

(Topics, Lead-in, and Lead-in Devotional Reading below)

Failures and Prodigals

Matthew 20:1-16; Luke 15:11-32

♩ = 108

Unison F B♭6 Fadd⁹/_A E/A B♭ F E/C F

1. Mag - ni - fi - cent God, with il - log - i - cal love, With
 2. You con - stant - ly call us to share in Your work. You
 3. With wild gen - er - os - i - ty, glad - ly You give With
 4. Great God of all giv - ing, O bless us each day With

B♭6 B♭ Fadd⁹ F E/A C sus C^{sus}/_G C C⁶ Dm Am B♭

mer - cy out - land - ish and free, You pour out the rich - es of
 bless us with all we can be To join in the har - vest of
 good - ness be - yond all de - gree. You pay all Your work - ers with
 lives that com - plete - ly a - gree With all the great love from Your

E/C E/A C sus C E/A B♭ E/A Gm⁷ Gm/C F E/C F

all that You are On fail - ures and prod - i - gals like me.
 un - dy - ing souls, Of fail - ures and prod - i - gals like me.
 all that we need, All fail - ures and prod - i - gals like me.
 mer - ci - ful heart For fail - ures and prod - i - gals like me.

WORDS: Ken Bible
MUSIC: Ken Bible, inspired by a Traditional Folk Tune

THOMAS AND ELLINOR
11.8.11.9.

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TOPICS: God's Love; Kingdom of God; Serving in Christ's Name; Tunes, Folk

LEAD-IN: *"The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. When he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and to those he said, 'You go into the vineyard also, and whatever is right, I will give you.' And so they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did the same thing. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day long?' They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.'*

"Now when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, starting with the last group to the first.' When those hired about the eleventh hour came, each one received a denarius. And so when those hired first came, they thought that they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they grumbled at the landowner, saying, 'These who were hired last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day's work and the scorching heat.' But he answered and said to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go; but I want to give to this last person the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I want with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?' So the last shall be first, and the first, last." (Matthew 20:1-16, NASB)

LEAD-IN DEVOTIONAL READING:

Is God Fair?

Read Jesus' story of the vineyard owner in Matthew 20:1-16.

Jesus came to tell us about His Father.

So here,

what does He want us to understand about Him?

As with the landowner,

everything belongs to the Father, and

He will do with it as He wishes.

So what does the Father care about?

How will He spend what is His?

He cares about the fruit in His vineyard.

He has worked hard for many years,

many centuries,

to nurture a Vine that gives good fruit.

And the fruit is ready now.

It must be harvested now.

He needs workers now.

(Are you available?)

He cares about His workers.

He doesn't want a single one of them to waste

their days or

their lives in idleness.

He wants to get every last one of them involved
in His important work,
gathering His precious fruit.
He is constantly recruiting, because
He cares about the fruit and
He cares about the workers.

Because He cares about the workers,
He gives to them –
not what they deserve,
but what they need.
He doesn't compare them to each other,
being careful that He doesn't overpay some.
He is not a miserly accountant, but
a lavish, loving Father.
He thoroughly enjoys giving away
all He has and
all He is.
He gives abundantly to everyone,
and no one can restrain His generosity!
As with most parents, His love seems
illogical,
irrational,
outlandish!

So is God fair?
No!
He pours out His love on the unworthy.
The self-centered will compare their "pay"
with those who seem less deserving than themselves and
complain.
Some who seem near to the Father
still don't share His heart.

Remember this:
as His workers,
His children,
our real reward is
not the riches of "having,"
but the riches of "being".
Our real reward is to share in Him.
Jesus is urging us
to enjoy our full inheritance,
to daily desire to become
more and more like our Father,
to truly be
His children
heirs to
His generosity,
His overflowing love,
His merciful, tender, beautiful heart.