

What shall we talk about today?

**Fairness**, perhaps.

The parable we just heard in the Gospel seems so unfair, doesn't it? Those who worked long hours got the same wage as those who worked a couple of hours. There's no place on earth that I know of that works that way.

**Difference**, perhaps.

God is God and we are not, Isaiah told the Israelites and us in the first reading:

**“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 thoughts.”**

Or, may be **detachment**.

**“For to me life is Christ, and death is gain,”** says St. Paul in the second reading.

**“If I go on living in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. And I do not know which I shall choose. I am caught between the two. I long to depart this life and be with Christ, for that is far better. Yet that I remain in the flesh is more necessary for your benefit.”**

It is obvious Paul would like to have died and gone to heaven to be with Christ. But he also wanted to be of service to anyone on earth who still might need him. And so, he was willing to stay on earth and put off his eternity with Christ until a later date.

And from all that we know about Paul, his life was a hard one, filled with hardships and many unpleasant happenings. He was willing to stay around for as long as anyone needed him, as long as God wanted him to. He placed himself at the service of God and people.

Many of us, maybe all of us, at times in our lives wish it were all over. We wish we could leave our troubles behind and get away from it all, even if it means dying. But do we want to get away and be with Christ whom we worship and who loves us more than we can ever imagine? As St. Paul was so in love with Jesus and desired to served the Lord that he wished he could soon be with Him in heaven.

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ:

Life is hard. We all know that. It's not going to get any easier. It's not going to get any easier. First of all, we are not going to get younger. And as we are aging, it is not difficult to get the mistaken message that we are no longer needed and feel so helpless facing a situation that seems insurmountable.

Our work is being shut down, our freedom chipped away, our finance depleted. Whatever maybe troubling us, whatever maybe making us begin to feel helpless and even useless, no longer needed, the truth is we just wanted escape what we feel we can't handle; we wanted a shortcut, a quick fix from this vale of tears.

In the past two days a young college age man whom I often saw sitting in our parking lot wandered aimlessly into the church looking for something. His looks had drastically changed. Once well kept, he now was filthy, haggard and emaciated. His physical appearance seemed to be eaten away by confusion, hunger and disorientation. I felt helpless and I wondered how many others are going through this time of confinement without any sign of hope.

As Catholics, we believe life is beautiful and worth-living. We believe as long as we are on earth God has the opportunity to be earth in each of us and through us touch others with His love.

Through us, God can be ever-present to His people and bring them His joy and a taste of His unending happiness. We are God's instruments. 'We are His hands, His feet, His eyes ...' said St. Teresa of Avila. We are members of Christ's Body.

We are unique and special and important. We are loved and cherished by God, individually and uniquely like no one else. And not only does God care so much for us but wants us to be together. That's why we are here at church today. And we are here not only for God but also for one another.

Like the workers in the vineyard in the Gospel, whether we are the faithful ones, whether we are the ones giving God a full day of work or the ones who have only given God a little effort, a little work, a little time, a little bit of ourselves, we are here to do what God is inviting us to.

And that means that we are the ones called and sent to show the world God's goodness, to shower God's blessings upon others, and do whatever we can to make things better for others. And most importantly, we are to love every person and in every situation, no matter how terrifically painful life is, no matter how helpless or useless we may feel.

As for me, I am haunted even now by the young man's lifeless demeanor. He has taught me a valuable lesson and reminded me of God's goodness that we are to be grateful and allow God and His Holy Spirit within us to carry out God's blessings we receive for the benefits of those around us and that makes all the difference in the here-and-now and in the hereafter. Amen.