

For Sunday, September 24, 2017

Laboring in God's Vineyard

25th Sunday of Ordinary Time

<http://usccb.org/bible/readings/092417.cfm>

Isaiah 55:6-9

Philippians 1:20c-24, 27a

Matthew 20:1-16a

The parable of the laborers in the vineyard stuns the conscience.

We readily relate with the workers toiling all day in the hot sun. We feel their disappointment and anger when they are paid no more than those who labored only an hour. It brings to mind the times we have been shortchanged and denied our fair share. In a societal context, it reminds us of efforts to [raise the minimum wage](#). That Jesus would compare God and his kingdom to such an arbitrary landowner challenges our sense of fairness.

What if we saw the parable in a different light? What if we put ourselves in the place of the workers who were in the field only part of the day?

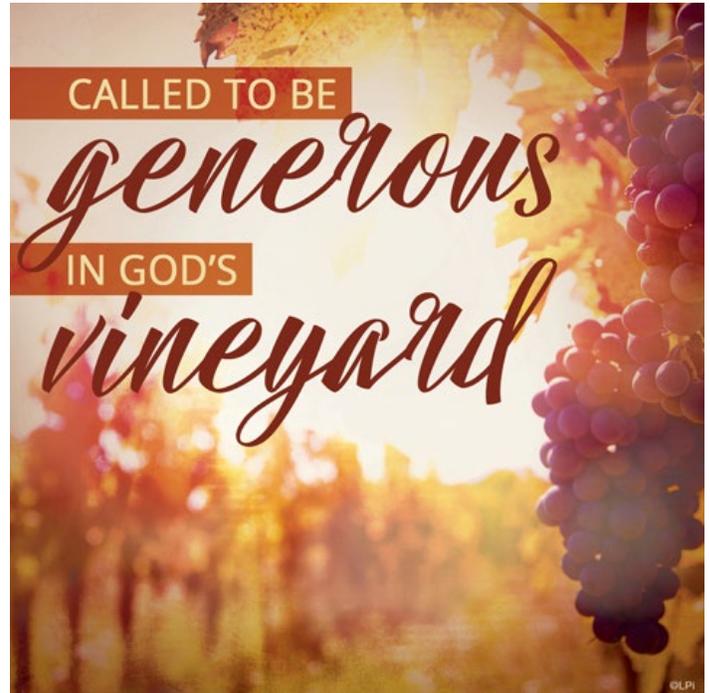
All these men were day laborers gathering in the marketplace every morning in the hope that someone would hire them for the day. If they were called upon to work in the fields, they would be able to return to their families with some money. If, however, they were overlooked and not chosen, they would have to go home empty-handed.

When the landowner first arrives, all of them wanted to be the first picked to work in the vineyard. Imagine the disappointment of those not chosen as they watched the others jump on the back of the carriage to get carted off to their jobs. The fear that they would go another day without work would have been eating them up inside. They had no choice but to wait and hope that someone else would arrive with work for them.

Just when it looked as if the day would be a total waste, the landowner shows up again and hires the rest of the men to work the remaining hours of daylight. They feel relieved to at least bring some money home to their families. When the day ends, imagine their surprise and delight to receive a full day's wage! The day is saved!

Though we may tend to identify with the first group of laborers, we are really more similar to those who are called last, especially when it comes to our relationship with God.

All that we have and are is a gift from God. None of us can claim that we deserve more from him than we have already received. It is up to him to decide for he is our Creator and Lord. Like the landowner in the Gospel, God will give to each one as he sees fit, according to his infinite mercy.



It is at the eucharistic banquet that we experience this truth of the kingdom. All of us who gather for Mass on any given Sunday are different. Some have great faith, and others are struggling with doubt. Some volunteer regularly, and others are just discovering how to use their talents in God's service. Some have been attending Mass all their lives. Others are just returning after a long absence. No matter where we are on our journey, we will all get in line to receive the same "pay" — Jesus in the Eucharist. He comes to the sinner in the same humble form of bread and wine as he comes to the saint.

God is calling each of us to labor in his vineyard. Some of us will give more than others. Some will respond more generously than others. Nonetheless, all of us are called in the same way and by the same God. Let us pray that we will be generous when God calls upon us, no matter how early or late in the day it is. And let us pray that all of us will receive God's abundant gifts with gratitude and awe.

Douglas Sousa, STL

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,
every good gift comes from your almighty hand.
All that we have and are is your gift.
When what we have does not seem to be enough
help us to trust in your providence.
Help us to be content with what you give us
so that we will give without counting the cost
and serve without expecting reward.
Just as you make your sun to shine down
on the good and the bad alike,
may we love everyone who crosses our path
so we can receive the blessings of your kingdom,
a world without end.
Amen.

To learn more about LPI's services and publications designed to help you build a vibrant parish please visit our website: www.4LPi.com

Liturgical Publications Inc
2875 S. James Drive • New Berlin, WI 53151
(800) 950-9952 ext. 2469

Send email address changes to: lpiconnections@4LPi.com

To opt out of receiving this reflection, contact: lpiconnections@4LPi.com

Copyright ©2017, Liturgical Publications Inc. All rights reserved.