

Septuagesima
St. Matthew 20:1-16
February 13th, 2022
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald Dulas

You Also Go into the Vineyard

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Merciful God and Father, we give Thee most hearty thanks that in Thy Word Thou hast graciously revealed the goal toward which we should bend all our endeavor; and we humbly beseech Thee, keep and direct us by Thy Holy Spirit upon the way of truth, that, when our course is run, we may obtain the crown of righteousness; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for His Vineyard. Said another way, the Church is the Lord + Jesus inviting poor, miserable sinners to come and receive His wonderful gifts through the work of the Holy Ghost through the means of grace. We have been invited into the Church to find comfort for our sin-wearied souls. We have been called into the Church so that all boasting of our merits may be abolished, so that we may not think there is any work in us that can be exalted to Heaven by which we may boast of doing the work of our own salvation. The Lord + Jesus through the preaching of the Gospel, both the preaching of the Law and the preaching of the comforting words of our Lord's salvation alone, brings low those filled with pride in their own works, but He also raises up those who have been humbled by the weight of their own sinfulness.

The Landowner—the Lord + Jesus—has called us to work in the Vineyard of the Church by saying to us, “You also go into the Vineyard.” This call and invitation has come through the preaching of the Gospel. It has come through the means of grace—by Holy Baptism, Absolution, the Sacrament of the Altar, and wherever two or three are gathered together in the Lord + Jesus Christ's Name. By these means the Holy Ghost creates and sustains faith in us. He enlivens us to receive the gifts of the Lord + Jesus; the gifts He won for us by His atoning sacrifice on the tree of the holy cross: forgiveness, life and salvation. He freely gives these gifts to us poor sinners.

To show how abundantly our Lord + Jesus is with His gifts, our Lord tells us the parable of the workers in the Vineyard today from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew. Those who worked only one hour received the same wage as those who had borne the burden and heat of the day—who had worked a full day's labor. Is it not lawful for the Lord + Jesus to give to the last man the same as the first? Is it not lawful for the Lord to be gracious and abundant with His own things? The Lord + Jesus desires to be abundant with His gifts of forgiveness and life with all men. He wishes to give to the last, just as He would the first. All those who abide in the Vineyard of the Church are gifted abundantly and graciously with the Lord's gifts. He gives to all of us freely forgiveness, life and salvation.

This is the lesson that the Lord + Jesus would have us learn today. That if we have been called and invited into the Church by the means of grace, whether we are the most holy person there is, or whether we are the most lowly and miserable sinner, His grace is abundant for us. His mercy and compassion is abundant upon all of us poor, miserable sinners.

Those in the parable who had borne the burden and heat of the day; those who had agreed to work for a denarius for the whole day are jealous because they feel they deserve more than what is promised to them. The problem, though, is not that the Landowner is stingy with His possessions. The fact that He gives the same wage to the men who only labored one hour is proof of that. No, the problem is that those men who had borne the burden and heat of the day had evil eyes. They sought something that did not belong to them. They were covetous of the grace that were shown the other workers. They lustfully desired more than was coming to them. This is how it is with the prideful. They believe they are deserving of the best of things. But they fail to learn the lesson that our Lord + Jesus would have us learn. They fail to see how abundantly merciful our Lord + Jesus desires to be with all men.

The Lord + Jesus desires that all men be saved; that all men hear the invitation to come and work and dwell in the Vineyard of the Church. He desires to give all men the denarius of eternal life. This is why He has come into the marketplace of the world. It is why He has humbled Himself and taken upon Himself our very flesh. He has become man so that He might lead us into Heaven. He has come down from Heaven to take us back into Heaven with Him. This is why in the parable the Landowner continually keeps returning to the marketplace—why the Holy Ghost is continually being sent out into this world today—to continue to invite and call poor sinners into the Church.

The stewards of the Landowner—His holy ministers—daily stand at the altar of the Lord + Jesus and give the laborers their wages. The ministers of the Lord—His stewards of the mysteries of the Lord God—had out the means of grace to weary and sin-sick laborers who need to hear time and again that their sins are forgiven them, for the devil and the world, and even our own flesh, is constantly warring against us to try to deceive us into thinking we are either to be exalted above what we deserve and are worthy of more than we are, or they lead us into despair thinking we do not deserve anything which our Lord + Jesus would graciously give to us.

This is why the last will be first and the first last. Many who exalt themselves because of the works they perceive in themselves will be brought low on the Last Day, for they shamefully trusted in their own works. This rightfully should put fear into us. We should fear pride in ourselves, for pride makes us think we are better than we actually are. Pride makes us forget our sin. It makes us forget that no matter how well we keep the Law—no matter how good we think we are at obeying the Ten Commandments—we are still filled with corruption; we still possess the original sin of Adam which condemns us all. This is why our Lord preaches this Law to us today, so that we may humble ourselves and remember that salvation is not found in our good works, but in Him and His works and merits alone.

The opposite is also true of the last. Those who are brought low by the weight of their sin—by the weight of the accusations of their conscience and the devil and the world—have no need to fear. Those of us who feel that we are unworthy on account of our manifold daily transgressions have no need to fear. For the Lord + Jesus has already borne the burden and heat of our punishment on the tree of the holy cross. He atoned for our sins by His suffering and death. We are justified when we cling to His works in faith. We are made right with the Lord God when we cling in faith to what our Lord + Jesus has done for us.

He suffered and died for all mankind. He desires to give to all mankind forgiveness, life and salvation; even to us poor, miserable sinners. Therefore, my dear friends, rejoice when you hear this parable spoken for our benefit today, for the promise has been made that our Lord + Jesus is a gracious and abundant giver of His gifts. No matter how high or how low we may think we are, the Lord + Jesus

is standing in the marketplace of the world to call us to labor in the Vineyard of the Church. He wants to give us the great reward that He has won for us by His death on the cross. He is truly the refuge of the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. He will not forsake those who through faith seek Him and cling to Him. Those who have need of the salvation found only in Him will never be forgotten by Him. Those who are poor in spirit, brought low by the weight of their sins, will prevail, for our Lord + Jesus desires this for us greatly.

Out of the depths of our sin-beaten consciences we have cried to our Lord + Jesus. He has heard our voices, and has come down from Heaven to purchase us with His very own blood shed on the holy cross. In the Lord's Supper we remember and proclaim this sacrifice of His. We drink His Blood and eat His Body in bread and wine, and receive the forgiveness of our sins. We do this as family—as the family of the Lord God. We unite together in one fellowship and share with one another our burdens of sin and shame, and we come together before the throne of our Lord's grace and receive from Him the great reward—the denarius—of forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation.

Therefore, my dear friends, you also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right, you will receive. The Lord + Jesus calls and invites us all to join Him in the Church today, so that He may richly reward us poor sinners with life and salvation, because He is abundant and gracious with His things and desires to do good toward us. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, Heavenly Father, who in the last hour of time hast called us into Thy vineyard, and of Thy grace given us our unearned penny in all manner of temporal and spiritual goods: Grant, we beseech Thee, that, trusting only in Thy mercy, we may at all times in patience and humility render unto Thee cheerful and patient service and never murmur against Thy goodness, to the end that we may not be denied by Thee and rejected, but continue in Thy household, and glorify and praise Thy marvelous grace; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!