

September 24, 2023



SINGLE-HEARTED GENEROSITY

By Julie Mussché

Today's Gospel

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.'"*

MATTHEW 20:1-16a

Reflection

I just returned from visiting my family in Oregon, an annual adventure and blessing. As part of our reunion tradition, we dedicate a day to touring the Willamette Valley with stopping in to sample the wares of several vineyards. The landscape is impressive; the order and balance of the grapevines create a beautiful texture and context for the surrounding natural and settled environs. It is evident that great care and stewardship is taken in the growing and harvesting of the fruit. The art and science of wine-making holds a bit of mystery and wonder, and engages the efforts of people with an assortment of talents and skills, a community working together toward a common goal, each contributing at a certain point in the process.

In today's reading, Jesus presents God's Kingdom as a landowner looking for workers to care for his vineyard. Who knows what the laborers were doing in the vineyard, but throughout the day, more people were called to work. No matter when folks were brought in to labor, at the end of the day, everyone received the same wage.

In the circumstance of our world of hourly wages, this may seem unfair. The

landlord responding to the grumbling of the earliest workers responds with frankness. Working in God's Kingdom offers the equal wage of redemption, no matter when or how we arrive or how one serves. There is much to do in the vineyard: all are welcome to help build and care for God's Kingdom.



Vineyard Willamette Valley
Photo by Julie Musché

For Pondering

Take a moment to peruse today's reading:

- What surprises you?
 - What unsettles or challenges you?
 - How do you hold God's single-hearted generosity?
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