

## Fr Ryan Homily 9/20/20

Read: Isaiah 55:6-9; Psalm 145:2-3, 8-9, 17-18; Philippians 1:20c-24, 27a;  
Matthew 20:1-16a

Jesus wants to annoy you today with this parable. He wants to provoke a reaction from you. The people who labored all day are disgruntled at the end and so are a lot of us when we hear this parable for the first time. We might think well that doesn't seem right. We might think that's not how you treat good and faithful workers who have been laboring for you all day. And it doesn't take an awful lot to figure out how this whole problem could've been avoided; just pay the one's who were there all day first, they're ecstatic and the landowner sends them away and they're happy. Once they're gone, then you pay those who showed up last and they're amazed that they received a full day's wage for just a couple of hours work. It would've been simple to avoid the problem. But the landowner doesn't do that. He has the first stand there the entire time and watch his generosity for the people who showed up last. Jesus is trying to provoke us with this. He wants us to react to it. He wants to see, and He wants you to see for yourself, if you really do grasp what His mercy is like. For those who have been doing nothing for the Lord, this parable can be a great comfort because they can say it's not too late. Just because I didn't start at the beginning doesn't mean I can't start now. And some have been idle for too long and this is a wake-up call. Jesus is saying begin now it's not too late come and work for me. For everyone else, this can be very agitating. And some might say I've been working hard for years for the Lord and this person who's been doing nothing their whole life can ask for forgiveness at the last moment and they get it? Come on. Then why was I working so long and so hard? And you can sum up that reaction in one word – it's envy. What's envy? Envy is not jealousy. What is jealousy? Jealousy is this. Jealousy is I wish I had the good that you have; I see you have it, I want it. That's jealousy. Envy is I am sad because of your good fortune. In fact, I hate you because God has blessed you in such a generous way. Seeing you flourish makes me miserable. That's envy. Now, envy in general it's already really bad, it's one of the seven deadly sins, it's not a good path to be on. But being envious because of how God distributes His mercy, now we're entering a whole new world of trouble, right? Our previous Holy Father Pope Benedict wrote about this passage and I love Pope Benedict's writings because he's so good at explanations and

commentaries on some rather challenging texts. And he wrote about this parable. I just wanna share a bit of what he said. He wrote "To often, Christians conceal a side-long glance at what we suppose to be the easier and more comfortable life of other people who are also gonna get to Heaven. We are too much like the workers taken on in the first hour whom the Lord talks about in His parable of the workers in the vineyard. When they realize that the days wage of one dinari is more easily earned they could no longer see why they sweated all day. Yet how could they have really been certain that it was so much more comfortable to be out of work than to work. And why was it that they were happy with their wages only on the condition that other people were worse off than they were. But the parable is not there on account of those workers at that time it is there for our sake. For in our raising the question about the why of Christianity, why do I have to do this if I don't have to, we're doing just what those workers did. We are assuming that spiritual unemployment, a life without faith and without prayer, is more pleasant than spiritual service. Yet how do we know that? We are staring at the trials of everyday Christianity and forgetting on that account that faith is not a burden that weighs us down it is a light that brings us council, gives us a path to follow and gives us meaning. We are seeing in the church only the exterior order that limits our freedom and thereby overlooking the fact that she is our spiritual home which shields us, keeps us safe in life and in death. We are seeing only our own burden and forgetting that other people also have burdens even if we know nothing of them. And above all, what a strange attitude that certainly is when we no longer find Christian service worthwhile if the dinari's of salvation may be obtained even without it. It seems as if we want to be rewarded not with just our own salvation but most especially with other people's damnation just like the workers hired at the first hour. That attitude is very human. But the Lord's parable is particularly meant to make us quite aware of how profoundly un-Christian it is at the same time. Anyone who looks at the loss of salvation for others as the condition, as it were, for which he serves Christ in the end will only be able to turn away grumbling. Because that kind of reward is contrary to the loving kindness of God." That was some of Pope Benedict's words, his commentary on this Gospel. So, this is a parable of the Kingdom. It forces us to ask why do I do what I do? Do we do it just for the reward? Or do we do it because we love God? Or what's another way to think about Pope Benedict's commentary on this Gospel. What's another way we can put some flesh and bones on it. Maybe we can think about it

like this. Who is the first person to go to Heaven after Jesus? Who was it? The good thief, right, he was right there. Died with Him. Jesus said you gonna be with me this day in paradise. He beat Jesus' mother to heaven. You ever think about that? The good thief was in Heaven before the Blessed Mother was. The Blessed Mother never did anything wrong from the moment of conception free of sin, never committed one sin and yet the good thief, who was a rotten scoundrel his whole life, got to go to Heaven before her. Hmmm. Now, do you think when Mary got to Heaven, she said you know what, I was good all my life, never committed a sin, and you're gonna let him in here before me? NO. Mary wouldn't do that because when you're in love it doesn't matter. There was no envy in Mary's heart. She didn't think well I'm less happy with how I live my life because he got in here too. Mary did what she did, she followed the Lord's commands, because she was motivated by love. And so it has to be with all of Christ's followers. Is living a life of faith burdensome to me? Do I scowl as I follow the commands knowing that others can be out there living a reckless life but could still be saved at the last moment? Because that wasn't Mary, right, she joyfully followed her Son. Is living a life of faith a joy for us as it was for her? Would we be ecstatic to find out that someone made it just by the skin of their teeth or would we be envious of that? So, what's the remedy for that type of envy that Pope Benedict kinda went through? What does Mary have that we all want and need? Well, it's gratitude. It's remembering all that God has done for me and for you. It's taking our eyes off those other workers in the vineyard and putting our eyes on Jesus and all that He has done and has promised to do for you. God owes us nothing and yet He's given us everything. And all of us are forever in His debt. So, let's all take to heart God's word today. Those who haven't been doing anything so far for the Lord, He says come to work. Those who have been working, maybe for a long time but seeing the job only as a burden envious of those out of work or arriving at the last hour, we ask Lord replace that heart of stone in me with a heart of mercy. Mary pray for me that I can look on others as you would've looked on the good thief so that I can say with St Paul life is Christ. And all I want is to know Him and to make Him happy by loving and serving Him.

Amen