

## HOMILY 25<sup>TH</sup> SUN OT YRA 2020

In the Gospel reading today we hear the parable of the landowner who hired laborers for his vineyard at various times during the day. He hired some early in the morning and they worked all day. He hired at 9:00, some at 12:00, some at 3:00, and some at 5:00 in the evening. This last group worked only one hour. At the end of the day they all got paid the usual daily wage. They all got paid the same amount. What do you think would happen if a business owner did that today? Well, if it were a union shop, I am think we would probably have grievances filed pretty quickly. We may have some picketing and demonstrating. Some animosity may develop among the different groups. The workers that worked all day may be in conflict with those who worked only one hour. There does seem to be some inherent unfairness about this situation. So what was the landowner thinking? The landowner represents God, so what can we learn from the parable about God?

Well, in the first reading the Lord says: “My thoughts are not your thoughts, not are your ways my ways.” There are certain things about God’s thoughts and God’s ways that we have learned from Sacred Scripture and Church teaching. There are some things that we have come to expect from God. There are also things that we want God to do. But we cannot limit God based upon what we know about him and what we want from him. We must have faith and trust in God’s unconditional love for us and God’s presence in our lives. There are ways that I see God working during this pandemic. God gave us physicians and scientists with the gifts and charisms they need to serve others. There can learn about how to treat people who are infected, how to slow and stop the spread of the virus, how to develop testing, how to develop a vaccine, and they are doing this. I also think he wants us to follow the new commandment, love God and love and serve one another. I think we need to love and serve one another by following the advice of the physicians and scientists and wear a mask, socially distance and practice good hand hygiene. And maybe even if we do not want to wear the masks, maybe we can just do it because it makes others feel safer. That is how God is working through each of us. But I also think that God is working in ways that we do not understand. We may see them later when the

pandemic ends and we may never understand them. This is part of the mystery of our faith. We have to have faith and trust in God's unconditional love for us.

So, what else do we learn about God from the parable? No one was cheated in the parable. Those who worked all day got what they agreed to work for. Those who did not work all day probably got more than they expected. The workers were only unhappy when they started to compare themselves with one another. God does not compare us with one another and we should not do that either. The usual daily wage for a day laborer was barely enough for the worker to sustain his or her family for one day. Maybe the landowner thought all of the workers deserved to be able to take care of their families. This is consistent with God's love for us. We do not earn God's love. He is giving them each daily their daily bread, which is what Jesus taught us to ask for every time we pray the Our Father. We also learn that it is not so important when we answer God's call, but that we answer the call when we receive it. The workers came to the market place at different times and received the invitation at different times. We are all on a spiritual journey. We are at different places at different times and we receive different communications from God. God does not condemn us or give up on us, he just keeps loving us. And that is what we are called to do for one another, to be Jesus for one another and accept one another where we are at without judgment. God does not love life long Christians more than those who find him later in life. And when we look at the unfairness of the land owner, we are looking only at the length of time they worked. Maybe those who worked only one hour provided something of great value that those who worked all day did not provide. Or maybe they all did the best they could with the gifts they had and the opportunities they were given. We do not start on an even playing field. More will be expected from those who are given more.

The Lord says: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, not are your ways my ways." We understand some of God's thoughts and ways, but God is much bigger than that. That is part of the mystery of our faith. We need to have faith and trust that God will continue to love us and care for us the way he always has in the past.