

Discipleship

Study provided by UMC Discipleship Ministries, adapted by Kathryn Rauhauser

Gathering

- Reflect and respond to the following: What is an unwanted gift you received that turned out to be a blessing? What changed your opinion and attitude about the gift?
- Read: Read Exodus 16:2-15 and Matthew 20:1-16.

Discussion

- What does this encounter in Exodus 16 tell you about God?
 - How is this consistent or inconsistent with your understanding of the character or nature of God?
- Skim Exodus 15 to find out the events that precede this moment in the wilderness. How do you see the attitude of the people shift from Exodus 15 to Exodus 16?
 - What does this tell you about God?
 - What does this tell you about human nature?
 - Where do you see people move from gratitude to grumbling today?
- In the Matthew 20 text, the laborers first complained because they had not received more wages than those who worked fewer hours. How do you think they would have felt when they heard the response from the landowner in verse 15, “Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?”
 - What lessons might this parable have for Christians today?
 - Why do we seem to struggle with jealousy or unfairness when we see others receive generosity?
 - How might this passage invite us to change our own attitudes?
- UMC Discipleship invites us to come to these passages with this in mind, “God provides, we gather, and we share.” What comes to mind when considering our responsibility to gather and share God’s provisions, just as the people of God worked to gather manna and labor in the vineyard?
 - How might it look for your congregation to take this responsibility on as a part of its mission?
 - What are the provisions that you have gathered that you can joyfully share with others?
- Where do you find yourself in the stories this week?
 - Are you the one who gathers more than they need, or the one who trusts God and gathers just enough?
 - Are you the one who worked all day, and struggles with receiving the same blessings as those who didn’t? Or are you the one who received extravagant generosity, and is struggling with the judgmental attitudes of others?
 - Wherever you find yourself in the passages this week, there is always an invitation to lean in, trust God, and grow in faith. Where is God inviting you to grow this week?

Prayer and Sending Forth

- If studying with a group, share prayer requests and praise reports as well as those on the church prayer list. If studying on your own, take time to pray for those on our church prayer list and lift up your own prayer concerns to the Lord.
- Consider praying the following or a similar prayer: Loving God, you have provided for us again and again along our journey of life. Forgive us for taking your provisions for granted or for resenting your generosity toward others. Pour out your mercy upon us and change our hearts to be fully content in you. In the name of Jesus, we pray, Amen.