

BRINGING HOME THE GOSPEL

September 24, 2023 • 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time • Matthew 20:1-16b

Generosity

Jesus balances last week's parable about the justice of God with this week's story about God's generosity. The parable is about a landowner who goes out to hire workers for his fields. Some people are hired early in the day; others are hired to work only the last hour. At the end of the day, all are paid the same. Those who worked the whole day are upset.

In all honesty, this Gospel story always caused me concern. I found myself on the side of the workers who had labored all day. When I listened to my inner voice, I sounded like a four-year-old, "That's not fair!" Then one Sunday a priest told a story in his homily that helped me understand the parable a little better. I'll share it with you.

A middle-aged husband and wife both die, and find themselves surrounded by a large crowd standing in front of the pearly gates. An angel behind the gates tells the crowd that the gates to heaven will be opened at any moment, and eternal judgment will begin.

The husband gets more and more agitated as time passes and as he looks around at the crowd. "Good grief," he tells his wife, "there's George Walton, one of the biggest frauds in the state. What is he doing here in front of heaven's gates? Does he honestly think he has a chance of making it in?" "Oh no," he continues, "there's the assassin Oswald. And is that Adolph Hitler in the corner there waiting to be let in? This is ludicrous," he continues, "Those three should be sweltering in hell. What is God thinking of letting them even near the gates to heaven and close to good folks like us?"

At that moment, the man hears the booming voice of God telling him he has just passed judgment on himself, and he has failed. In questioning God's love and generosity, he has shown his own lack of both. He was refused entrance through the pearly gates.

Jesus is clear in the parable of the landowner that God's love and generosity is not to be questioned. We are all on the receiving end of what was promised. God's generosity is something to celebrate, even if we are not the ones on the receiving end at that particular moment.

FAMILY RESPONSE

Ask each family member to name a gift they received from God. If they were God, what gift would they give to each family member?

PERSONAL RESPONSE

What gift would you give each family member? What would you give yourself? What do you want to remember from last week? What are you looking forward to next week? What are your concerns?