

Theme of the Week - I am generous

Often we call people great when they are very successful, or rich and powerful. Jesus explains that such things are not important to God. He measures our greatness by our goodness and willingness to think of others before ourselves.

When you have a cake to share out, how do you do it? Do you watch carefully to see that no one gets a bigger piece than you?

Have you ever watched someone else getting treated better than others? In the Gospel today do you think the vineyard owner was fair? (Those who worked all day had a whole day's pay as they had agreed upon; those who worked only a little also got a whole day's pay. God was not unfair with the first group, but was abundantly generous with the others) Jesus told today's story to make people think in new ways because many people in that time believed that God didn't love people who sinned.

In the first reading on Sunday, Isaiah's words were addressed to the exiles in Babylon and follow the invitation to the Messiah's banquet. They are words of pleading to those whose faith has grown cold, to turn back to a forgiving God whose thoughts are far beyond our understanding. The Gospel challenges our human understanding of the principles of fairness and generosity. God does not operate on a formula of who deserves what. In this story the owner makes a point of having the last workers paid first in full view of the others. If the order of payment had been different the full day workers would have gone away happy with their remuneration and none the wiser. The audience is drawn into sharing the feelings of disgruntlement in solidarity with the full day workers. Our sense of fairness is challenged by this story. But it sheds light onto a problem that had arisen in Matthew's community at the time. Jewish Christians who had come to have faith in Jesus early and had been persecuted for that faith, are seeing new-comers, mostly Greek converts, being offered the same reward. Jesus addresses this issue squarely - God is sovereign and his generosity extends to all believers regardless of merit.

This parable, where the vineyard symbolises the people of God and the owner symbolises God, would be understood to be about those being gathered into God's people and welcomed into the kingdom. The challenges of this story hit us as we identify with the feelings of indignation alongside the workers. Think about the times you have experienced jealousy or resentment. What caused these emotions, and how did you deal with them? Have you ever experienced giving or receiving generosity? Is there a difference in how we react to being recipients of generosity and watching others being treated with generosity when we don't believe they deserve it?

This week be generous to your family, to a friend or better still someone you don't usually talk to. Being generous is not about handing over money; your time to listen and talk to another is generous with your spirit, let the Holy Spirit live out in you this week.

I am generous

Weekly Reflections
24th September 2023



A reading from the Gospel of St Matthew (20:1-16)

Jesus said to his disciples: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner going out at daybreak to hire workers for his vineyard. He made an agreement with the workers for one denarius a day, and sent them to his vineyard. Going out at about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place and said to them, "You go to my vineyard too and I will give you a fair wage." So they went. At about the sixth hour and again at about the ninth hour, he went out and did the same. Then at about the eleventh hour he went out and found more men standing round, and he said to them, "Why have you been standing here idle all day?" "Because no one has hired us" they answered. He said to them, "You go into my vineyard too." In 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." So those who were hired at about the eleventh hour came forward and received one denarius each. When the first came, they expected to get more, but they too received one denarius each. They took it, but grumbled at the landowner. "The men who came last" they said "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." He answered one of them and said, "My friend, I am not being unjust to you; did we not agree on one denarius? Take your earnings and go. I choose to pay the last comer as much as I pay you. Have I no right to do what I like with my own? Why be envious because I am generous?" Thus the last will be first, and the first, last.'

Day 1

In today's Gospel, Jesus uses a parable to explain to the disciples how to be generous.

What do you think Jesus was trying to tell them about God in this story? (That God is generous, even with people who don't deserve it, and gives gifts freely; God's love is big enough for us all to share)

Day 2

Why do you think Jesus was focused on how people react when God does this? (That we can often be jealous instead of pleased when we see others getting blessed)

In our own lives, how do you react if you feel you are treated unfairly?

Day 3

During this week think on God's gift of abundance and generosity and look for specific ways to be generous with others, with your time, your money, your attention and your attitudes.

Prayer for the Week

Dearest Lord, teach me to be generous. Teach me to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to seek for rest; to labour and not to ask for reward, save that of knowing that I am doing your will.

Amen

Saint of the Week

St Vincent de Paul (1581 - 1660)



Vincent was known for his complete dedication to the poor. He was born to a farming family in southwest France and remained an essentially humble man among his Counter-Reformation contemporaries. While travelling by sea from Marseille on family business, he is said to have been kidnapped by Barbary pirates and enslaved, finally escaping with his master, a former Christian priest in 1607. In 1622, his experience of enslavement led him to be created chaplain to the galley slaves, and he went on to found the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity. He was:

GRATEFUL & GENEROUS