

## Interactive lesson



*picture from MMMS collection*

If I ask people to wade across the pictured section of the Otselec River, will everyone get across equally easily and dry?

If I give them all size 8 wading boots, could everyone get across equally easily and dry?

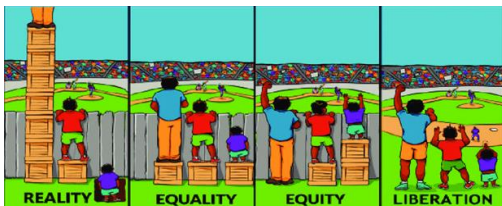
What if I gave them each wading boots that fit them properly? Could they all get across equally easily?

What if we built a wide bridge across there? Could they all get across equally easily then?

Does everyone have the same abilities and opportunities in life?

Why not?

Is reality fair?



*picture from [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-difference-between-equality-equity-and-liberation-Figure-taken-from-The-A-Z-of\\_fig2\\_356663229](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-difference-between-equality-equity-and-liberation-Figure-taken-from-The-A-Z-of_fig2_356663229)*

This picture shows different approaches to dealing with the inequity of reality. What do you see in the equality approach?

Is giving everyone the same thing fair?

Do they all have the same chance to enjoy the game?

What about the equity approach – is it fair?

Do they all have the same chance to enjoy the game?

What about the liberation approach – is it fair?

Do they all have the same chance to enjoy the game?

We can think of sin as a barrier to living as God intends for us, much like the wall in front of these people trying to watch the game or the river I wanted people to cross. In our human wisdom and from our human perspective, we may try to adjust things so others can live better too, but we are still stuck behind the wall of sin.

What did Jesus do to the wall of sin separating us from God?

What does tearing down that wall look like in our daily lives?

May we all find better ways to live in love with one another, celebrating our diversity and sharing our gifts for the glory of God, that God's kingdom may be better seen upon this earth.

### **Gospel lesson**

Just before this reading, Jesus answered complaints the Pharisees made about His disciples not washing their hands before they ate. He had pointed out their hypocrisy because they broke God's commandments in other ways that undermined the intent of the law with direct negative impacts on elderly people (Safe Sanctuaries vulnerable population).



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/Lumo-rich-man/>

## Matthew 15:10-28

NRSV

<sup>10</sup> Then he called the crowd to him and said to them, "Listen and understand:

<sup>11</sup> it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles."

<sup>12</sup> Then the disciples approached and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?"

<sup>13</sup> He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.

<sup>14</sup> Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit."

<sup>15</sup> But Peter said to him, "Explain this parable to us."

<sup>16</sup> Then he said, "Are you also still without understanding?

<sup>17</sup> Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer?

<sup>18</sup> But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the

heart, and this is what defiles.

<sup>19</sup> For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander.

<sup>20</sup> These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile."

<sup>21</sup> Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/Lumo-syro-phoenician-woman/>

<sup>22</sup> Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon."

<sup>23</sup> But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us."

<sup>24</sup> He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

<sup>25</sup> But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me."

<sup>26</sup> He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs."

<sup>27</sup> She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

<sup>28</sup> Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.

*The word of God for the people of God*

<Hymn "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy" UMH #121>

## Message: Is It Fair?



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/the-path-of-the-disciple-searching-for-the-face-of-god/twelfth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/twelfth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Wise Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer,  
as we take time now to further consider today's  
scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we learn to share Your love and blessings more  
fully in all we do. Amen.

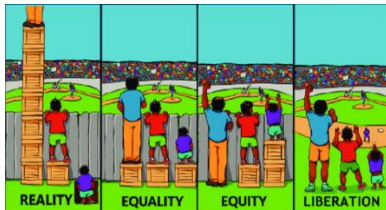
As disciples "Searching for the Face of God," this  
week we ask: "Is It Fair?"

"When we are truly seeking the face of God, we go  
beyond fair and move into grace manifested in love  
in all our relationships."

That sounds like someone studied the story of Joseph

revealing himself to his brothers in Egypt at last, doesn't it? Forgiveness for being sold into slavery and pouring out blessings in love because God had blessed him: everybody gained in the end!

So why didn't Jesus act that way when the Canaanite woman first came to him? Why did He make her justify getting her daughter healed?



picture skewed from [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-difference-between-equality-equity-and-Liberation-Figure-taken-from-The-A-Z-of\\_fig2\\_356663229](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-difference-between-equality-equity-and-Liberation-Figure-taken-from-The-A-Z-of_fig2_356663229)

In the picture I shared earlier, it was pretty easy to tell who was at a disadvantage just by looking at them. In Jesus's day, the Pharisees were socially like that guy on the tower of boxes; the disciples were like the middle one on a box peeking over the fence, and that woman was like the little person in the pit.

Jesus had already knocked them toward a state of social equality before Him by chastising the Pharisees about their hypocrisy, by teaching the disciples that what was in their hearts mattered, and by not preventing the woman from approaching Him. So what was wrong with her asking for God's help?

For both the Pharisees and the disciples, it was like this lower class woman was asking for gifts to which she had no right. The Pharisees in particular strove

to maintain righteous standing; was that for nothing?

Who was this uppity woman that dared shout at a man for attention? Was this social outcast not only going to get equal access to the Lord, but to get blessed when Jesus had just taken away social standing from those who worked hard for it? How was this fair for the covenant people?

Everyone expected an equity result if Jesus healed the woman's daughter. But Jesus pushed back against that paradigm, refusing to elevate the woman above the Pharisees and disciples at their expense.

And then the woman spoke of her desperation, begging for help by describing herself as a dog relative to the men. She was not looking to take away from them, but she would scrounge for whatever leavings she could have and trusted the Lord to have enough.

With that, Jesus tore down the wall of societal sin that allowed only some to be blessed. He let all of them see the kingdom of God in action without belittling any or elevating any of them.

They could all celebrate God in faith just as they were, living their lives for God in harmony rather than competition, sharing love and joy rather than disdain and anger.

In God's kingdom, the concern is not "fair" – that is a construct to deal with the presence of sin. There is no need to worry about "fair" when everyone has love, joy, and peace for healthy living, enough to prosper and to celebrate others' prospering.

We live in a world obsessed with acquisition of things and social standing. It seems like everybody wants to be the person up on the tower of boxes, stacking the boxes higher and higher – and many take pleasure in seeing a towering person fall. That is not living in love, joyful, or peace-filled.

"Fair" is often defined arbitrarily, based on an immediate situation and limited resources. Its focus is on equality or maybe equity rather than nurturing the unique individuals involved. We rely on it in this sin-filled world where so many barriers exist to living freely in communities driven by God's love. But we should always be looking for how to break down the walls and live better, as Jesus taught us to do.

In the picture I shared earlier, it was pretty easy to tell who was at a disadvantage just by looking at them. But how often can we tell what a person is dealing with just by looking at them? Typically we cannot – people hide what they are ashamed of.

So this week, I want you to consider those you consider "less" of a person than you and those you



avoid out of jealousy, thinking they have “more” – possibly financially, morally, or socially, or maybe they are just an outsider to the community, different than you. Think about how God views them.



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/the-path-of-the-disciple-searching-for-the-face-of-god/twelfth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/twelfth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-graphics>

Then ask, how can we effectively connect with them that all our lives may be enriched? What are the barriers we need to remove so that we can all live freely in God’s love? Then, work toward that, not merely seeking “fair,” but chasing God’s kingdom!