

30 November 1985

Dear Friends at Grace Church,

Gloria, the boys and I send our greetings and love. Please allow me to be sentimental and to say how much we think of you and miss you all very much!

This past semester in New Testament studies, my class has been doing exegesis of various passages. One that I've been "trying my hand at" is Matthew 20:1-16, the Parable of the Laborers In The Vineyard. In researching the historical contexts of the parable, I found it fascinating to see how the parable maintained relevance and insight from the time of Jesus through the development of the early church.

Jesus' audience, whether it had been his disciples, scribes, pharisees or the Jewish masses, no doubt would think his description of the kingdom by this parable rather curious to say the least! Although Jewish teaching envisioned the establishment of God's kingdom by the Messiah through a Divine plan, few saw the kingdom revealed in Jesus Christ and fewer still understood him when he spoke of the kingdom's present inclusive nature. Sinners, tax collectors, Gentiles and Jews are receivers of God's gift of grace, love and a special place in God's kingdom. Matthew's immediate audience has been characterized as one composed of "little ones", Christians of Jewish descent in the process of building a church without the aid of bishops, priests

and deacons. I couldn't help but think of the similarity to Grace Church!

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a householder..." Grace Church is also part of "the kingdom", although at times we felt more like a wayward vassel! Christ the King never let us close the doors and slip away! Some of the laborers in the parable were prone to grumble; I guess we did too but but grumbling is far better than not caring enough to grumble, right?

My family and I were relatively newcomers, coming around the "eleventh hour". Like the householder, you gave us full and equal membership; we didn't have to earn our acceptance. The parable has two meanings of the verb, "to give". In 20:8, the Greek "apodid" is used. This form of the verb is generally used in a context of work(s) or giving an account of (Matthew 12:36, Luke 16:2, Rev 22:12). However, the verb form, "didomi", to give as a gift, is used in 20:4 and 20:14 of the parable. The latter form, to give as a gift was your response to Gloria, the boys and me! (I had to slip some Greek in just to prove I haven't always been sleeping in my Greek class!)

*This is as
far as I get*

With Advent and Christmas, the actions of giving and receiving take renewal meaning. You, as friends and members of Grace have given us so much over the years that trying to find an appropriate gift in return is quite impossible! So please

realize that you all are in our hearts and prayers, especially as
we begin celebrating the most wonderous Gift of all!

Love,

Jim, Gloria, Julian, James and Joel

Jim, Gloria, James, Julian, Joel

February 2, 1986

ANNUAL

MEETING

11:00 Holy Communion

12:00 Potluck Dinner

1:00 Meeting