

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

[Reading I: Is 55:6-9](#)

[Responsorial Psalm: Ps 145:2-3, 8-9, 17-18](#)

[Reading II: Phil 1:20c-24, 27a](#)

[Gospel: Mt 20:1-16a](#)

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/092423.cfm>



This portion of Isaiah was initially addressed to the Israelite community during the Babylonian Exile and was calling them to repent and turn back to God. They do not need to fear for God's ways are different from human ways. When they turn to God, they will find acceptance and life. God's forgiveness and generosity far exceed what humans can imagine. Rather than being focused on sin and wrongdoing or avoiding God, the prophet invites us to experience the joy, the renewal, and the fullness of life that comes with turning toward God. The preceding verses describe the lavish banquet that God has prepared. "Come buy grain without paying, drink wine and milk without cost." (Is 55:1) All are invited to share in this banquet.

The gospel passage continues this theme of generosity. Salvation is not achieved but received as a gift. This passage follows Jesus' interaction with the rich young man whom Jesus invited to come follow him. He unfortunately was too attached to his possessions. Peter asks Jesus what will come to the disciples who have given up everything to follow him. Peter betrays the assumption that the giving up of the disciples has earned them something. Jesus assures them that they will receive more than they can image but it will be a gift, not something they have earned.

In Matthew's use of the parable, it may reflect the struggle that life-long pious members of the Jewish community raised about tax-collectors, prostitutes, and gentiles responding to the message of Jesus and the early church. Their concern was that we have kept the law and worked hard to avoid those practices all their life. It is not fair that these people can claim a relationship with God without all the rules we understand to be commanded by God and receive salvation so easily. It is available to all who are willing to accept it no matter when someone comes to a decision. If one responds to God's call, God is ready to give salvation, even to those who wait until the end of their life.

The invitation to be a disciple is a gift. The invitation to life in the reign of God is a gift. Salvation is a gift. There is no earning salvation. The primordial recognition of spiritual life is that we cannot do it on our own. We need God to gift us and help us. Secondly, it is essential to recognize that God is active in our lives and desires to help us. There is no earning God's help nor any requisite activities. God desires only sincerity; God provides the rest. The various Christian practices flow from God's life and power within us.

Once we enter into God's life through God's gift, our behaviors flow from that life. A Christian lives virtue because of God's grace, not to earn God's grace. A Christian life flows from God's work in us. God empowers us to be faithful, to be loving, and to forgive. One must continue to grow in awareness of God through the people one meets, the events in one's life, and the opportunities that arise each day. Through this awareness, we can draw upon God's gifts to live in a way that manifests God's life.

After sixteen weeks of reading from Paul's letter to the Romans, the second reading for the next four weeks comes from Paul's letter to the Philippians. Philippi was a prominent Greek City in the Northeastern part of Greece in an agricultural area and near gold deposits. It was an ancient city that Philip II of Macedonia renamed for himself.

The letter to the Philippians is probably a combination of three letters from Paul that were merged to preserve them. Our section today comes after Paul described his ministry while imprisoned, probably in Ephesus, around the year 55. Paul does not know what his future holds, so he ponders both what his martyrdom and his freedom would mean. If he dies, it will offer a great witness that he would give to Christ, and it would mean full union with Christ for him. If he is released, it will enable him to continue the mission of Christ of sharing the Good News of God's saving work in Jesus. Both are valuable. Ultimately, Paul says that what is most important is "Life is Christ." In every aspect of life, we are to reflect Christ both in furthering the mission of Christ and in dying like Christ with complete trust in God.

Themes:

Quest for God and meaning
Divine ways and human ways

Salvation as gift
Spiritual Journey

Reflection Questions:

Who or what helped you when you sought God in your life? How do you seek God today?

How do you react to the parable of the laborers?

As you think about your relationship with God, do you start by trying to please God to get something, or do you look for God's gift to you?

What are the tensions that Paul feels in his situation? What tensions do you feel in your life today in striving to follow Christ?

What does "conducting yourself in a way worthy of the gospel of Christ" mean to you?

Prayer Suggestions:

For the Church: that we may humbly accept God's gift of salvation and recognize that each day is a gift from God to us

For all who are seeking God: that the Spirit of God will lead them into an encounter with God and open them to God's presence and action in their lives

For the grace to prefer nothing to Christ: that we may live each day striving to be faithful disciples through trusting in God's providence and showing love and compassion to all who enter our lives

For freedom from envy: that we may appreciate the gifts and blessings that others receive and rejoice in the good they experience

For all who are approaching death, those with terminal illnesses, and those who care for them: that they may approach death as a gain and prefer Christ before all else