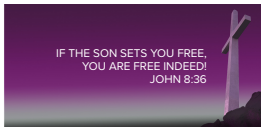


Jesus 101

“Grace Thoughts”



A short devotional to help get you excited about Jesus!

“Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?” –Matthew 20:15

The evil eye is an ancient, superstitious belief, dating back thousands of years. It suggests that someone could alter your good fortune because they are envious of you. To this day, if you visit Greece, you will see thousands of blue-eye amulets in the marketplace that people buy to protect themselves from the evil eye. It has become a very popular souvenir. But what about our own envy or jealousy regarding God’s graciousness to those who seem less worthy of His goodness?

The parable of the laborers in the vineyard is about God’s generous grace. The landowner hires laborers to work for him at different times of the day, and he even hires a group at 5:00 P.M.! But when evening came, the landowner gave all the laborers the same pay, and those who had worked longer grumbled against him, because to them it seemed unfair. This is when the landowner responded: “Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?” (Matthew 20:15). The Greek text reads: “or is your eye evil because I am good?” His response exposes a discrepancy in values between the good, gracious, and generous landowner, and his jealous and envious laborers, demanding justice and fairness. Donald A. Hagner explains: “The spirit of envy, like the insistence on ‘justice’ reflected in the complaint of the workers who were hired first, stands in sharp contradiction to the reality of grace.”* Our ability to share the grace and mercy of God with others is rooted in the understanding that we ourselves do not deserve anything, and that we have received salvation out of God’s graciousness and not by the sweat of our brow. Only when we understand that at the foot of the cross we all stand on even ground, that none of us is worthier than the other, that there is only One who is worthy of our praise and glory, only then will we be able to joyfully share God’s mercy and grace with everyone. The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner whose graciousness was lavished upon us, undeserving sinners. Let’s share His grace without reservations!

*Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28, World Biblical Commentary*, vol. 33b (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1995), 572.