

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.’

■ **The Gospel of the Lord.**

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Reflections on the Gospel



THE SAVING WORD

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME / A

20 SEPTEMBER 2020

REFLECTING THE GENEROSITY OF GOD

Today’s Gospel is introduced as a parable ‘about the kingdom of heaven’. That is, it illustrates the way in which God’s rule is reclaiming the world for values that allow people to live lives that are human in the fullest sense of the word.

In the Palestine of Jesus’ time, employment was for many a day to day business. Whether labourers got work—and the wage they needed to support themselves and their families—depended on whether they were hired for that day in the marketplace.

The story presupposes a long working day with successive hirings during the day. The ‘just wage’ agreed upon at the start of the day would have been a denarius, the standard wage for a day’s labour. This is in fact what everyone receives, but when those who have laboured since early morning see even the latecomers paid this wage, they expect that in *their* case ‘a just wage’ will mean considerably more. Hence their grievance.

Jesus’ message is that we cannot simply take the conventional idea of justice and apply it without qualification to God. God *is* just, but, beyond justice, reserves the right to be overwhelmingly generous as well. If the landowner, out of wider social concern, chooses to be generous and to pay everyone, deserving or not, what social justice today would call a ‘living wage’, this truly reflects the will and action of God. Aligning ourselves with this view of God has much to do with allowing the values of the kingdom to transform our lives and our world.

Brendan Byrne, SJ

FIRST READING

Isa 55:6-9

A reading from the prophet Isaiah
My thoughts are not your thoughts.

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

Let the wicked man abandon his way,
the evil man his thoughts.

Let him turn back to the Lord who will take
pity on him,

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.

■ **The word of the Lord.**

RESP PSALM Ps 144:2-3, 8-9, 17-18. R. v. 18

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

1. 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. **R.**

2. 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. **R.**

3. 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. **R.**

SECOND READING

Phil 1:20-24, 27

**A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Philippians**

For me to live is Christ.

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.

■ **The word of the Lord.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION cf. Acts 16:14

**Alleluia, alleluia! / Open our hearts,
O Lord, / to listen to the words of your
Son. / Alleluia!**

GOSPEL Mt 20:1-16

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Matthew.**

Why are you jealous because I am generous?

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