



Archdiocese of San Antonio
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Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
September 21, 2014

Sometimes the parables of the Gospel leave us a little confused. Like why would someone leave 99 smart sheep on the hill alone and go after one really silly one who had wandered off? Or like why would a woman throw a big party after finding one lost coin and spend more than the coin was worth? We get another such parable today. Why would the land owner think it is “fair” to pay the person who only worked one hour the same as the person who worked the whole day? To the mind of the world, this is clearly “unfair.” But for the mind of God, this is perfectly fine. How can this be?

Our Lord answers our question by saying: “As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts” (Is). Our Lord acts in ways that are far above ours, and always he acts with mercy. We can be certain that God’s ways will surprise and challenge us, but this is because he loves us so completely. His mercy is beyond understanding. Isaiah exhorts us: “Turn to the Lord for mercy; to our God, who is generous in forgiving.” It is actually the Lord’s mercy that is the key to understanding these parables in the mind of God.

Let’s look at the parable again in a different way. Of course we can tell that God is the land owner, and that we are the laborers. The labor we do is our work for the Kingdom in this world. Some people come to work for the Kingdom early in their lives. They stick to the faith from a young age, they live virtuous lives, and they strive to love God and their neighbor always. Some come back to the Church a little later, when they hit high-school or college, when they get married, when they baptize their child. But then there are some to who do not come back to us until much later – some even as

they are on their death-bed. When we start to think of it this way, the “generosity” of our Lord becomes amazing good news. Our God is so generous to those who have come later into the faith (or back to the faith). He loves them just as much as he loves the faithful cradle-Catholic. This should make us feel gratitude and joy, and not make us grumble as if it were unfair. God’s love is his to give to whomever he wants.

But here is the greatest part. The “usual daily wage” the parable talks about is not some amount of money or anything so small. The wages of faith in Christ come to us as eternal life with God in heaven! Our God is so generous that he pours out his entire life to us and makes us sharers in it. How amazing is our God! This is an amazing gift, so much more generous than we could ever earn ourselves. St. Paul even shows how much he longs for this eternal life in his letter to the Philippians. He is in prison with his life in the balance, but does not worry about losing his life, because, as he put it: “I long to depart this life and be with Christ.” This gift of our Lord is amazing. There is no possible way to give more, so why would we think that it is “unfair” for God to give those new to the life of faith the same as he has given us. We have received everything from the Lord.

But still, my brothers and sisters, if we are honest with ourselves, we are not always good and faithful workers. We sin in this life, and it would be “fair” for God to condemn us. It would be “fair” if we received nothing from him against whom we have sinned. But no, our God is merciful and generous, and he has showered his love upon us. Thanks be to God! “The Lord is near to all who call upon him” (Ps 145). Pope Francis said it very clearly in a mass this April: “How many of us would deserve to be condemned! And it would also be just. But he forgives! With this mercy... it is a great light of love, of tenderness.”

So may we put on the mind of God, my friends. Justice is not an exercise of balancing the scales; that is always an exercise that we will lose. May we attract people to Christ by extolling his merciful love. How many people are waiting to be welcomed into our communities to hear how our Lord loves them and is mercifully waiting to call them back to himself. No matter the situation, God offers a way back. Through the intercession of Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe, who called San Juan Diego to work for

the Lord, may we open our hearts that we may “conduct yourselves in a way worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Phil), and show God’s merciful love to all that we meet.