

**20 September 2020**

**Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

*Isaiah 55:6-9; Philippians 1:20-24; Matthew 20:1-16*

I prayed this Gospel parable with our Pastoral Council, our Finance Council and our Pastoral Staff in the past days. It **aggravated nearly all of them who identify with the workers who were at it all day and got the same wage as the ones who worked on hour**. One woman said that it reminded her of “Tomato canning day” at her mom and dad’s place when all her sisters and she go to help her mom can pounds and pounds of tomatoes. Typically, she said, she is the only one who works all of Friday, Saturday and Sunday, the other siblings showing up, some on Saturday, and some just Sunday afternoon, and darn it all but upon leaving everyone gets the same number of tomato jars!! Clearly, she deserved more—or at least the others deserved less!

The tomato woman **got over her resentment** a while back, when the thought came to her, “Hey, maybe I work more than my siblings who get the same number of tomato jars as I do, but they miss out all the beautiful time that **I get to spend with my mom, working side by side.**” It made me wonder if we could always see the hard work we do as part of God’s will, and spending more time with Christ, “working side by side.” That would ease the burden of resentment, for sure.

It also made me think of a conversation or two that I’ve had over the years with people who are generous financial givers to their parish. Sometimes they’ll say something like, “If everybody just gave a hundred bucks a year to the parish, we would have no financial worries, but they don’t so that’s why I give way over a thousand.” And I wonder and sometimes say, “Well, who would you rather be, someone unaware of this responsibility, someone aware but unwilling, someone aware and willing but unable, or someone like you, aware, willing and able?” It’s not a curse to bear the burden of sacrificial life; with the eyes of faith, it is a blessing.

So, that’s one way of scratching at this story to make peace with it—to try and see the benefits, the silver lining of working all day without getting more pay than others. **Maybe the best strategy, though, is to try and empathize not with the ones who worked all day but with a “communion mentality” to empathize with the ones who worked just an hour.** What a blessing for them to be able to bring home a day’s pay.

**When I was in fourth or fifth grade**, I was in scouts, and we had this city-wide track meet that my pack and many others participated in. Johnny Nepl and I were in the same pack and we lived two house down from each other. Johnny was wiry, strong and thin, and most of all her was fast. I was not that way. I was a little, let’s say, chunky. Not overly so, but enough to slow me down, so to speak. So, the races began and I didn’t do so well. Johnny, out of the hundred or so competitors, won two bronze medals—really quite an accomplishment. So, I thought our walk home would involve me admiring his medals.

**Then they announced that everyone who hadn’t won any medals should go to the start line**, and so there was a big group of us whom they split into groups of three to run a race. I ran against two other losers...and won! **They put a gold medal around my neck.**

So, on the walk home with Johnny, it was my old medal I was admiring. Johnny was, and continues to be, a big hearted and kind person, but that day I guess he just couldn’t help himself. As his two bronze

medals clinked against each other, he saw me admiring mine, and said, "You know your medal doesn't really count."

But I was too happy to be bothered by that little dig. **I was happy to be part of a universe where mercy is shown to the slow, and while most often it is the swift who win the race, occasionally the heavens open and the last end up the first.**