

Septuagesima Sunday
St. Matthew 20:1-16
February 16th, 2025
St. Bartholomew Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Fort Myers, FL
Pastor Jerald Dulas

It Is My Will

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“But he answered and said to one of them, ‘Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a shilling? Take up that which is thine, and go thy way; it is my will to give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? or is thine eye evil, because I am good?’”

Prayer in Pulpit before 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.

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

My dear friends, in the close of the Commandments our heavenly Father refers to Himself as a “jealous God.” We often equate jealousy as having a negative connotation. For us it is wrong to be jealous. Why then would our heavenly Father call Himself a “jealous God?” Our Lord God Who is holy and perfect can have perfect jealousy. He can have a jealousy that is not sinful. When He calls Himself a “jealous God” He means that He wants us to have no other god but Him. He does not want us chasing after false gods which cannot help, nor save us. Only He can grant us forgiveness of our sins. Only He can protect us from evil. Only He can give us all that is good and right to help and support this body and life He has gifted us with. No other god which we chase after can do this for us. Indeed, all other gods are no gods at all, for there exists only One True God.

Therefore, our heavenly Father would have us cling to Him alone. In other words, His jealousy is for our benefit. He is jealous for us so that we may have a True God and He may grant us all the gifts that He so willingly and lovingly desires to give to us. This is why for us jealousy has a negative connotation. We are jealous not because we care about the other person, but because we feel like we have been slighted by them in some way. They have put the wool over our eyes in some way, and so we hate them in jealousy. Our jealousy is dripping with hatred and greed. Our Lord’s jealousy is filled with love and compassion for us.

This is pictured for us in the parable for today from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew. We have today our Lord + Jesus telling us the parable of the workers in the vineyard. The workers are all the Christians who have been called out of the marketplace of the world (where before we were called

we stood around idle) and brought into the vineyard of the Church. Those outside of the Church stand around idle chasing after all the false idols. These idols are useless and do not produce any harvest. They are a waste of our time. And we waste our time when we chase after false gods. But the Householder, our heavenly Father, called us out of the marketplace of the world by the pure preaching of the Word of the Lord God, and by our participation in the Blessed Sacraments. The Holy Ghost, by the Word, implanted faith in us so that we desired to be in the vineyard of the Church. We desired to work for the Householder.

In this the Householder, our heavenly Father, shows His love and compassion for us. He shows that He is jealous for us to be benefited by being in the vineyard of the Church. He cares that we have employment and all the good gifts that come from a life not lived in laziness and idleness. This employment, this work in the vineyard is not the work of good works. It is not doing works to prove our righteousness. For no work that we do could ever produce enough righteousness for us to be saved on account of it. No, the work that we do is the same work for which we gather here in this place today. We come to receive the gifts of our Triune Lord God. We come to receive forgiveness of our sins, to be reminded that we have an eternal home in Heaven awaiting us. We come to be renewed and strengthened from our daily fight against all that is evil in our life and in this world. Here in this place, we are reminded that our Lord God has already fought the good fight for us, and has conquered once and for all every one of our enemies.

Thus, our heavenly Father, the Householder, shows His love and compassion for us by calling us to work in His vineyard. To further illustrate how much the Householder burns with jealousy for us poor, miserable sinners, our Lord + Jesus in the parable tells us that He did not go out just once or twice, but throughout the full day the Householder sought to bring in workers into the vineyard. He is continually calling poor, lost sinners out of their sin and shame into the gracious Kingdom of the Church. He continues to show compassion for this world so that it may turn from their sinfulness and cling in faith to Him alone; to have Him alone as their Lord and God.

Throughout the day workers pile into the vineyard. The work of the Church continues with more workers being called throughout the entire day. It is only the first group called with which the Householder agreed to a specific wage, "a shilling." In the Greek, this word is "a denarius" the standard wage for a day's pay. In the parable our Lord + Jesus points out that there was an agreement with this first group. They believed they were receiving a fair wage, and the Householder believed He was paying a fair wage. The word in that is used in the English is "agreed." This word in the Greek is "symphony." A symphony is an agreement in sounds that produces a pleasing harmony for us to hear. This was the level of agreement that the first workers had with the Householder. They were happy to receive the wage agreed upon.

But the others called at the third, sixth, ninth, and eleventh hours had no such agreement with the Householder. They only received the promise of a fair wage. They were just happy to be out of the marketplace; to no longer be standing around idle. They were happy to work in the vineyard for whatever wage the Householder would give them. Everything seems to be going well with everyone involved until the end of the day when it came time to hand out the wages.

The Householder told the steward to call the laborers and give them their wages starting with the last ones called to the first ones called. These last ones each received a shilling, a penny, a denarius. These last ones received the same wage that was agreed upon by the workers who were called first. The first workers thought they would receive more, even though they had agreed to the fair wage at the beginning of the day. Here is where jealousy comes into play. These first workers were jealous of the last workers because they received the same wage. They felt that they had been slighted by the Householder. They were angry at Him and the last workers. This is what our jealousy does. We do not like it that some other person may benefit greater than ourselves. We want to be seen as the

one on the top; as the best person; to receive the greater reward.

The scribes and Pharisees were jealous of the tax collectors, prostitutes, and other sinners, who had repented of their sins, and clung in faith to the Lord + Jesus for salvation. They hated these new converts because it took the focus off of them, and put it on others. This happens often when there are lifelong members of a congregation, and new members join. There is a tendency for some of them to be jealous of the new members, because much more attention is focused on the new arrivals. Those fresh off of a life lived in sin need more attention than those who have lived a life a faith all their lives, for these new ones are often like newborn babies. They need the same amount of attention as a newborn baby would need. Otherwise, they would quickly suffer and die.

But we are selfish people, and we want to be the focus and have the attention on us. Well, except maybe the introverts. The point is that jealousy when it is self-seeking is dangerous to us. Our jealousy should be for the good of the other person. We should desire for them to have the same love and adoration of the heavenly Father that we have. To put it in terms of the parable, the first workers should have been happy that the last workers received the same wage. They should have seen how loving and compassionate the Householder was; how generous and benevolent He truly was.

Our heavenly Father is a jealous God. He desires that we have Him only as our god. For it is only from Him that we receive the wages for working in the vineyard. It is only through Him that we have forgiveness, life, and salvation. Let us, my dear friends, share that same jealousy for our brothers and sisters in Christ. Let us be jealous for their redemption. Let us desire that they share with us in all the gifts that our Lord God has promised for us. When we are jealous in this way, the Church grows and is strengthened, for no person is seeking His own rewards, but he is seeking the benefit of all those who grace themselves by coming into our midst.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us rejoice that we have a jealous God Who only wants us to worship and adore Him. And let us give thanks that He continues to call workers into His vineyard. These are our fellow workers, who will also receive the same wage that we will receive. Let us be jealous for each other so that we may help and assist each and everyone of us to enter into that heavenly abode that has been promised to us. For those who we worship with in this life, will be the same ones with which we worship the Lamb of God in His Kingdom for all eternity. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord + Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same + Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the 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!