We all know that a good story will almost always act as an excellent springboard for reflection; that’s why I like to tell them and listen to them. A good story will almost always touch the hearer in unexpected ways; a good story will sneak up. You may not remember the whole story but you will remember how it made you feel. This may have happened in a speech, a homily, a good book or a movie; sometimes you even forget the title or subject, but you do not forget how it made you feel.

As many of you may know, I teach college English; in fact I am dealing with Generation Z. Generation Z (also known as Post-Millennials, the iGeneration, Centennials or the Homeland Generation; they may live with you.

They live in an e-world; they are always connected – too much sometimes – I think. I teach a Short Story class; in fact I think many of them registered for the class because “short” is in the course title.

However, I like to watch them as they move into the heart of the semester and encounter stories written a couple hundred years ago that ring their bell, make them think – change the way that
feel, make them ask questions of the author’s intent – and of themselves. Stories cross time – that is why Jesus used them to illustrate his ministry on earth.

Jesus' most effective teaching tool was the parable - the story
However, they were not easy to understand. He gathered his disciples and at different points and told a number of parables; some that moved some of them to ask, "Where is God in all of this?"
And, I suspect that is exactly what Jesus wanted; he wanted them to ask, to ponder and to remember how the story moved them, and to help them see God in the real-world where they lived.

This parable might sound a little remote, but it has an overt meaning on the surface. It is a story about how God sees humanity. He sees us as his children; he tries to lift us all up, treat us equally, all as disciples as brothers and sisters, but we see here – differing points of view.
Those who worked the entire day in the hot sun were paid the same as those who worked a few hours nearing the end of the
day when it was cooler. They all went to the pay master and probably watched him distributing the wages for the day. Even though they all agreed to their wages in the morning; they saw the different payouts as unfair.

However, we are all subject to these views of our own. This parable is like standing in a mega-millions line and chatting with a co-worker, and then learning the next day - they won it all. It really has nothing to do you, but it does, doesn’t it? Or like buying a new car and finding out someone else paid far less than you did for the same car with better accessories.

Or it is like someone sitting down at a slot machine that you have been playing, feeding for a few hours and then getting up done, exhausted and out of money. As you vacate the seat, someone else slides right in. On the first pull, they hit the Jackpot; lots of luck there – but not for you.

Let’s ramp this up were it really counts – family, life - love.

You are in the hospital with a family member or a friend; they are very ill. In all the times that you go to visit, you meet others who are very sick as well; you meet their extended families too.
They recover, go home, back to life; it is a gift from God a miracle; you bury your spouse, asking God why.

You are happy, but envious at the same time – how could we not be; we are human. One family receives a miracle – the others fall into a black hole of grief. There are hundred of like stories with the two hurricanes – some spared others devastated.

So this parable clearly tells us that life is not fair in the world in which we all live; it was not fair in the time of Jesus either: that is his point. Of course, their real problem, and in turn our problem is that we really do not comprehend the nature of God’s unmerited grace.

We sing songs like “Amazing Grace,” but the truth is that we usually are uncomfortable with last minute, death bed conversions. We feel that these persons have gotten the best of both worlds. It doesn’t seem fair.

None of us have promises from God that we will skate though this life without bruises, falls and failures. We worship a God who watches and weeps as we disappoint Him time and time again _ I suspect. Our God is not a god of violence. He allows the weeds
to mix with the wheat and grow together in His fields. He sends his messengers again and again to offer the world countless opportunities to change the way things are. But we - as a whole refuse to listen, and I suspect the world is in the shape it is - precisely because of our treatment of the messengers.

The promise from God at the end of this parable is the one that really matters; our God is a God of grace; his love for you and I is unconditional, boundless and freely given. None of us know how we will be judged or how others will meet their maker. Neither, is it our task to speculate. I do know one thing – the God we worship will come and find us where ever we are in our own hour of need because He said we would, and that for me is enough. He will always see what we cannot; God sees the beautiful tapestry of life – we all live in the tangled threads beneath.