Sunday Reading

A Reading from the Gospel of Matthew 20:1–6A: The Workers in the Vineyard

Jesus told his disciples this parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with them for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. Going out about nine o’clock, the landowner saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and he said to them, ‘You too go into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just.’ So they went off. And he went out again around noon, and around three o’clock, and did likewise. Going out about five o’clock, the landowner found others standing around, and said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ They answered, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You too go into my vineyard.’ 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.’ When those who had started about five o’clock came, each received the usual daily wage. So when the first came, they thought that they would receive more, but each of them also got the usual wage. And on receiving it they grumbled against the landowner, 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.’ 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? Take what is yours and go. What if I wish to give this last one the same as you? Or am I not free to do as I wish with my own money? Are you envious because I am generous?’ Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

Focus Questions

1. In Jesus' parable about the Kingdom of Heaven, why does the landowner go out at dawn?
2. What payment do the laborers at dawn agree on before they are sent to the vineyard?
3. Going down at nine o’clock, what does he tell the laborers he will give them if they work in his vineyards?
4. What does the landowner ask the ones standing around at five o’clock and how do they answer?

5. After receiving payment for their day’s work, why did the first laborers grumble against the landowner?

6. What does the landowner say to them in reply?

7. What does Jesus say the last and the first will be?
**The Last Shall Be First**

**Directions:** Sometimes the things that make us feel happy make us feel less happy when we compare them to the things other people have. When we make that comparison, we are feeling envious. Not only are we being ungrateful for things we do have, we aren't wishing the best for the other person either. We are really only thinking about ourselves. Reflect on the following two scenarios and think about the feelings you might have. Then relate them to the feelings of the workers in the parable of the workers in the vineyard.

1. You stay up all night studying hard for your algebra test. You are happy when you receive an A. Then you find out that your best friend—who breezes through algebra—got an A without even cracking the book.

2. After eighteen months working at your part time job, you have enough money to buy a used car. You're beaming with happiness as you drive off the lot. As you pull into your driveway, you see a car with a big red ribbon on it in the driveway next door—it must be for their daughter, who is a year behind you in school. She's getting a car as a gift.

Read the following verse from **John 13:13-16**. Then answer the reflection question.

“You call me ‘teacher’ and ‘master,’ and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do. Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than his master nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him.”
Reflection Question: Write a brief reflection on how the passage above compares to Jesus’ statement “the last will be first, and the first will be last” from the parable in this week’s Gospel. How does Jesus teach us to put ourselves last? In both examples, how are we thinking of or treating others if we put ourselves “first”?

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