

# ***ctkAlive!* Scripture Study**

## **25<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time 2020—A Cycle Readings**



Photo courtesy of [Maria Silva](#) via [unsplash.com](#)

*Note: For your convenience and to broaden your benefit from this and all sessions in this series, you will find links to books, authors, and other references mentioned in the text.*

*Caution: Links to the internet are like rabbits dashing across a hunter's path. Instinct says, "Leave the reflection and chase after that link!" Instead, we suggest waiting until you have followed the entire reflection. Then take all the time you wish to follow these interesting and educational links. Exception: In the course of the lesson, you may have an opportunity to watch or listen to a relevant song or video.*

### **Opening Prayer**

*(edited and abridged for use here)*

### **Laborers in God's Vineyard**

Lord Jesus, you came into this world to seek and save the lost.  
Show me how to share your loving invitation with them.  
Teach me, Good Lord, to serve you as you deserve;  
to give and not to count the cost;  
to fight and not to heed the wounds;  
to toil and not to seek rest;  
to labor without asking for reward,  
other than knowing I do your will.

Source: [Daily Prayers](#)

### **Introduction to the 25<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Both Paul and Matthew present us with dilemmas. Paul: Is it better to live or die?  
Matthew: Do I not have a valid gripe when God's generosity extends toward others clearly not as deserving as I am?

Isaiah 55: 6-9 “Yahweh says: my thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways are not your ways.”

How we wish it were the opposite! *My thoughts* being God’s thoughts; *my ways* God’s ways? The prophet tells us everything we need to know in one sentence: “Turn to Yahweh for he will have mercy, for our God is generous in forgiving.”

Good thing our God is “generous” and “forgiving.” It’s not easy for us.

Psalms 145:2-3, 8-9, 17-18 “(Yahweh) is near those who call on him, who call trustfully upon his name.”

This an intimate psalm. The author (not David) must have composed it in a time of special closeness to Yahweh. The central place of the ‘reign of God’ unites this psalm with Jesus’ core preaching about ‘the Kingdom of God,’ which must continue to grow in our fragile, inconsistent society.

Philippians 1: 20-24, 27 “Try, then, to adjust your lives according to the gospel of Christ.”

This letter is universally acknowledged as written directly by Paul. It’s personal and filled with close attention and tenderness. The Apostle wrote this letter during one of his multiple imprisonments. He addressed it to the community at Philippi that had always shown genuine concern for his well-being. More than once Paul counted on their material assistance, thereby showing his confidence in their willing generosity. By insisting on earning his own living as a tentmaker, he avoided suspicion of personal interest, when asking for donations.

Matthew 20: 1-16 “... the last will be first, the first will be last.”

Jesus spoke these words at the end of his “workers in the vineyard” parable. He thereby shattered any mistaken idea we may cling to that *we* have piled up more merits than others. God should favor us more for that.

Pay close attention to the story as Jesus compares several different groups of laborers. Matthew seems to compare “veteran” converts, who received the word of God in the early days of the Jesus Movement, to others only recently baptized into Christ. In this parable, *all* are treated on *equal terms*. Each worker in the vineyard received the agreed-upon silver coin. Matthew reminds us that *all* faithful Christians are equal in the sight of our Savior.

### **A Reading from the Book of Isaiah (55: 6-9)**

Seek Yahweh while he may be found;  
call to him while he is near.  
Let the wicked abandon his way,  
let him forsake his thoughts,  
let him turn to Yahweh for he will have mercy,  
for our God is generous in forgiving.  
My thoughts are not your thoughts,  
my ways are not your ways, says Yahweh.

For as the heavens are above the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways,  
and my thoughts above your thoughts.

### Personal Reflection

“Seek Yahweh while he may be found; call to him while he is near.”  
All of us experience times when God seems close to us. We enjoy the intimacy  
of that period.

— *How do I personally relate to the nearness/distance of God?  
Do I recall a specific time period during which I felt really close to God and God to me?  
What was going on in my life at that time? How might I describe my memory of that  
time? [Do this in writing if you can.]*

— *Recall another time when it seemed that God and I were “out of synch.” What was  
going on in my life at that time? How might I describe my memory of that period? [Do  
this in writing if you can.]*

### **Antiphon: Psalm 145 (2-3, 8-9, 17-18)**

In praise of God’s grandeur . . .

*The Lord is near to all who all who call upon him.*

I will extol you, my God and King;  
I will praise your name forever.  
I will praise you, day after day;  
and exalt your name forever.

*The Lord is near to all who all who call upon him.*

Compassionate and gracious is Yahweh,  
slow to anger and abounding in love.  
Yahweh is good to everyone;  
his mercy embraces all his creation.

*The Lord is near to all who all who call upon him.*

Righteous is Yahweh in all his ways,  
his mercy shows in all his deeds.  
He is near those who call on him,  
who call trustfully upon his name.

*The Lord is near to all who all who call upon him.*

## Personal Reflection

“Yahweh is good to everyone; his mercy embraces all creation.”

— *In this time of worldwide pandemic, how difficult is it for me to believe that God is “good to everyone” and “embraces all creation”?*

*“The Lord is near to all who call upon him.”*

— *What about those who do not believe in God, let alone “call upon him”? Is God near or far from them? Where do I place myself on the “nearness/distance” scale? What am I doing consciously each day to assure myself that I am not pushing God away? When I catch myself failing in this regard, what steps do I take to restore that nearness?*

## **Second Reading: From St. Paul’s Letter to the Philippians (1: 20-24, 27)**

“I am hopeful, even certain, that I shall not be ashamed. I feel as assured now, as before, that Christ will be exalted through my person, whether I live or die. For to me, living is for Christ and dying is even better. But if I am to go on living, I shall be able to enjoy fruitful labor. Which shall I choose? So, I feel torn between the two. I desire greatly to leave this life and to be with Christ, which will be better by far, but it is necessary for you that I remain in this life.

“Try, then, to adjust your lives according to the gospel of Christ. May I see it when I come to you, and if I cannot come, may I at least hear that you stand firm in the same spirit, striving to uphold the faith of the gospel with one heart.

## Personal Reflection

Paul finds himself “torn” between two goods, his day-to-day ministry and eternal life with Christ in heaven. He describes his dilemma in this way, “Which shall I choose [*life or death*]? I feel torn between the two.”

— *When in my life have I ever—like St. Paul—had to choose between two good options? What were they? Examples might be: choosing between two appealing job offers; trading in the independence of single life for marriage; the freedom of not having children and the joys of parenthood. What else \_\_\_\_\_? What did I choose? Why that choice? How has it work out?*

## **Proclamation from the Gospel according to Matthew (20: 1-16)**

“This story throws light on the kingdom of heaven:

“A landowner went out early in the morning, to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay each worker the usual daily wage and sent them to his vineyard.

“He went out again, at about nine in the morning, and, seeing others idle in the town square, he said to them, ‘You also, go to my vineyard, and I will pay you what is just.’ So they went.

“The owner went out at midday, and, again, at three in the afternoon, and he made the same offer.

“Again he went out, at the last working hour—the eleventh—and he saw others standing around. So he said to them, ‘Why do you stand idle the whole day?’

“They answered, ‘Because no one has hired us.’

“The master said, ‘Go, and work in my vineyard.’

“When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wage, beginning with the last and ending with the first.’

Those who had gone to work at the eleventh hour came up and were each given a silver coin. When it was the turn of the first, they thought they would receive more. But they, too, received one silver coin.

“On receiving it, they began to grumble against the landowner. They said, ‘These last, hardly worked an hour; yet, you have treated them the same as us, who have endured the heavy work of the day and the heat.’

“The owner said to one of them, ‘Friend, I have not been unjust to you. Did we not agree on one silver coin per day? So, take what is yours and go. I want to give to the last the same as I give to you. Don’t I have the right to do as I please with what is mine? Why are you envious when I am kind?’

“So will it be: the last will be first, the first will be last.”

### Personal Reflection

If you’d like to begin this gospel reflection by watching the two videos recommended later in this commentary, here they are:

First, “[The Parable of The Laborers In The Vineyard](#)” a dramatization of Matthew 20: 1-16, from [BibleVideos.org](#) (3 min.)

— *How do I feel about deathbed confessions and last-minute conversions? Do I feel cheated for living a life of fidelity (considering all the “fun” I might have missed)?*

*Are late and last-minute conversions (repentance) unfair on God’s part? (An example is the 4<sup>th</sup> century “Christian” Emperor Constantine who is said to have waited until his dying moments to be baptized.)*

Next, a “man on the street” asks young passersby for their opinion in “[The Parable of The Workers in the Vineyard](#)” (3 min. 44 secs).

— *Would I take a job in a company knowing that all employees, from the janitor to the CEO, were paid very generous but identical salaries with any future raises and bonuses being equally distributed? Why or why not?*

### **Shelter-in-Place**

Jesus cares not about political parties or their platforms, but only about justice and the common good of all peoples. Presidential and other positions and propositions are less than eight weeks away. Given that no candidate for any office, national or local, is perfect, let alone a “living saint,” our choices call for thoughtful spiritual discernment.

— *Since voting is a privilege, a right, and a sacred act, what provisions am I making to see that my ballot is safely cast or delivered to the appropriate place?*

— *How open am I to weighing the pros and cons of each candidate I vote for? If I prefer to vote strictly along party lines, how do I justify that?*

(From last week) “What would Jesus do?” (WWJD) is a popular saying. If I’m a “single party” or “single issue” voter, perhaps this quote from the late Fr. Brian Joyce will help: “What would Jesus want **me** to do” in the coming elections? How sure am I that my vote represents what Jesus would want me to do?

Write about your feelings and your lived experience of these issues during your journaling time (below).

### **Journaling Prompts**

What insights have I gained from reflecting on the readings for the 25<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time in light of my current social demands and restrictions. Suggested prompt:

— *After reflecting on the three readings, what made the deepest impression on me?*

We mustn’t simply be grateful “recipients” of God’s good gifts. We need to be “givers,” too.

— *How will this week’s Scriptures and current societal events impact the way I think, live, love—and “give back”—during the week ahead?*

## **For Inspirational Viewing / Listening / Reading**

Watch/Listen:

“[The Parable of The Laborers In The Vineyard](#)” dramatization of Matthew 20: 1-16, from [BibleVideos.org](#) (3 min.)

“[The Parable of The Workers in the Vineyard](#)”—Man on the street asks passersby to comment on the parable (worth a look). *If I'd been interviewed, what would I have said about the fairness of the vineyard owner?*

### **Preview of Next Session**

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Ezekiel 18: 25-28 “You say: ‘The Lord’s way is not fair.’”

Psalm 25: 4-9 “Your ways, O Lord, make known to me.”

Letter of St. Paul to the Philippians 2: 1-11 “Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory.”

Matthew 21: 28-32 “Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people . . . ‘A man had two sons. . . .’”

### **Closing Prayer**

*(edited and abridged for use here)*

#### **A Prayer for Humility**

by [Mark Fortino](#)

*(Pray along with the composer as he sings the prayer.)*

Mighty God and gentle Lamb, Lord of all creation  
How we long to know You, how we strive to serve You.  
Help us now to love You even more.

Give us humble hearts to praise You,  
And listening ears to hear Your voice,  
Willing hands to serve You,  
Thankful spirits to rejoice.

Lord of all, we adore You  
And we bring this prayer before You.  
Create in us, humble hearts.

When our thoughts turn proud,  
Remind us of the grace You freely give.  
When we lose our way, Lord, find us.  
Draw us close to You again.

Give us humble hearts to praise You,  
And listening ears to hear Your voice,  
Willing hands to serve You,  
Thankful spirits to rejoice.

Lord of all, we adore You  
And we bring this prayer before You.  
Create in us, humble hearts.  
Amen

### **Questions?**

Send any questions or comments you might have to [algarrotto@comcast.net](mailto:algarrotto@comcast.net)

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