



First Parish of Westwood UCC

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Rev. Dr. Jill Edens, *Interim Pastor*

Rev. Richard Edens, *Interim Pastor*

September 20, 2020
16th Sunday after Pentecost

Gathering

Preparation

God is a generous giver, but we can only see and enjoy God's generosity when we love God with all of our hearts, minds and strength. As long as we say: "I will love you, God, but first show me your generosity," we will remain distant from God and unable to experience what God truly wants to give us, which is life and life in abundance.

Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey*

RINGING OF THE HOUR

Bob Deininger

WELCOME

Rev. Richard Edens

* PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Rev. Dr. Jill Edens, Interim Pastor

CALL TO WORSHIP IN MUSIC

Adagio cantabile from 'Sonata Pathetique'

Ludwig van Beethoven
Dr. Sarah Tocco, Director of Music

Encountering the Word

+ WORD FOR ALL AGES

Patricia Hatch, Minister of Christian Education

LESSON

Reader: Brian Bayer
Matthew 20:1-16, *NRSV*

In fairness, the grace of God is scandalous as well as amazing. The offense of grace is not in the treatment we receive but in the observation that others are getting more than they deserve. We may experience the grace of getting more than one deserves – and we may even be able to explain why – but we too often find it difficult to celebrate when others get more than they deserve.

'For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the market-place; and he said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." So, they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, "Why are you standing here idle all day?" They said to him, "Because no one has hired us." He said to them, "You also go into the vineyard." When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, "Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first." When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, "These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat." But he replied to one of them, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?" So, the last will be first, and the first will be last.'

Reader: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

MESSAGE

Rev. Richard Edens

ANTHEM

Amazing Grace

Traditional, arr. A.L. Christopherson
Thomasine Berg, flute
Dr. Sarah Tocco, Director of Music

Giving Thanks in Response to the Word

PASTORAL PRAYER CONCLUDING WITH THE LORD'S PRAYER

Rev. Richard Edens

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

OFFERING OURSELVES TO GOD AND TO ONE ANOTHER

Rev. Richard Edens

Until that day when we gather in the sanctuary, please send your tithes and gifts for First Parish to the church office at 252 Nahatan Street, Westwood, MA 02090.

Sending

* BENEDICTION

Rev. Richard Edens

BLESSING IN MUSIC

Go in Peace

First Parish Choir
Dr. Sarah Tocco, Director of Music



The old concept of power, in which most of us have been socialized, originated in a particular worldview. This view saw reality as composed of discrete and separate entities: rocks, plants, atoms, people. Power came to be seen as a property of these separate entities, reflected in the way they could appear to push each other around. Power became identified with domination. Look it up in the dictionary; more often than not it is still defined as exerting your will upon other people: "power" means "power over." In such a view, power is a zero-sum game: "The more you have, the less I have," or "If you win, I lose." It fosters the notion, furthermore, that power involves invulnerability. To be strong, to keep from being pushed around, defenses, armor, and rigidity are needed in order not to let oneself be influenced or changed.

From the systems perspective, this patriarchal notion of power is both inaccurate and dysfunctional. That is because life processes are intrinsically self-organizing. Power, then, which is the ability to effect change, works from the bottom up more reliably and organically than from the top down. It is not power over, but power with; this is what systems scientists call "synergy."

Life systems evolve flexibility and intelligence, not by closing off from the environment and erecting walls of defense, but by opening ever wider to the currents of matter-energy and information. It is in this interaction that life systems grow, integrating and differentiating. Here power, far from being identified with invulnerability, requires just the opposite - openness, vulnerability, and readiness to change.

Joanna Macy, "Working Through Environmental Despair,"
from *Ecosychology*, Roszak, Gomes, & Kanner, eds., (Sierra Club 1995)