whispers that are around. You were content with your job, but then you heard that somebody else got a wage that was a little bit higher than yours.

Look, we are content with the generosity of our King until we compare ourselves to other people in the kingdom. Is that right, church? Because comparison breeds contempt. I want to hear you say it because this is what we feel. Comparison breeds contempt. That's what it does. And so you can either be content with the grace of Jesus and how generous he is, or you can look over at somebody else. You can compare yourself and then have contempt against them. Because comparison breeds contempt, not just out there, no, comparison breeds contempt in the kingdom because comparison breeds contempt for each other. Comparison breeds contempt for each other. Because the moment we see somebody else's car, we don't like the one that God has given us, even though it works just fine. And we're okay with the labor or the owner of the vineyard blessing us with what we need to get from day to day until we see how much is on somebody else's table. And when they have more than I compare myself to them and I don't really like them very much and I start having contempt for the people in my house, I start having contempt for the people in my church. I start having contempt for the people that have been blessed in my community. And what's incredibly sad and I think just as insidious is that I don't just have contempt for each other. I will look at what they have and I'm going to start having contempt for the King who has given. The just one, the one who is generous with each of us. Because comparison breeds contempt for the King, the owner of the vineyard. If we're thinking about a generous kingdom, maybe the first thing we need to weed out in this vineyard of our own hearts, in our own communities is comparison because we don't have what somebody else has had, even though we probably do have everything that we need for this life in this day.

And this is how the vineyard owner does respond in Matthew 20 verse 13. He replies to one of them, friend, he's letting them know you're still in this kingdom. I'm doing you no wrong, didn't you agree with me for a denarius, didn't we do that? And we agreed that this is what was going to happen. Yep,

that's exactly it. They agreed the wage didn't change. So then he says, take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. And verse 15, he says, as a generous King, am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my, do you begrudge my generosity? When you translate this from the Greek, that actually says, is your eye evil because I am good. Evil eye was a way to say stingy back in the day. Is your eye stingy? Are you reacting against what you're seeing here? Because I'm so generous. If so, the problem is not with the King who is giving the problem is with the person receiving. Because what would it look like if we did get, if you and I in this kingdom got what we deserved as a wage. If all we got for justice in our wages was how we compare against one another, man, the scriptures are super clear. The wages of sin is death. That means everybody in this kingdom would be dead. The me's, the we's, all of us would be dead if left to that kind of comparison. That's what Romans 6, 23 says at the beginning of the verse, but the end of the verse says, the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ. The King has given you grace.

We're going to move to 20 verses 17 through 19 because it is the person speaking this parable. He closes out the parable and then he says, behold, we're going to Jerusalem. And do you want to know what he's going to do in Jerusalem? He's going to go up to the cross. He's going to take all of our contempt for him as we push it on to everybody else. And he's going to pay the wage that we earned. And it is, it's not just one denarius. It's not two denarii. It's not a hundred denarii. It's not 10,000. We owe him a debt we could never repay. And yet he is so incredibly gracious and generous. He goes to the cross in Jerusalem to pay that debt and be absolutely generous with his grace.

So now what do we get to do? We've been given a wage we never earned in a kingdom we don't belong, but now because of Jesus, he's brought us into it. Every single me, every single one is now a we and us in the kingdom of Jesus. And so I want to close the parable with his closing of the parable is Matthew 20, 16. You get a chance to go back and forth on this as well. So the will be, and the first will be last. Yes, this is a call to serve for you and I to reflect the vineyard owner for you and I to reflect the King of Kings for you and I to look forward to serving together.

I know a pledge. This is like an old school thing, right? Churches used to do this all the time, but we're making sure the pledge card comes back. Why? Because we are doing this together. Ministry in the next few months, as we close out this year, we're doing it together next year. We're doing it together. So I'm going to ask you to do just pray over it. Do nothing else. Fill it out. Pray over it. There is no pledge before a prayer. I'm talking, take some serious time, search the scriptures, read this parable. Think about what the Lord is going to do in this place next year. We're going to have more big Sundays. We're going to have more outreach efforts. We're going to connect even more to all of the schools that we are in. We're going to send more people to Los Amantes, Guatemala. We're going to send more students to Chile. We're going to send more of God's people equipped and out because next year, spoiler alert, all of the messages go deep in the word, deeper and deeper. We're going to preach through books of the Bible next year because that's what the kingdom does. We read his word so we can be equipped by his word and we go out together by his word. Why? Because we share the same kingdom values.

P-R-A-C and the little E because we are going to be generous. We are going to be reliant in prayer and worship. We're going to be authentic in the way that we actually live out our lives in the kingdom and we are going to be courageous, not just in the future way off, but today when you leave this place and who are we going to share this with? Every person, everywhere, every day, because we are the

kingdom. We are the kingdom. I was once a me all by myself and I was alone, but I got to serve Jesus with you and so this me became a we and we are the kingdom.

So I want to hear you say this at all campuses, all together as we go from this place and share his generous message, one, two, three, we are the kingdom. That was all right, but one more time, we are the kingdom. Amen. Now please stand as we close in prayer.

Jesus, you are king of kings. You are Lord of lords. You own this vineyard. This harvest is yours. We would ask that your generous grace would be sent out by the power of your spirit into every single person in every single room worshipping you. Lord, we know it doesn't matter if we're in Fremont, if we're in the Bennington area, if we're in Omaha, your spirit is here because your words of promise is here and your grace is here. Lord Jesus, bless your people as we go out into your generous kingdom to generously share your grace and all God's people said, amen.