



25th Sunday in Ordinary Time September 24, 2017

GOSPEL MATTHEW 20:1-16

Jesus told his disciples this parable:
"The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire laborers for his vineyard.

After agreeing with them for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. Going out about nine o'clock, the landowner saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and he said to them,

'You too go into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just.'
So they went off. And he went out again around noon, and around three o'clock, and did likewise.

Going out about five o'clock, the landowner found others standing around, and said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?'
They answered, 'Because no one has hired us.'

He said to them, 'You too go into my vineyard.' When it was evening the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman,
'Summon the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and ending with the first.'

When those who had started about five o'clock came, each received the usual daily wage.

So when the first came, they thought that they would receive more, but each of them also got the usual wage.

And on receiving it they grumbled against the landowner, saying, 'These last ones worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who bore the day's burden and the heat.'

He said to one of them in reply,
'My friend, I am not cheating you. Did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what is yours and go. What if I wish to give this last one the same as you? Or am I not free to do as I wish with my own money? Are you envious because I am generous?'

Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last."





September 24, 2017

GOSPEL MATTHEW 20:1-16

The readings are exploring the full notion of the human sense of outrage over the unfairness of life vs. Jesus new expectations of justice. We will be going deeper, deeper, deeper into that each week of this series. We are navigating the path toward a “Simpler” life by leading people to realign their definition of fairness and justice. And we are taking our lead from the Scriptures – about people in exile, people who feel from the core of their being that they have lost their way, they are lost, the grounds shifting beneath them with no lifeline.

Are there times when you try to relate to God on your terms rather than to accept God's ways? **What do we think are God’s “thoughts” on fairness?**

Reflect on this approach from the Gospel parable of the workers: **When and how did I enter into the agreement of the “usual daily wage”? What is it? What is your understanding of this agreement with the Lord?**

We may think that “we deserve” more – yet God promises there is plenty to go around. He is generous with his love, his mercy and the reward of everlasting life. It is available to everyone – whether they started working on it years ago or came to Jesus just today. “The first shall be last, the last shall be first”. Look at that same situation through Jesus’ definition of justice. **How do you see this at play in your faith life? At Church? In ministry?**





26th Sunday in Ordinary Time October 1, 2017

GOSPEL MATTHEW 21:28-32

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people:
"What is your opinion? A man had two sons.

He came to the first and said,
'Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.'

He said in reply, 'I will not, '
but afterwards changed his mind and went.

The man came to the other son and gave the same
order. He said in reply, 'Yes, sir, 'but did not go.

Which of the two did his father's will?"

They answered, "The first."

Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you, tax collectors
and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before
you.

When John came to you in the way of righteousness,
you did not believe him; but tax collectors and prostitutes
did. Yet even when you saw that, you did not later
change your minds and believe him."





October 1, 2017

GOSPEL MATTHEW 21:28-32

1. Have you ever changed your mind about something? Did it lead you to a better place – or not? **Think about one difficult thing you may need to change your mind and heart about – how can your faith help in this conversion?**
2. Jesus wants us to know that it is not enough to say that we love God, we must live it. We must move from being self-centered to other-centered. Consider the parable of the two sons – along with Jesus' teaching of the chief priests who would not repent vs. the tax collectors and other sinners who did. Jesus could ask us the same question. **Do our words indicate our obedience to God and his ways? Do our actions? Do our attitudes?**
3. Are there “demands” we have of our faith or the Church we must examine in the same way? **Another way to think about this: How many go to Mass/ Church with a gripe? Or a story of joy? [What gets us to Mass Sunday after Sunday – obligation or opportunity for Communion?]**
4. **Say the Jesus Prayer** – at least 3 times. Let go – Let Jesus fill your heart.





27th Sunday in Ordinary Time October 8, 2017

GOSPEL MATTHEW 21:33-43

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people:

"Hear another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went on a journey.

When vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to obtain his produce. But the tenants seized the servants and one they beat, another they killed, and a third they stoned.

Again he sent other servants, more numerous than the first ones, but they treated them in the same way. Finally, he sent his son to them, thinking, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance.' They seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes?"

They answered him, "He will put those wretched men to a wretched death and lease his vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the proper times."

Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures:
The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; by the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes?

Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit."





October 8, 2017

GOSPEL MATTHEW 21:33-43

The vineyard is the setting for the readings and the Gospel. There will be a vintage time, an accountability, that draws near. However, we may be trapped in this undercurrent of anger because of what we perceive as the unfairness of life. Then, ultimately, this self-centered exile will lead to ruin, says the readings. In the Gospel, Jesus uses tells the parable of the landowner and the wicked tenants to send a clear message to the elders: When vintage time draws near, the Kingdom of God will be taken from the unbelieving and given to the faithful (the people who produce fruit).

Which areas of your life are bearing fruit now – prayer, family, community, worship, service? **What areas needs tending?**

We may struggle in difficult times to see the Hope -- to recognize God's Grace in your life. But it is not God's intention to leave you there – how do you know that? **Think of two or three extraordinary gifts you have received in your life lately. Name them; share with the group.**

Think of someone who may need extra support to accept God's grace in his/her life. **How could you invite him/her to a faith-centered experience (including a ministry, a parish event)?** Invite him/her to Mass next weekend for a message of HOPE.

Say the Jesus Prayer –3 times for yourself and 3 more times for someone you want to bring closer to Jesus. Say it with intention to Let Go – Let Jesus fill your heart, and theirs.





28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 15, 2017

GOSPEL MATTHEW 22:1-14

Jesus again in reply spoke to the chief priests and elders of the people in parables, saying,

"The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son.

He dispatched his servants to summon the invited guests to the feast, but they refused to come. A second time he sent other servants, saying,

"Tell those invited: "Behold, I have prepared my banquet, my calves and fattened cattle are killed, and everything is ready; come to the feast.""

Some ignored the invitation and went away, one to his farm, another to his business.

The rest laid hold of his servants, mistreated them, and killed them.

The king was enraged and sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.

Then he said to his servants, "The feast is ready, but those

who were invited were not worthy to come. Go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find.'

The servants went out into the streets and gathered all they found, bad and good alike, and the hall was filled with guests.

But when the king came in to meet the guests, he saw a man there not dressed in a wedding garment.

The king said to him, 'My friend, how is it that you came in here without a wedding garment?' But he was reduced to silence. Then the king said to his attendants, 'Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.'

Many are invited, but few are chosen."





October 15, 2017

GOSPEL MATTHEW 22:1-14

God is offering us a lifeline – Church. Jesus is our lifeline here – so too are those who Jesus brings to help us in the journey. We all have been caught in the riptides of life and need help. We are all continuously realigning our faith life from being “self-centered” to “other-centered”. This week, the preachers are also using the recent story of the family caught in a riptide in the Panhandle – saved by 80 strangers who came together. Have you found **your 80strong**? On this spiritual journey, many invited to the banquet, but few are chosen. Don't be afraid to ask for help in your spiritual journey.

Today's Gospel reminds us that God invites all of us to his kingdom. *Some people said yes to the invitation to be his disciple and some people refused this invitation.* **How do we respond to this invitation? Are we ready? Do we take it for granted?** Do we accept – and act as God asks (love as Christ loves, serve as Christ serves).

We find a lifeline right here in Church, in Communion. The worship of God is a virtue of justice since we give God what is due to Him. **What are you looking forward to when you come to Mass?**

Reflect on the “80strong” witness story from Mass: **Who/what has been the lifeline leading you to Church, to a personal encounter with Jesus?**

What do you need in your spiritual journey? Have you encountered some of the ministries mentioned by Witness talks and at the welcome after Mass this past weekend (wk 4).

The reason that we are “Church” is because we all have been through that riptide at some point. **How can we be that lifeline to others (disciple-makers)? What do you have to share? How can you invite others to the feast?**

