

Mardi Gras down in New Orleans is really a time of carefree festival. Everyone takes off from work and school, and parties! (Then they start their Lenten practice the next day.)

I've experienced the fun and celebration of Mardi Gras when I taught at our Salesian high school near New Orleans. The teenagers of our school could not wait until they were old enough and had the means to be in a Mardi Gras parade. You see, there is a fee to be in a parade. Then, you have to buy the doubloons, beads, trinkets, and whatever that you would throw into the crowd. To be actually be on a float to have the privilege to throw your doubloons and beads at the people lining the streets is something to aspire to as a young Louisianian.

People watching the parade wait with open hands to receive the tons of doubloons, beads and trinkets from those riding on the floats. Those on the street catch their Mardi Gras souvenirs free of charge, while those throwing them pay all the cost. It's a good deal for the spectators.

In Jesus' parable of the Laborers and the Vineyard, those workers who were hired last received the same pay as those who worked all day. That was a great deal for the latecomers—too good in the estimation of those who worked all day—they, then, expected to be paid more.

To any of us who has the slightest sense of justice, we know that what the landowner did was not fair. How could you pay the ones who worked only an hour the same as those who worked all day? **However, the lesson Jesus teaches us is not about the fairness of God, but about the generosity of our God.** Like those who ride on the floats in the Mardi Gras parade, God has paid all the cost for our salvation. We receive His gift free of charge. We just need to be there for His "parade" with hands and hearts open to Him.

Yes, the Lord our God has paid the price of our salvation by sending His Son to us to suffer and die for our sins. The cost of our salvation was great. For us, however, it is given free of charge.

The point of Jesus' parable was to show the generosity of God. Our God is generous. Our God is generous in His mercy. Our God wants to give us the fullness of life—even if some come at the last hour. He desires every one of His children to experience the fullness of life. No one is to be left out. Our God is in the habit of giving all He has away. And He gives it all away to us.

There once a little girl who drew a picture of God. She portrayed the Almighty as a very old man, with a long beard. He also looked poor, but with a big smile on His face. When the teacher asked why she drew God that way she said: "Well, God is very old because He's been around forever. He's smiling because He's very happy. And He's poor because He gave everything He has away." That little girl knew God very well.

So, let's not be too concerned about how fair our God is. In fact, if you appeal to God for what you think you deserve, like those who worked in the vineyard all day, you will be surprised how little you really do deserve from God, who has given us all He has. Let's rejoice and be glad in how generous God is. He gives everyone what he or she needs no matter when they come into His vineyard. He given us Jesus Christ His Son.