

Connecting With the Sunday Readings

**Twenty-fifth Sunday
Ordinary Time**

Gospel Word
Matthew 20:1-16a

What is at the heart of today's Gospel reading? It's one of those parables that are decidedly outside the realm of simple logic and reasonableness. How could one justify giving the same wage to a person who worked all day to one who worked only an hour? The worker's union would be horrified and the all day worker would be angry. There must be something going on in this parable besides a discussion of just wages.

One way to understanding this Gospel reading is to see the owner of the vineyard as a metaphor for God. Everyone was given one day's wages. In other words, they were given enough to sustain them for one day. Full life for today! Tomorrow is another matter. That's not the issue. It's just about today, and the bottom line is that God will always give everyone enough for today. The parable also describes a God who is outrageously generous, more generous than most of us can comprehend. Generosity is God's way. God is generous and kind, and most of all, reliable. We all receive all that we need. This means we can trust God, and that's good. Better to trust God than some human form of calculation.

-by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Living the Word

Life isn't fair! How many times have you said this to yourself or others? Of course, all of us have our own scales to decide what's fair. And sometimes our scales seem to work a bit differently from everyone else's. In reality, we know that life is very complex and that comparisons are almost always flawed in some respects. We may know who the richest person in the world is, but who is the happiest? It's really impossible to judge.

So we survive by doing the best we can. We seek to use our talents and gifts to the fullest. And deep down we know that comparisons with others are guesses at best, and in the end, quite futile. Furthermore, comparisons can be disheartening.

At an early age, we become incredibly facile arbiters of justice. We can calculate to the smallest fraction whether we are being given our due in comparison to what is being given to others. We want at least what everyone else has. So this easily turns into dissatisfaction. This kind of calculating can continue well into adulthood. If you view this situation in the vineyard with a calculating mind, it will never make sense. That's why we have to take a different perspective: God gives us what we need for today, and God's generosity is far beyond what we can imagine.

Prayer

God of Power and Love,
Give us what we need to be all that
you desire of us, and strengthen in us a
grateful spirit. Amen.