

Scripture Study

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle A



Opening prayer

Isaiah 55:6-9

(Ps 145:2-3,8-9,17-18)

Philippians 1:20c-24, 27a

Matthew 20:1-16a

Overview of the Gospel:

- Since the Gospel readings a couple of weeks ago, we have skipped over Matthew chapter 19, in which Jesus discusses the indissolubility of marriage, the little children and Jesus, and the story of the Rich Young Man.
- This Sunday's reading contains the first of three parables in Matthew that concern a vineyard (Matthew 21:28-32 and 21:33-44). The vineyard was a common Old Testament image for the people of God (Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 5:10; Ezekiel 19:10-14), usually in the context of their unfaithfulness to him.
- In this context, this parable is aimed at the unbelieving Jews of the time who resented the fact that Gentiles (non-Jews) could be allowed into God's kingdom on equal status with the Jews (Matthew 21:45). By extension it also applies to Christians and their attitudes toward late converts to the Faith.
- Jesus' point is that both calls are not owed, but are an entirely free gift from God to give to whom he chooses. The reward, which is the same for all, is his gift alone to give.

Questions:

- How does the 1st Reading underscore the fact that God works in his own ways beyond our ability to completely see or understand?
- In the 2nd Reading, does St. Paul presume to have God's plans for his life figured out? What is his overall attitude toward God's will and providence in his life?
- Why are identical wages given to both early and late workers? Who is discontented and why (verses 10-12)? Is the landowner's practice unjust, generous, or both? Why?
- Who gets any less from God: the "five o'clock" converts (Gentiles)? Or those who should have known God since "the first hour" (the Jews)?
- If you were one of the first workers hired, how would you have reacted to the landowner?
- How do you feel about recent converts getting the same benefits as you in the kingdom?
- Would you say you entered God's kingdom early, in the middle, or late in the day? Do you ever wish you had entered later in your life, or felt jealous of others who waited until the "eleventh hour"?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 679, 1021—1022, 1040

Closing prayer

Teach us, good Lord, to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to ask for rest; to labour and not to ask for any reward save knowing that we do your will. - St. Ignatius of Loyola

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!

"Do you begrudge my generosity?"

Scripture: *Matthew 20:1-16*

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place; and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing; and he said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.' And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.' And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. And on receiving it they grumbled at the householder, 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 a denarius? Take what belongs to you, and go; I choose to give to this last as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?' So the last will be first, and the first last."

Meditation: What can work and wages, welfare and the unemployed tell us about the kingdom of God? In the parable of the laborers in the vineyard we see the extraordinary generosity and compassion of God. There is great tragedy in unemployment, the loss of work, and the inability to earn enough to live and support oneself or one's family. In Jesus' times laborers had to wait each day in the marketplace until someone hired them for a day's job. No work that day usually meant no food on the family table. The laborers who worked all day and received their

payment complain that the master pays the late afternoon laborers the same wage. The master, undoubtedly, hired them in the late afternoon so they wouldn't go home payless and hungry.

God is generous in opening the doors of his kingdom to all who will enter, both those who have labored a lifetime for him and those who come at the last hour. While the reward is the same, the motive for one's labor can make all the difference. Some work only for reward. They will only put as much effort in as they think they will get back. Others labor out of love and joy for the opportunity to work and to serve others. The Lord calls his disciples to serve God and neighbor with generosity and joy. Do you perform your work and duties with cheerfulness and diligence for the Lord's sake? And do you give generously to others, especially to those in need?

"Lord Jesus, may I serve you and my neighbor with a glad and generous heart, not looking for how much I can get but rather looking for how much I can give."

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