

MATTHEW 20:1-16

Jesus said to his disciples: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner going out at daybreak to hire workers for his vineyard. He made an agreement with the workers for one denarius a day, and sent them to his vineyard. Going out at about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place and said to them, "You go to my vineyard too and I will give you a fair wage." So they went. At about the sixth hour and again at about the ninth hour, he went out and did the same. Then at about the eleventh hour he went out and found more men standing round, and he said to them, "Why have you been standing here idle all day?" "Because no one has hired us" they answered. He said to them, "You go into my vineyard too." In the evening, the owner of the vineyard said to his bailiff, "Call the workers and pay them their wages, starting with the last arrivals and ending with the first." So those who were hired at about the eleventh hour came forward and received one denarius each. When the first came, they expected to get more, but they too received one denarius each. They took it, but grumbled at the landowner. "The men who came last" they said "have done only one hour, and you have treated them the same as us, though we have done a heavy day's work in all the heat." He answered one of them and said, "My friend, I am not being unjust to you; did we not agree on one denarius? Take your earnings and go. I choose to pay the last comer as much as I pay you. Have I no right to do what I like with my own? Why be envious because I am generous?" Thus the last will be first, and the first, last.'

COMMENTARY: To begin to understand this parable bear in mind two things: 1: *Faith is a gift.* 2: *It is a free response to God.*

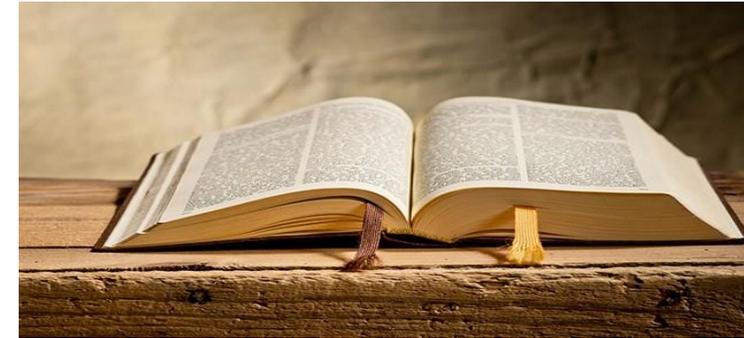
The parable reveals that some are happy to be life-long disciples and others come to the party late in the day. The reward is the same.

In a way also, the parable reveals that there is plenty of work to be done but not that many willing to share in it. Those standing around without work, so to speak, could represent those who are just not looking. The vineyard owner in approaching the unemployed, then represents the constant invitation from God to join Christ in his mission. The invitation always remains but it is a matter of hearing it. A good question therefore maybe 'does your prayer give you enthusiasm for the mission?'

Liturgy of The Word

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

24 September, 2023



The Lord is near to all who call him.

I will bless you day after day
and praise your name for ever.
The Lord is great, highly to be praised,
his greatness cannot be measured.

The Lord is kind and full of compassion,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
How good is the Lord to all,
compassionate to all his creatures.

The Lord is just in all his ways
and loving in all his deeds.
He is close to all who call him,
who call on him from their hearts.

ISAIAH 55:6-9

Seek the Lord while he is still to be found,
call to God while still near.

Let the wicked person abandon their way,
the evil one their thoughts.

Let them turn back to the Lord who will take pity on them,
to our God who is rich in forgiving;

for my thoughts are not your thoughts,

my ways not your ways – it is the Lord who speaks.

Yes, the heavens are as high above earth

as my ways are above your ways,

my thoughts above your thoughts.

COMMENTARY: The time to start seeking God is now, because there is only *‘now’*.

**The past is no more,
the future not yet,
the gift is *now*.**

Here, the prophet reveals that he has gained some insight into the depths of God’s love, and so he encourages the people to allow the wicked (the sinners) to turn back to God without fear.

Most of humanity has trouble with this, so Isaiah states (on behalf of God!) ‘my ways are not your ways’. So don’t judge or condemn, just encourage.

Forgiveness of sin is not a problem for God. The refusal to accept our call to grow into God (become human that is) does affect God because we have been created in the image of God and we have been created out of love.

PHILIPPIANS 1:20-24,27

Christ will be glorified in my body, whether by my life or by my death. Life to me, of course, is Christ, but then death would bring me something more; but then again, if living in this body means doing work which is having good results – I do not know what I should choose. I am caught in this dilemma: I want to be gone and be with Christ, which would be very much the better, but for me to stay alive in this body is a more urgent need for your sake.

Avoid anything in your everyday lives that would be unworthy of the gospel of Christ.

COMMENTARY: St Paul is writing this letter to the Church of Philippi in Greece while he is imprisoned in Rome. It was one of the communities he had begun some ten years prior. He is writing to all the Church as well as to those who hold an Office in the Church, elders (bishops) and deacons.

St Paul’s union with Christ has helped him understand there is something more wonderful to be discovered but this will only be realised after death. He also feels for this community and he knows that while he would be better off with Christ, his concern for the community remaining faithful is more important at this stage.