

- Lets face it; this is not one of Jesus' more popular parables. In fact it seems in direct opposition to one of our most deeply cherished values: *The value of hard work and reward. The more you work, the more productive you are, the more you ought to be paid.* I don't know many people who would disagree with that statement.
- And we see this value expressed in the complaint of those workers in the Gospel parable who worked in the field all day while others only worked part of the day but received the same pay.
- "It's not fair, we worked longer and harder but you have made them equal to us".
- We might even have our own experiences that are similar to the Gospel parable. We might know others who *we feel* neither earned or deserved what they received: a job, a promotion, a raise, some recognition. We might think we worked longer or harder but it made no difference.
- Very often we view the world through *our* definition of fairness. Fairness is based on what you deserve, how hard you work or the way you behave.
- But before we dismiss this parable and label it "Bible message not to be taken seriously", let's consider the possibility there is a lesson to be learned here. A lesson about the difference between human ideas about fairness and God's idea about fairness.
- So what is the real meaning? The real message of today's Gospel passage?
- On one level St Matthew is speaking to the audience of his day. That was a Jewish audience who believed they were the chosen people of God. They believed God's love and His Kingdom were exclusively for them.
- Matthew uses Jesus' parable to remind the Jewish people - yes, you were first into the vineyard. [God called them first; they were given the Ten Commandments, they were sent prophets.] but others are also called, invited into God's

Kingdom. Matthew was referring to the Gentile people, who the Jews looked down upon as unworthy.

- Matthew reminds his audience that the Gentiles, although called later, are called to an equal place, an equal share in God's Kingdom. God loves all of His children and shows no preference. And that is good news for all of us!!
- On another level, Jesus uses this parable to speak to each of us in today's world. And I'd suggest there are three points the Lord is making.
- First: Jealousy and Envy are dangerous, destructive things.
- We live in a world in which people scramble to be first all the time. We scramble to be first in line, students scramble to be at the top of their class, employees scramble for promotions...and the list goes on.
- But this scrambling often leads to envy and jealousy.
- Notice in the Gospel parable the workers were not so mad about what they didn't get. They were more mad about what the others did get. Mad others were made equal to them.
- Jesus uses this parable to tell us being jealous or envious is the wrong attitude to have toward someone else's good fortune. It is displeasing to God, who wants us to care about others and celebrate their blessings.
- Jesus shows us in this parable that jealousy is hurtful to us. It gets us angry, takes away our peace and most importantly blinds us to seeing and enjoying the gifts *we are given* by God. Jealousy blinds us from seeing the blessings in our life.
- Which leads to Jesus' second point in this parable: God is amazingly generous!
- We can see God's generosity everywhere, we just need to take the time to stop and look and enjoy what is right in front of us.
- Amazing sunrises and sunsets; beautiful beaches; leaves changing colors in the Fall and all the other beauties of nature. Our family and friends – people that love and care for us. Our health, our homes, our jobsGod is amazingly generous!!
- But there is more. God wants to be close to us. He actually dwells in us, gives Himself to us in the Holy Eucharist. God is amazingly generous !

- When we make comparisons with others we can get into trouble. God's gift to others is not a slight or insult to us (as those complaining workers in the parable thought it was). It's just God's love and generosity – plain and simple – it is who God is.
- Which leads to Jesus third point to us in this parable: God's love, God's generosity is for everyone.
- Think about this: Maybe those hired to work at 5pm (the end of the day) were left standing idle all day not because they didn't want to work or didn't try to get a job. Maybe they were viewed by others as "not fit to work". Maybe they were old or frail or disabled somehow. Maybe they didn't speak the "right language". Maybe they were not as strong or aggressive as the others who were selected first.
- But in Jesus parable everyone got to work and everyone was given "the usual daily wage" (which in those times was understood as enough to feed their family and survive for the day).
- Notice in the parable everyone did *some* work. God relies on each of us to bring His love and generosity to the world. God gives each of us something we can do for Him – but what matters most is not the amount we can do. What matters most is the attitude we bring to that work. God wants us to serve Him and others with a loving heart, a heart thankful for the blessings He has given us. A heart that knows everything we have is a generous gift from God and a heart willing to share those gifts with others.