



LIVING THE GOSPEL

**25th Sunday in Ordinary Time
20th September, 2026**

Theme: "So the last will be first, and the first last"

Gathering Prayer

Facilitator: O God, who founded all the commands of your sacred Law upon love of you and of our neighbor, grant that, by keeping your precepts, we may merit to attain eternal life. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Matthew 20:1-16

¹Now the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner going out at daybreak to hire workers for his vineyard. ²He made an agreement with the workers for one denarius a day and send them to his vineyard. ³Going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place. ⁴and said to them, "You go to my vineyard too and will give you a fair wage." ⁵So they went. At about the sixth hour and again at about the ninth hour, he went out and did the same. ⁶ Then at about the eleventh hour he went out and found more men standing around, and he said to them, "Why have you been standing here idle all day?" ⁷"Because no one has hired us," they answered. He said to them, "You go into my vineyard too." ⁸In the evening, the owner of the vineyard said to his bailiff, "Call the workers and pay them their wages, starting with the last arrivals and ending with the first." ⁹SO those who hired at about the eleventh hour came forward and received one denarius each. ¹⁰When the first came, they expected to get more, but they too received one denarius each. ¹¹They took it, but grumbled at the landowner saying, ¹²"The men who came last have done only one hour, and you have treated them the same as us, though we have done a heavy day's work in all the heat." ¹³He one of them and said, "My friend, I am not being unjust to you; did we not agree on one denarius?" ¹⁴Take your earnings and go. I choose to pay the last comer as much as I pay you. ¹⁵Have I no right to do what I like with my own? Why should you be envious because I am generous?" ¹⁶Thus the last will be first, and the first, last.'

Gospel Focus

Jesus' parable this Sunday can irritate us. We might find ourselves sympathetic with the early-morning workers, out in the sun all day only to receive the same pay as those who had just arrived. "Equal pay for equal work," seems right by our standard of justice and for good reason. In contrast, the parable defies human logic. The landowner pays the usual daily wage to all workers-not denying anyone the agreed upon daily wage, but

choosing to be generous to his latest hires, knowing that they too be able to eat that day. In this way, the landowner's action is a matter of justice. Each receives what they need for the day. From another angle, this parable shows that God cannot divide himself and give someone "half" of heaven. If heaven is the gift of God's self, God does not hold back that gift, instead giving himself totally. The question then is not God's generosity, but our own ability to receive God's gift. Thus, "the last will be first and the first will be last."

Gospel Reflection

The parable in today's gospel seems so unfair. Don't people who work harder and longer deserves more pay? How can it be just that the vineyard owner pays all the laborers the same when they haven't worked the same amount of time? These troublesome questions arise when we stand in the place of those were hired first and who worked the whole long day in the sun.

However, the comments of a woman at a recent bible study workshop at an American parish might help us reflect on and understand this parable from a whole new angle. She was single mother, raising three children alone after her husband deserted them. She had little education and few marketable skills. Day after day she stood in line at the unemployment office, hoping against hope for a job.

As she read the parable, she remarked that the ones standing idle all day long in the marketplace were not lazy. They would gladly have worked for anyone willing to hire them. But they were always left behind, perhaps because they were old, infirm, and unskilled, unable to work as hard as the more robust prospective workers around them. They were like her and the people who thronged to the unemployment lines these days, she said.

As she reflected on the ending of the parable, she observed that if the landowner had given the laborers that we re hired last anything other than one day's wage, what would that do? How would they feed their children? Sure, she admitted, the first hired had worked all day in the hot sun, but they also had the satisfaction of knowing all day long that at the end of the day they would be able to feed their families.

Justice, in God's reign, she proposed, is about everybody being able to eat at the end of the day, no matter what each one's capacity to work. God's justice, she advanced, cannot be earned and does not depend on how much you work.

This explanation seems to be much closer to what Jesus' original audience of people struggling to survive would have understood. The assertion of the vineyard owner that he is doing no injustice to the earlier hired workers challenges those in privileged positions to examine their sense of entitlement. Does it take anything away from the first hired if the last hired receive the same wage?

The vineyard owner's question in verse 15 points out the destructiveness of evil-eye envy in a community. The owner asks, "Are you envious because I am generous?" In the original Greek of the gospel, the sentence is literally, "Is your eye evil because I am good?" The question is about God's goodness, which is extended equally to all, and how difficult it is for us not to look enviously on goodness poured out on others, even as it has been lavished upon ourselves. Is it not, however, a great relief that God's justice does not mean that people get what they deserve.

Old/New Testament and CCC links

First Reading — Isaiah 55:6-9

⁶ "Seek out Yahweh while he is still to be found, call to him while he is still near. ⁷Let the wicked abandon his way and the evil one his thoughts. Let him turn back to Yahweh

who will take pity on him, to our God, for he is rich in forgiveness; ⁸for my thoughts are not your thoughts and your ways are not my ways, declares Yahweh.

⁹For the heavens are as high above earth as my ways are above your ways, my thoughts above your thoughts.

Responsorial Reading — Psalms 78:1-2, 34-38

R: The Lord is near to all who call upon him.

Every day will I bless you, and I will praise your name forever and ever.

Great is the Lord and highly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable. (**R**)

The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness.

The Lord is good to all and compassionate toward all his works. (**R**)

The Lord is just in all his ways and holy in all his works.

The Lord is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth. (**R**)

Second Reading — Philippians 1:20-24, 27

²⁰ all in accordance with my most hope and trust that I shall never have to admit defeat, but with complete fearlessness I shall go on, so that now, as always, Christ will be glorified in my body, whether by my life or my death. ²¹Life to me, of course, is Christ, but then death would be a positive gain. ²²On the other hand again, if to be alive in the body gives me an opportunity for fruitful work, I do not know which I should choose. ²³I am caught in this dilemma: I want to be gone and to be with Christ, and this is by far the stronger desire—²⁴and yet for your sake to stay alive in this body is a more urgent need.

²⁷But you must always behave in a way that is worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come to you and see for myself or whether I only hear all about you from a distance, I shall find that you are standing firm and united in spirit, battling, as a team with a single aim, for the faith of the gospel.

Sharing and Discussion

1. What stands out most about the landowner's actions? How does this parable subvert the typical expectations of a transactional business world? How does this apply in everyday life?

2. The workers who labored all day felt their wage was unfair because of their extended effort. In our spiritual lives, how do we sometimes fall into the trap of treating our relationship with God like a transaction or a ledger rather than a relationship built on grace?

3. Jesus concludes by saying, "So the last will be first, and the first last." What does it look like to live out that counter-cultural kingdom value in your daily interactions, workplace, or community this week?

Closing Prayer

Facilitator: Loving God, you hear us in your kindness and satisfy our every need and desire. Hear these our prayers of our mouths and hearts and grant them according to your will. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Facilitator: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen

Looking to deepen your faith and connect with fellow parishioners? Join us for our "Living the Gospel" Bible study and sharing session at the parish. Together, we will reflect on God's Word, grow in faith, and journey together in fellowship.

Every Saturday

Time: 9.30 – 11.00 am

Venue: Level 3, Rm 03-06

All are welcome! For more information, please contact;

Mary Chua - 96965049 (marybay2468@gmail.com)

George Chee – 97399216 (georgejc@gmail.com)

Reflection material available on Parish Website under – (Weekly Bible Sharing - Living the Gospel)

References for the Living the Gospel Reflection:

- 1) Gospel notes taken from the Navarre Bible
- 2) Gospel reflection and Living Liturgy are taken from "Living Liturgy for Sunday and Solemnities" by Order of St Benedict. Published by Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota. Reprinted with permission.
- 3) CCC references are taken from Catechism of the Catholic Church