

Fr Dispin John – Homily 25th Sunday Ordinary Time 20/9/2020 St John’s Mitcham

¹www.stjohnsmitcham.com.au

It is not fair. That can be one of the first reactions that we might have. This is a problematic parable. It is not fair. It's really unjust and unfair that the person who worked for just an hour, gets treated the same way as the one who worked all day in the heat. It's not fair.

At the start off our school year, every year, during my high school days, we used to have a team day or a house day. What this means is that the whole school would be divided into four teams or houses. The four captains and the vice captains who had already been chosen would come around to every classroom and they would choose their members like casting lots on them.

And every member of the class had a value. If you're really good at sports, you would be the first person to be picked. And then it goes down. And towards the end of that, choosing you know, business, there would be few of us left who would be kind of, you know, don't care, which team you end up. You actually do not add any value to the group because you would not be good at sports, blah, blah, blah. So they then become the rejects. They would be taken as kind of, just to be on the team.

The gospel seems to be filled with such rejects. The world of the gospel is peopled with lives, rejects and latecomers who find themselves with some sort of disability. They are the physically damaged, the psychologically damaged, the spiritually damaged, the economically damaged or the socially damaged. They are the outcasts, the prodigal sons, the sinners, the overlooked, the ones people think they can safely ignore or shun. And these are the people who are found in the midst of the gospel because they are in the midst of life. And Jesus seems to have a very clear favour for them. Through this he shows that God's ways are not our ways that God does not work on the arithmetic that we calculate from. God has a divine heart and he thinks differently.

So that's why in today's gospel, Jesus gives us a marvellous insight into the wisdom of reversal, which is at the heart of the kingdom. That God favours the outcast, the reject. So, the landowner's generosity to the late comers aggrieves the early starters, even though they are paid, what was agreed, one denarius. And that's why the landowner confronts them that question: "Have I no right to do what I like with my own?". Why be envious because I am generous? In the parable you can see the Pharisees, who pride themselves as being very virtuous, becoming very angry and grumbling against the God's act of generosity.

We have done everything right. And they are also welcomed in the way that we are. And it is not fair. So, the fairness or the word justice keeps coming back again and again, in the gospel today. Justice, in the eyes of God, is giving someone what is due to that person. Now just imagine for a second, that the latecomers, the people who were chosen at the 11th hour to work, not because of their choice, because they were not chosen. Just imagine these people, the landowner never came for these people. They would have gone home empty handed to their waiting families and their families would go hungry that day.

Another scenario, imagine these waiting people, the daily wages went home with say, half a denarius or even less. That would still make it very unjust for that family. So God sees things differently. The way God sees justice through this gospel we see, is that God fills us with what we need, what we lack and God's justice is filling us when we lack something. It's very difficult, very easy to judge. Why am I given less? Why are they given more? It's very easy to judge, but God looks at our needs differently. God has not been unfair to the first comers because they are given what they are promised.

One beautiful thing we see in the gospel today is that God comes back for those who are waiting. God knows that those people waiting there, need their wages to support their families. God never gives up on us. Sometimes the waiting might seem a bit longer, but God will come back for us and he will give us what is due to us. Dependence on God as daily wages was very, very important. Those people who depended on God received what they needed.

Are you feeling empty at times? Do you feel that you lack something? Do you feel that you have been waiting for a very long time for what you need? Don't give up because God does not give up on you.

God wants to fill you with his goodness. And sometimes it can be a long time, but remember, God knows our needs. God knows how to fill us. God knows how to make us whole again God knows our physical, spiritual and emotional needs, and he'll get back to us. But it is that sense of waiting just because you were not hired at the first instance, you just don't drop everything and walk away home empty handed. You hang in there. Sometimes it may be the 11th hour that God will fill you. So hang in there, just like, in the second reading, you know, we are like Saint Paul. We have to live a life according to the vision of Christ, even though at times it is difficult. So when he says avoid anything in your everyday lives, that would be unworthy of the gospel of Christ. And in today's context, it is never giving up, never giving up on God, because God never gives up on you.