

Isaiah 55:6-9

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

Philippians 1:20c-24, 27a

Matthew 20:1-16a



## Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

### September 24, 2023

### REFLECTION

Jesus' parables are countercultural and they surprise us because their endings are usually different than what we would expect. We find this is true in today's Gospel. Jesus tells this parable of the vineyard laborers and the just actions of the landowner to illustrate what the kingdom of God is like. The vineyard owner pays all the workers the agreed upon amount regardless of the amount of work they did. This makes some workers angry even though the landowner was giving what he promised. This story should hit home for most of us. We live in a society that resists sharing our hard-earned wealth and resources with those who are not working. We might feel that we deserve more than others. However, this story inspires us to model the kingdom of God by giving generously to support others and to acting with fairness and mercy.

### ACTION

The vineyard workers who were standing idle in the marketplace could not find work, but we see that everyone deserves work and a wage that provides enough to live with dignity. This week, spend some time learning about Homeboy Industries, which helps former gang members and at-risk youth in Los Angeles find work so that they can be free of gang influences. This organization was founded by a Jesuit priest named Fr. Gregory Boyle. This ministry helps people remember their own dignity and gives them hope for a better future.



Check out this video about Homeboy Industries:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORF2MD3BBGk>

### QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How does Homeboy Industries relate to the parable of the vineyard workers?
- ❖ How does your work or activities contribute to your own sense dignity?





September 24, 2023

# TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## LECTIONARY #133A

Isaiah 55:6-9

Psalms 145:2-3, 8-9, 17-18

Philippians 1:20c-24, 27a

Matthew 20:1-16a

## Prepare for the Word

*The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.*

### Leader's Context

In today's Gospel, Jesus is trying to teach the disciples what the kingdom of God is like. This is a new understanding for them so he tries to break it down in terms they will understand. In this parable, Jesus tries to relay that God's kingdom is one where God loves us all individually and treats us as such. When we think that something in life is not fair, we are called to trust that God knows more than we do and pray that he can open our hearts and eyes to be humble and wise. We are not all treated the same and that is okay in some instances. We are called to see our earthly situations with this same kingdom vision and treat others with the fairness of God, not of human beings.

**Q FOCUS:** *God sees us with clear eyes of love and justice.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

On September 21, we celebrate the feast day of St. Matthew, the author of the Gospel according to Matthew. We hear readings from Matthew during liturgical year A, which we are currently in. Tradition holds that Matthew is one of Jesus' apostles and a tax collector (see Matthew 10:3), but scholarship is unsure of the actual identity of the author. Nevertheless, this Gospel was widely used in the early Church. Matthew's original audience for his Gospel was a community in a time of transition from

mostly Jewish Christian to Gentile Christians. He makes many references to the Old Testament. He is often symbolized as a winged man/angel, sometimes holding a quill, and is known as the patron saint of accountants, bookkeepers, and bankers.

### Church Teaching Connection

"Jesus wants to make us contemplate the gaze of that landowner: the gaze with which he looks upon each of the labourers searching for work and calls them to go to his vineyard. It is a gaze which is filled with attention, kindness. It is a gaze which calls, invites one to get up and begin a journey because he wants life for each of us; he wants a full, committed life, safe from emptiness and inertia. God excludes no one and wants each of us to achieve his or her fullness. This is the love of our God, of our God who is Father" (Pope Francis, Angelus Message, September 24, 2017).

## Hear the Word

*Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.*

### Gospel Acclamation

*Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.*

Alleluia, alleluia.

### Gospel

Matthew 20:1-16a

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

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

*All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.*

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."

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Everyone may be seated.*

## Reflect on the Word

*When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:*

Can't you just see the workers in the Gospel passage today throwing their arms in the air and exclaiming, "But that's not fair!" Have you ever had that moment? Maybe a situation didn't seem fair to you based on

your limited understanding at that time. I'm sure that has happened to all of us at one time or another.

► Have you been in a situation where something like this happened? Perhaps it was at work, or maybe it was in a group project in school.

► How did it make you feel when everyone received the same grade or pay regardless of the amount of work they completed?

The Gospel readings draw us closer to the heart of Jesus and his teachings, so let's pause and think about the deeper meaning of this passage. Jesus is teaching the disciples about what the kingdom of God is like. God's kingdom is something altogether different than anything else they know or have experienced.

► What do you see as the major differences between how Jesus describes the kingdom of God ("the last will be first, and the first will be last") and what happens on earth?

Jesus chooses to explain the difference between the kingdom of God and what happens here on earth by using terms the disciples are familiar with: a landowner and the workers in his vineyard. The goal of the owner is to get the work done in his vineyard. It is that simple. He will decide the amount of pay and distribute it as he sees fit.

It is not unreasonable to understand how the workers who endured the long day and the heat were angry that the other workers who only worked a couple of hours in the cooler evening air did not earn their pay as much as they did. But in the kingdom of God, which this parable describes, God loves and forgives all who come to him equally, no matter how much we have done in our past, or whether we believe in God from childhood or have a death-bed conversion.

► What we think of as "fairness" is not always the same as God's completely fair and just actions. How do you feel about that?

Along with this vision of the kingdom of God, it is also important to remember that we are not all allotted the same gifts and talents. Something may be harder for you while it is easier for someone else, but then there will be things that are easier for you and harder for them. God knows the whole story of each of us. He knows our strengths and our weaknesses.



He loves us individually and that is a gift! The owner of the vineyard in this story did not treat all the workers fairly in the eyes of the workers but he did treat them fairly in his eyes. God knows more than what we can see and his fairness does not know limits.

## Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the “Church Teaching Connection” on page 34.

**God’s kingdom is different than the world we live in.**

**Trust God in all circumstances; he loves each one of us.**

**The Lord sees a bigger picture than we do of our lives and the lives of others.**

## Act on the Word

### It’s Not Fair!

For this activity, you will need to know how to play “Rock, Paper, Scissors.”

Ask the teens to pick a partner. Once they are all partnered up, review the rules for the game “Rock, Paper, Scissors” (be sure to decide when each person will make the gesture they are choosing). In this setting, whoever wins two out of three tries wins the round. Once everyone knows the rules, have them play a round. Have the losers sit down and have the winners find another winning partner. Continue this until there is one ultimate winner, then gather the teens to reflect on their experience, using the following script. “In the games we just played, there were clear winners and losers. In life, there are winners and losers. There are sport seasons or competitions where you lose most of your games and maybe take that moment to reflect on how sportsmanlike you

are or should be. There are other seasons in which you win most of your games. In the end, it takes both teams to play. It takes the full effort of each player to make the game fun. In all of this, it is important to recognize our emotions and get past the ‘It’s not fair!’ feeling. When we do that, we can rejoice with others in their wins and that is how we are called to treat others, even when it hurts a little. As we close this activity, respond to the following petitions with the response, ‘Jesus, change my heart.’

From the desire to be esteemed (response)  
From the desire to be preferred over others (response)  
From the desire to win approval (response)  
From the fear of being humiliated (response)  
From the fear of being despised (response)  
From the fear of being forgotten (response)  
From the fear of being ridiculed (response)  
From the fear of being wronged (response)

Jesus, grant me the grace to desire you. Amen.”

## Closing Prayer

*God of justice and love,  
you see to all our needs.*

*May we not be envious because  
you are generous,  
but rejoice with all  
as undeserving recipients  
of your boundless mercy and forgiveness.*

*Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.*

## For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday’s Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at [www.ltp.org/lwgr](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.