

## From the Homily Library of Fr. Callistus Iyorembor

25<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time - Year A - September 20, 2020

*Are you jealous because I am generous?*

During Jesus' teaching and mission, He used a lot of parables. So, what is a parable? In my religion class in high school we were taught that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Even though this sounds elementary, there is some truth to that.

In a parable Jesus draws on some realities within our physical world of time and space to explain some reality in the Spiritual realm; to explain something fundamental about the nature of God. Parables - in their very nature - are disturbing and puzzling. Some Biblical scholars have said that the parable of the Generous Landowner that we hear about in our Gospel passage for today is one of the most puzzling/disturbing parables that Jesus ever preached.

The landowner goes out to hire worker for his field; this will be a common practice at the time of Jesus. He goes out very early in the morning; hires workers, then he goes out at mid-day 12 Noon and later in the afternoon at 3 o'clock and then at the very end of the day - maybe 6 PM. He hires more and more workers to come work in his vineyard. Then the workday ends. He says call the workers in for their wages, but then he says those whom I hired last should be called in first; those who had worked maybe just for ½ hour or 45 minutes and he pays them the full day's wage. Those who had been hired earlier are excited. They say *'hey this is great we are going to be paid more we worked all day.'* When they come, he pays them the same daily wage.

They are indignant - and I must be honest - most of us reading this story are indignant. This is simply unfair. These people worked eight hours and others worked for 45 minutes and all are paid the same amount. Something is not computing here. There is some form of injustice going on here, we might say. Most of us here have either experienced injustice ourselves or have seen some form of injustice perpetrated.

This parable is not about injustice or an unfair situation. Our way of perceiving things can be sometimes different from the way God see things. God's wisdom transcends human perception.

This is what we hear in our **first reading** from the prophet Isaiah, "*for my thoughts are not your thoughts nor are your ways my ways,*" says the Lord. "*As high as the heavens are above the earth so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thought. **Man looks at the appearance; God looks at the heart.***" 1 Sam 16:7

**What is this Parable about? What is the theology contained in this parable - nature of God?**

**In God we find Perfect Generosity**

This parable is teaching us that in God we find *perfect generosity*. We hear this in the key phrase in our Gospel passage: "*Are you envious because I am generous?*"

In God we find perfect generosity - Jn 3:16 (one of the most popular sections of Sacred Scripture).

Maybe the landowner was compensating them for the difficult day they had. They had not been hired the whole day. They may have suffered anxiety or a sense of failure from not having been hired the whole day. Maybe the landowner knew something about

them that we do not know. Maybe he was thinking how they would feed their families. God's ways are not our ways. His thought not our thoughts. God's generosity transcends human wisdom.

Today's liturgy calls us to rejoice that God is generous to a degree that far exceeds human generosity. God deals with us in ways that are very different from the ways we normally deal with one another. The goodness and generosity of God is a great comfort to us. But it is also a great challenge because we are called to imitate his generosity and goodness. We are called to make our ways of dealing with one another more like God's way of dealing with us.

Today I would like to invite you all to open your hearts to God's generosity, and when you have experienced it, let it serve as a model for our dealings with others.