

Making Faith Connections - Cross of Hope Small Group Ministry
September 20, 2026
Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost (Lectionary 25)

Gathering and Check-in ... *share where you've encountered God this week.*

Prayer Almighty and eternal God, you show perpetual lovingkindness to us your servants. Because we cannot rely on our own abilities, grant us your merciful judgment, and train us to embody the generosity of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.** (ELW 48)

Introduction: Matthew narrates one of Jesus' controversial parables in which Jesus says that the reign of God is like that of a landowner who pays his workers the same wage no matter what time of day they began to work. When God changes God's mind about punishing Nineveh for their evil ways, Jonah is angry. Yet God is gracious and merciful, abounding in steadfast love. In baptism we receive the grace of God that is freely given to all. As Martin Luther wrote, in the presence of God's mercy we are all beggars. (from Sundays and Seasons)

Discussion Questions:

Read again Matthew 20:1-16

- What do you notice about this story as you read/hear it this time?
- What is challenging or confusing as you read/hear it this time?
- How is this a story of *unexpected grace*?
- Why might this parable be considered controversial then? Now?
- What does that teach/tell us?
- What is the role of envy in this passage?
- How does this call us to lives of generosity?
- When are you generous with mercy? When are you not?
- Reflect on why this may be.

Read again Jonah 3:10—4:11

- What do you notice about this story as you read/hear it this time?
- What is challenging or confusing as you read/hear it this time?
- How is this a story of *expected grace*?
- Why do you think Jonah is angry?
- What does the story of Jonah teach us about God? Ourselves?
- How would you answer the question that ends the book of Jonah in v11?
- How is baptism an act of mercy?
- Why is Martin Luther's observation that 'in the presence of God's mercy we are all beggars,' good news?

Read and reflect on Acts 2:14-21, 33-35 and Psalm 145:1-8

Prayer Requests and Prayer