

Your Lourdes Sunday Liturgy at Home

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 20, 2020

“the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

– Matthew 20:16a

“Are you envious because I am generous?”

Matthew 20:15

Isaiah stresses in today’s prophecy that God’s ways are not our ways. Thank God for that! We humans can be a tad harsh in our judgments, hyper-critical in our assessments, and just down right contrary in our ways. God’s ways sometimes feel unfair, especially when we come out on the short end of a situation. That’s what most of the workers felt in our parable today. They (and perhaps we) don’t realize the many benefits and “legs up” they’ve (we’ve) had. There’s an old adage about the clueless privileged folk: “they were born on third base and think they’ve hit a triple.”

This very practical parable invites us to admit that our automatic envious responses are often self-centered but need not be our final answer. As a rule of thumb, we might sum it all up by saying that when first we yell, “It’s not fair!” that our next remark should be “Who am I to judge?” Pope Francis says the latter all the time.

Our parable from Matthew (20:1-16a) begins with a situation of mutual need. The owner has a harvest that must be picked. The day laborers need work or they will not be able to feed their families at the end of the day. Unlike so many situations we might see today with workers desperate to be hired, the owner establishes a just day’s wage from the start.

If you’ve ever been in a building supply store’s parking lot and watched job-seekers make a mad dash when a hiring truck enters the lot, you can understand the anxiety and competition that mark the scene. The contest is intense because the stakes are high and the competitors, often non-English-speaking and poor, are the least

powerful in society. Those who succeed in being hired know how lucky they are and rejoice in the potential a day's wage offers them. This parable, unlike many Jesus told using his own culture as a starting point, has a strong reference point in the poor we see in our own cities. Oft times these workers are cheated out of their pay by unscrupulous contractors, and they feel they have no recourse.

Watch the scene unfold. Those hired early were very lucky. At the same time, they could be proud that their sweat, callouses, bug bites and sunburn gave witness to their efforts to fulfill their side of the bargain. Nobody toils in another's field for the sheer pleasure of it. The workers knew that even if being chosen was a lucky break, they earned their reward. They may have sympathized with those hired later, knowing that fickle fortune had smiled first on themselves.

That sympathy melted away when they got in the pay line. Watching the latecomers receive a day's wage first, they riveted their attention and concern on themselves. Blithely content to ignore the fact that their recently hired brothers had the same survival needs as they did, the lucky all-day workers figured they deserved more, and were counting on getting it. We can well understand their disillusionment upon receiving exactly what they had contracted for.

Not only can we imagine their feeling, but if we're honest, we probably recognize ourselves in their disgruntled reaction. This parable is one of the easier ones to understand, and therefore one of the more uncomfortable ones to hear. How many times do we give lip service to thanking God for our good fortune — for having been born in this time, country, family, etc., without letting that gratitude affect our conviction that we deserve it all, just like those laborers, “because we worked for it – we earned it”? This week's readings come together in multiple ways, all able to be summed up in Isaiah's disconcerting message that God's ways are far from our own preferred patterns. We can chafe at this parable, or take it as an invitation to change.

Our opening prayer sums it all up powerfully: “God most high, your ways are not our ways, for your kindness is lavished equally upon all. Teach us to welcome your mercy toward others, even as we hope to receive mercy ourselves.”

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Prelude: Sing along with Aretha Franklin in “Amazing Grace”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGN64GwVIRM>

Leader: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and
the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

All: And with your spirit.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus, you taught that God’s generosity is not like ours:
Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you show us that God’s love is offered to everyone:
Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you call us to live with generous, boundless love:
Lord, have mercy.

Opening Prayer

**God most high,
your ways are not our ways,
for your kindness is lavished equally upon all.**

**Teach us to welcome your mercy toward others,
even as we hope to receive mercy ourselves.**

**Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.**

Let the church say – Amen.

**Readings for the Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time,
Year A
September 20 2020**

1st Reading – Isaiah 55:6-9

⁶ Seek the LORD while he may be found, call him while he is near.

⁷ Let the scoundrel forsake his way, and the wicked his thoughts; let him turn to the LORD for mercy; to our God, who is generous in forgiving.

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.

⁹ As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts.

The Word of the Lord.....Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm – 145:2-3, 8-9, 17-18

R. The Lord is near to all who call upon him.

² Every day will I bless you,^{[L][SEP]}

and I will praise your name forever and ever.^{[L][SEP]3}

Great is the LORD and highly to be praised;^{[L][SEP]}

his greatness is unsearchable.^{[L][SEP]}

R. The Lord is near to all who call upon him.

⁸ The LORD is gracious and merciful,^{[L][SEP]}

slow to anger and of great kindness.^{[L][SEP]}

⁹ The LORD is good to all^{[L][SEP]}

and compassionate toward all his works.^{[L][SEP]}

R. The Lord is near to all who call upon him.

¹⁷ The LORD is just in all his ways^{[L][SEP]}

and holy in all his works.^{[L][SEP]}

¹⁸ The LORD is near to all who call upon him,^{[L][SEP]}

to all who call upon him in truth.^{[L][SEP]}

R. The Lord is near to all who call upon him.

2nd Reading – Philippians 1:20C-24, 27A

Brothers and sisters:^[SEP]^[SEP]20C Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.

21 For to me life is Christ, and death is gain.

22 If I go on living in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. And I do not know which I shall choose.

23 I am caught between the two. I long to depart this life and be with Christ,^[SEP]for that is far better.

24 Yet that I remain in the flesh is more necessary for your benefit.

27A Only, conduct yourselves in a way worthy of the gospel of Christ.
The Word of the Lord.....Thanks be to God.

Alleluia – [Acts 16:14B]

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Open our hearts, O Lord,^[SEP]
to listen to the words of your Son.^[SEP]

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel – Matthew 20:1-16A

Jesus told his disciples this parable:^[SEP]^[SEP]1 “The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire laborers for his vineyard.

2 After agreeing with them for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard.

3 Going out about nine o’clock, the landowner saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

4 and he said to them, ‘You too go into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just.’

5 So they went off. And he went out again around noon, and around three o’clock, and did likewise.

6 Going out about five o’clock, the landowner found others standing around, and said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’

7 They answered, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You too go into my vineyard.’

8 When it was evening the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Summon the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the

last and ending with the first.’

⁹ When those who had started about five o’clock came, each received the usual daily wage.

¹⁰ So when the first came, they thought that they would receive more, but each of them also got the usual wage.

¹¹ And on receiving it they grumbled against the landowner,

¹² saying, ‘These last ones worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who bore the day’s burden and the heat.’

¹³ He said to one of them in reply, ‘My friend, I am not cheating you. Did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage?’

¹⁴ Take what is yours and go. What if I wish to give this last one the same as you?

¹⁵ Or am I not free to do as I wish with my own money? Are you envious because I am generous?’

^{16A} Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

The Gospel of the Lord.....Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection Prompts:

First, listen to Hezekiah Walker & the Love Fellowship Crusade Choir from the “Live in New York By Any Means Necessary” CD sing:

“[God of a] Second Chance”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=guoYLH-z2u0>

- Is it comforting or frightening to think that God is so different from us?
- Do you ever feel resentful like those workers who were hired at dawn and had worked all day?
- Have you ever been the recipient of someone’s unexpected generosity? How did you respond?
- What does this parable tell us about our treatment of immigrants and migrant laborers?

Meditation Prompts:

- Pray for the ability to look with the eyes of God, desiring good for all people.
- Reflect on how there are no degrees of salvation; in the eternal vineyard, all receive the full reward.

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS – September 20, 2020
TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY OF THE CHURCH YEAR

Presider: Let us pray that we can reflect God's extravagant forgiveness and generosity in our world.

Worship Leader

1. For the whole church to be a beloved, community, reflecting God's extravagant forgiveness and generosity. We pray: **Order our steps, O God.** (ASSEMBLY RESPONDS: **Order our steps, O God.**)
2. As we observe the International Day of Prayer for Peace on Monday, that wars are ceased. We pray: **Order our steps, O God.**
3. For all those in the path of Hurricane Sally and the flooding which followed. We pray: **Order our steps, O God.**
4. For heeding God's call to us to care for the earth, and renew it with good food, fresh water, clean air, and renewable energy. We pray: **Order our steps, O God.**
5. For an end to the Death Penalty and Human Trafficking, especially in Georgia. We pray: **Order our steps, O God.**
6. For parents, teachers, catechists, coaches, counselors and all who work with youth, that they may model the value of generosity toward others. We pray: **Order our steps, O God.**
7. For our community, that we may reach out to the most needy, the sick and the grieving among us — especially those whose pain goes unnoticed by others. We pray: **Order our steps, O God.**
8. For long-term commitments by individuals and institutions to erase Racism and White Supremacy in American society. We pray: **Order our steps, O God.**

9. For all who seek healing from substance use disorders and mental health issues, that they find help and mutual support. We pray: **Order our steps, O God.**
10. For medical researchers and public health officials to be prudent and candid in their work on vaccines and medications for Covid-19. We pray: **Order our steps, O God.**
11. For all those who are separated from us by infirmity, especially those listed in our bulletin, and for all those living with HIV and AIDS, that they know our community's care for them. We pray: **Order our steps, O God.**
12. For all the dead, that they see God face to face, especially Evelyn Burrows, Raymond Burrows, Robert Burrows and Rita Engelhardt for whom this Mass is being celebrated. We pray: **Order our steps, O God.**
13. Please share any intention you have [PAUSE.....] as well as all our own needs. We pray: **Order our steps, O God.**

Presider: O God, your grace and mercy have seen us through. We're living this moment because of you. Help us to see with your eyes and treat one another with your love and generosity. We ask this in the name of your beloved son, Jesus. LET THE CHURCH SAY – AMEN!

Sing or recite "The Lord's Prayer." Then, hear Tramaine Hawkins sing "Changed." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Kymk9f2TNQ>

Closing Prayer

Compassionate God, upon the two commandments to love you and to love our neighbor you have founded all your holy law. Give us the grace to keep these commandments and so inherit eternal life. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. LET THE CHURCH SAY.....AMEN!

Hear GMWA Women of Worship sing "Order my Steps"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCSuw1zs8Kw>

