

## Homily by Fr. Anthony Davis

**“... Are you envious because I am generous?”**

September 20, 2020

25<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)

Is 55:6-9; Phil 1:20-24, 27; Mt 20:1-16

For several months, as a direct result of our troubled times, I have been praying the “Chaplet of Divine Mercy” which has an option for a closing prayer that includes this phrase “...increase Your mercy in us, that in difficult moments we might not despair or become despondent, but with great confidence submit ourselves to Your holy will...” AMEN!!!

Indeed, there are elements in today’s reading that emphasize the call to submit ourselves to God. For example, in the first reading Isaiah exhorts us to seek the Lord wherever he may be found even in the midst of turmoil, the pandemic, civil unrest and political divide. St. Ignatius encourages us to see God in all things, in all people, yet our hardheadedness and stubbornness often moves us into despair. What we cannot see and understand fully—even control—leads us to doubt our faith and become despondent. Isaiah notes that God’s ways are “as high as the heavens are above the earth” emphasizing that God’s ways and thoughts are far above ours.

The Gospel reading certainly reinforces the idea that God’s ways may be in conflict with our ways of thinking. The idea of “fairness” is front and center in most readings of the story of the landowner and the vineyard laborers. With our limited human eyes and flawed logic, it seems it wasn’t fair for the same wage to be paid to workers who worked only an hour compared to those that worked all day. A critical message of this parable is that we are all equal recipients of God’s gifts. The reality is that we often manifest a weakness in our personal faith journey and that we are often covetous and jealous when God’s gifts of forgiveness and life are given to others in equal measure. Jesus’ parable highlights the goodness and generosity of God. That is to say, as the ultimate “landowner,” God will use what has always belonged to the Creator for the good of all even if we humans fail to view the world through His eyes.

The parable illustrates our own tendency to covet/be envious of what others receive from God. Or in another way, we may ask “why am I suffering so much when others have it easier”? The owner of the vineyard asks those who have worked longest and (presumably) hardest for him, “Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?” What is most striking about the landowner is the relentless way he himself goes out to find laborers, his constant willingness to hire the ones who are still standing there, and his desire to pay them a full day’s wage. This means, God takes the initiative in seeking us out.

And He chooses us despite our utter unworthiness. And God is lavish in his self-gift to us!! Conversely, the temptation is for us to measure our life by what we imagine we deserve. But in truth, God is always giving us far more than we deserve, even in calling us to labor in his kingdom. In short, God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness are God's to give away, as He sees fit!!!

The recompense of reward from God will be given to all believers, but not according to the time of their conversion but indeed, according to just their faith. Hence, this parable describes the state of the church in the world, and explains that the last shall be first, and the first last—regardless of, or despite the wisdom of man.

Therefore, if God gives extravagant grace to others or relief from pain and challenge, it is kindness to them, and no injustice to us. In other words, we must have faith that our portion of gifts or challenges are in tune with what God asks of us in our lives as we serve His kingdom. Indeed, life can be unfair, and life can be hard. However, in faith Praise the Lord! Let us always strive to “seek the Lord while he may be found, call him while he is near”; because, for us, “Life is Christ”. Amen!