

Dear friends,

I would like to ask you a question this morning. Do you want a boss who is fair, or one who is generous? (No. don't answer. Just stay with it.) If you are an employer, do you want to be fair or generous with your employees, your customers, your suppliers, even your competitors?

A clergyman was walking down the street when he came upon a group of about a dozen boys, all of them between 10 and 12 years of age.

The group surrounded a dog.

Concerned lest the boys were hurting the dog, the clergyman went over and asked "What are you doing with that dog?"

One of the boys replied, "This dog is just an old neighborhood stray. We all want him, but only one of us can take him home. So we've decided that whichever one of us can tell the biggest lie will get to keep the dog."

Of course, the reverend was taken aback.

"You boys shouldn't be having a contest telling lies!" he exclaimed.

He then launched into a ten minute sermon against lying,

beginning, "Don't you boys know it's a sin to lie," and ending with, "Why, when I was your age, I never told a lie."

There was dead silence for about a minute.

Just as the reverend was beginning to think he'd gotten through to them, the smallest boy gave a deep sigh and said,

"Oh..All right,he won...give him the dog."

If you look at the world today, you sometimes think God rewards bad behavior. How many times we have said it or felt it "God is not fair."

The Gospel story, goes against one of the most fundamental beliefs that we have...life should be fair. This starts early on. When we were kids, our "fair radar" was constantly on, searching out even the smallest thing that we thought was unfair. How many parents heard the phrase, "That's not fair!" from one of your kids this week? We are conditioned at a very young age to fight for what we believe is our fair share.

Every time that I go to the cathedral in Oakland I pass by homeless dwellings. Last Wednesday, as I drove to meet the Bishop for dinner, this is what I saw under the freeways in Oakland. (Pictures of homeless dwellings on the wall) I ask myself. Why would this happen in a first world country like ours or in a country that prides itself as a Christian nation??? We have this monstrous cathedral – the symbol of our faith and then just a mile away we have homeless encampments – an indication of our failure to live that faith. Is God fair?

There is a book “God is just not fair” by Jennifer Rothschild. The subtitle explains it all- God doesn’t always give answers to my questions. God gives me something better...an encounter with Him. And an encounter with God let you see as God sees. During my retreat, I learnt a difficult lesson: sometimes when things are falling apart, they may actually be falling into place.

The point of this parable today is to teach us that God is not governed by human standards. He is not held captive by what we believe is right and fair.

In this parable, the landowner who represents God chose generosity over fairness. And Jesus’ whole point is that this is exactly what God does. God chooses generosity...He chooses love...He chooses grace instead of choosing to be fair. In fact He bore our sins and took our punishment on himself.

Can you imagine for a moment what would happen to us if God dealt with us fairly or justly?

Faith teaches that when we sinned, God opted for forgiveness rather than fairness. He opted for grace and mercy rather than justice. Let us choose generosity, love and grace over fairness and Justice

If we choose generosity over fairness, things change. If we choose generosity over fairness, then we will find a resolution to the challenge of homelessness in our cities, if we choose generosity over fairness, then our lawmakers – democrats, republicans and independents will find a solution to health care, mental illness and drug addiction, and if we choose generosity and mercy over justice, our brothers and sisters wont have to live and work in the shadows. And so much more. I would like you today to fill in the blanks. If I chose generosity over fairness, then I would..... What is the change that you would see?

Do you agree with the perspective? Has fairness taken over in our society and spontaneous generosity gone by the wayside?

In the TV program, “The undercover Boss” the CEO goes undercover and meets his/her employees and encounters them in real life situations. In the finale, the One who emerges is not a fair CEO but a generous CEO who throws 100s of thousands of dollars to pay for the health of a loved one or paying for the education of their employee’s children. Isn’t is surprising that in an encounter, generosity prevails.

At its best, giving is an act of worship.