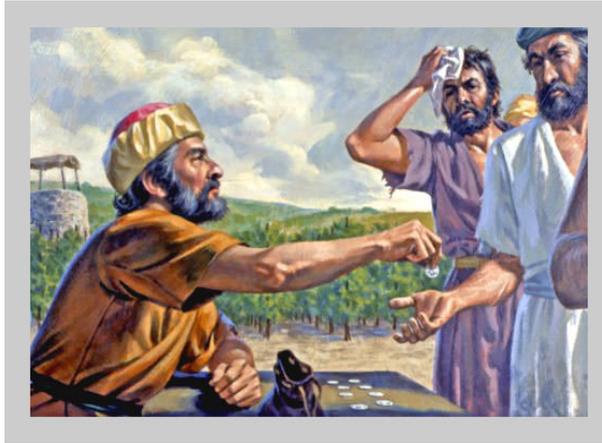


## THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

September 24, 2017

The Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 55:6-9 + Philippians 1:20c-24, 27a + Matthew 20:1-16a



Reflection by: Dyann Brown, OPA

### Justice and Salvation Even for Latecomers

In the parable of today's gospel at first blush, it seems laborers are not getting their fair share. Even in today's economic structure, laborers may be the hardest workers but the least to enjoy hefty or equitable wages. It's a knee jerk for me to stand on the side of the underdog because, from a secular standpoint, it seems laborers get the short end of the proverbial economic stick.

However, since today's gospel is a parable, the Lord uses this story as a metaphor for beneficence and generosity to explain His kingdom. So, a landowner seeking workers for his vineyard engages men at the local marketplace at dawn for a day's work. He returns to the marketplace throughout the day to late afternoon to hire more workers. All accepted the agreed-on wage of "whatever is right."

As the workday closed, workers gathered to receive their wages. The landowner, as good as his word, gave the usual wage to those who worked a full day and the **same** wage to those who worked a shorter day. Those who worked a full day let loose vocal indignation about such inequality of payment. To his credit (and generosity), the landowner told the men he cheated none and gave all not only what was agreed upon but also what was "just." The story affirms that those who enter first or late into God's kingdom is not through action or entitlement of being first, but through generosity and justice. Perhaps other landowners did not see the value in the last idle men at the marketplace in the late afternoon whom other landowner had no plans on hiring. (Did they look weaker, lazier or unkempt than the first batch?)

The parable isn't lost in its application nowadays in many arenas. Yes, day laborers may get low pay for backbreaking work. Yet, consider the migrant, immigrant, refugee, under-employed (but well-educated), minority, or older worker—all marginalized systemically or politically, yet who deserve dignity and opportunity in the democratic process. Unlike the secular world, entrance to the kingdom is not earned but based on receiving salvation for all those who seek Him—first or late.