

SEPTEMBER 20, 2020
Sunday of the 25th Week in OT
Matthew 20: 1-16

“GOD’S GENEROSITY TO US.”

“There’s a play by Timothy Thompson based on this parable in which he depicts two brothers vying for work. John is strong and capable; Philip is just as willing but has lost a hand in an accident. When the landowner comes, John is taken in the first wave of workers, and as he labors in the field, he looks up the lane for some sign of Philip. Other workers are brought to the field, but Philip is not among them. John is grateful to have the work but feels empty knowing that Philip is just as needful as he. Finally, the last group of workers arrive, and Philip is among them. John is relieved to know that Philip will get to work at least one hour. But, as the drama unfolds, and those who came last get paid a full days’ wages, John rejoices, knowing that Philip – his brother – will have the money necessary to feed his family. When it comes his turn to stand before the landowner and receive his pay, instead of complaining as the others, John throws out his hand and says with tears in his eyes, “Thank you, my Lord, for what you’ve done for us today!” God’s justice arises out of a sense of community in which we see the “eleventh hour” workers as our brothers and sisters whose needs are every bit as important as our own. (Philip W. McLarty, “The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard.”)¹

Our gospel for today is one of the strange parables of Jesus that describe a landowner hiring people to work in his vineyard at five different times and paid all of them with the same living wage for a full day’s work. We may say it’s unfair to give the same salary to different people working at different time. The more work hours, the more pay, the less hours, less pay. The parable is not for economic interpretation but God’s mercy and generosity.

¹ frtonyshomilies.com

We can see in this parable the difference between God's standpoint and ours. It also shows the mercy, compassion, and generosity of a gracious and forgiving God in allowing everybody to enjoy, experience and be with Him in the same eternal bliss called Heaven. Invitations are for all: Jews, His Chosen People or Gentiles.

My brothers and sisters, we can't question God's generosity and mercy to each one of us because our own perspective is different from His own perspective. As in the parable, the landowner, that is God, asked those who are complaining: "Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?"²

As in the story that I told in the beginning of my homily, "God calls us Christians to do something profound. He calls us not only to be happy for others when they receive blessings. Our Lord asks us to be the one who bestows blessings on those who don't seem to deserve them. Our Lord asks us to imitate that landowner: to extend blessings to others, not because of how deserving they may or may not be, but to share in the Lord's work of bestowing undeserved blessings upon our fellow fallen man."³

My brothers and sisters, the Lord is teaching us through this Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard two things: "We need to follow God's example and show loving generosity to our neighbor. When someone else is more successful than we are, let us assume that person needs it. When someone who does wrong fails to get caught, let us remember the many times we have done wrong and gotten off free. Envy should have no place in our lives. We cannot control, and dare not pass judgment on, the way God blesses others, only rejoice that He does so, just as He blesses us. Second, we need to express our gratitude to God in our daily lives. God personally calls each of us to our own ministry in this world and shows us His care by giving us His grace and eternal salvation.

² Matthew 20: 15 NRSV Catholic Bible Press, USA

³ www.catholicsermons.com/daily_reflections

To God, we are more than just numbers on a payroll. Our call to His vineyard is a free gift from God for which we can never be sufficiently thankful. All our talents and blessings are freely given to us by God. Hence, we should express our gratitude to God by avoiding sins, by rendering loving service to others, by sharing our blessings with the needy, and by constant prayer, listening and talking to God at all times.”⁴ Be generous and be a blessing to others.

Let this be our prayer: “Our Lord Jesus Christ, you are so generous and loving to me and to my family. Help me to be generous, forgiving and look others not as competitors and rivals but as my brothers and sisters. Fill me with your abundant mercy and compassion and send me the Holy Spirit that I may serve you joyfully through my neighbors, looking not for how much I can get, but rather for how much I can give. Amen.”

⁴ frtonyshomilies.com