

**Church of the Divine Love**

**SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

**SEPTEMBER 24, 2023 10:15 AM**

**HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II**

Prayer before worship – on insert

THE WORD OF GOD

Processional Hymn #

Opening Acclamation page 355

Collect for Purity page 355

Gloria (sung) page 356

Collect of the Day - lectionary sheet insert

First Lesson: **Jonah 3:10-4:11**

Psalm 145:1-8

Second Lesson: **Philippians 1:21-30**

Gradual Hymn #

Gospel: **Matthew 20:1-16**

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze (printed on insert)

The Nicene Creed page 358

Prayers of the People, Form VI page 392

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn #

Doxology (sung)

The Great Thanksgiving:	
Eucharistic Prayer A	page 361
Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal)	page 367
Hymn during Consecration – on insert	
The Lord’s Prayer	page 364
The Breaking of the Bread, Anthem & Prayer	page 337
The Communion of the People	
Communion Hymn #	
Post Communion Prayer	page 365
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Dismissal Hymn –	
Dismissal	

### **Sermon Sunday September 24, 2023**

Jonah 3:10-4:11; Psalm 145:1-8; Philippians 1:21-30; Matthew 20:1-16.

#### **Sisters and brothers in Christ,**

We could all tell our own version and experience of this parable. We know people who, in our not so humble opinion, neither earned nor deserved what they got; a job, a promotion, a raise, recognition, happiness, success. That we worked longer and tried harder seemed to make no difference. More often than not we view the world, ourselves, and others through the lens of fairness rather than grace, the exact opposite of how God views the world and our lives.

We have been taught from an early age that fairness matters. Watch a bunch of children play and it won’t be long before you hear someone say, “That’s not fair!” So, it wasn’t fair the night my grandmother gave me twelve lima beans and my sister got only eight. That I actually counted the beans on our plates and that I still remember that night suggests how deeply ingrained within us is the concept of fairness. Maybe it’s just me, but I don’t think so. I am willing to bet that you too in some ways have

counted lima beans! It's not just children. Adults want fairness too. Too often, however, fairness rather than love, acceptance, mercy, forgiveness, or generosity is the measure by which we act and judge another person or life circumstances.

We like fairness, I think, because it gives us some assurance of order, predictability, control, and hierarchy; even if it is a false assurance. Fairness is based on what you deserve, how hard you work, what you achieve, the way in which you behave. Sometimes it is fair to give a reward other time a punishment. We live in and promote a wage-based society in which you earn what you get. You deserve the consequences, good or bad, of your actions. What happens though when divine goodness trumps human fairness? You get today's parable. Today's parable suggests wages and grace stand in opposition to each other. They are two opposing world views. The degree to which this parable strikes us as unfair is the degree to which our life and world view is wage based. A wage-based world view allows little room for grace in our own lives or the lives of others.

Grace is dangerous. It reverses business as usual. "So, the last will be first, and the first will be last." That's not how a wage-based society works. The world says the last are last and the first are first because they deserve it. It's what is fair. Our understanding of fairness, however, does not seem to have priority in the kingdom of heaven where grace is the rule not the exception. Grace looks beyond our productivity, our appearance, our dress, our race or ethnicity, our accomplishments, our failures. Grace recognizes there is more to you and who you are than what you have done or left undone. Grace reveals the goodness of God. Wages reveal human effort. Grace seeks unity and inclusion. Wages make distinctions and separate. Grace just happens. Wages are based on merit. The only precondition of grace is that we show up and open ourselves to receive what God is giving. When we do we begin to see our lives, the world, our neighbor differently.

Grace reminds us that we are not nearly as self-sufficient, deserving, or independent as a wage-based society would like us to believe. Neither is our worth determined by our productivity or usefulness to another. Grace does not justify or excuse discrimination, unfairness, or oppression. To the contrary it holds before us the truth that each person is more than their behavior, their looks, their accomplishments, or their failures. The tragedy of a wage-based life is that it blinds us to the presence of grace, the life of God, in our own life. It can make us resentful of grace, goodness, and beauty in the life of another. It separates and isolates us from others. Eventually we set up standards and expectations not only for ourselves and others but for God. That's what happened to the first hired in today's parable. They saw themselves as different from and more deserving than the later hired. They grumbled against the landowner saying, "These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us." The truth is they are not that different from each other. Neither group owned the vineyard. Both groups needed a job and both groups were chosen, invited in, by no effort of their own doing. There is, however, something that distinguishes the first hired and the later hired.

The distinction is not what time they showed up to work. The real distinction between the first hired and

all the later hired is the terms under which they entered the vineyard. The first hired entered the vineyard only after agreeing to the usual daily wage. They settled for too little. They shortchanged themselves. That's often what happens in a wage-based society. Apparently, the landowner is willing to pay more than the usual daily wage. A full day's wage for less than a full day's work. "That's not fair," we might say. No, it's not. That's grace.

The first hired got what they bargained for. The later hired workers, those who come at 9:00 a.m., noon, 3:00 p.m., even 5:00 p.m., did not, however, negotiate for the usual daily wage. They entered the vineyard trusting they would be paid whatever is right. Whatever is right is not determined by the first hired or by a wage-based society but by the goodness of the landowner. These later hired workers received more than they earned, more than they deserved, more than they had a right to ask or hope for. That's just what God does. Whatever is right isn't about fairness but about grace. Why settle for the usual daily wage when God wants to give you whatever is right for your life, your needs, your salvation? Whatever is right will always be more than fair, more than we could ask or imagine. Yet we sometimes trust a wage-based life more than we trust grace. In so doing we deny ourselves and others the life God wants to give. So how might we begin to move from a wage-based life to the vineyard of grace?

Stop comparing yourself and your life to others and you will create room for grace to emerge. Refuse to compete in such a way that someone must lose for you to win. Trust that in God's world there is enough for everyone. Let go of expectations based on what you think you or others deserve. Give God the freedom to pay whatever is right knowing that God's ways are not your ways. Make no judgments of yourself or others. That is the way of grace, the way of God.

Imagine if we all let go of those four things; comparison, competition, expectation, and judgment. Your life would be God-filled, you would make space for the life of another to be God-filled, and the world would, the parable tells us, look a lot like the kingdom of heaven. The Kingdom of God belongs to those who believe in Jesus Christ, whether they are a Jew or a Gentile. Dear Jesus, all of us receive the same grace, the same love, the same inheritance in heaven. Use this beautiful parable about your equal grace to unequal people to jar me out of my natural inclination to compare my life to others. Help me freely love, forgive and hold grace out to everyone without discrimination regarding their sins or spiritual stature. **Amen!**

17 PENTECOST	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II	(also on zoom)
		COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS	
	11:30 AM	VESTRY MEETING	
MONDAY	8:30 PM	AA MEETING	

WEDNESDAY 7:00 PM AL-ANON

THURSDAY 10AM-2PM THRIFT SHOP  
8:30 PM AA MEETING

SATURDAY 10AM-2PM THRIFT SHOP

18 PENTECOST 10:15 AM HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II (also on zoom)  
COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS

	Today	Next Week
Eucharistic Minister	Deb Giordano	Roe Prosser
Coffee Hour	Prossers	Janet Croft

SUPPORT THE FOOD PANTRY – DROP-OFF IN THE KITCHEN

### PARISH PRAYER LIST

Loving God, comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit. Give them courage and hope in their troubles and bring them the joy of your salvation. Especially we remember before you:

Grace Schinella

Lourdes S.

Kaylee

Bob Curley

Arlene Goodenough

Art

Chris Dickson	Kate Jones	Deb P.
Michael Echevarria	John Rocco	Bethany
Joan Blan	Warren	Kristen
Charlotte H.	Bernie Walther	Anthony
Mo (Rachael)	Phil Ryder	Carolyn
Anthony Paribello	Barbara Curran	Del
Robert Hosey	Robert Sweat	Aidan
Sally & Roger	Sophia	Carol K.
Mary & Family	Christopher	Amy
Nathan Treadwell	Vincent	Judy
Michael & Family	Celeste	Ciara
Donna Amundsen	Margaret G. and Baby	

All people and countries suffering from violence, hatred  
and natural disasters.

Help us speak words of encouragement and offer deeds of kindness to them.  
Bring us with them, into the unending joy of your kingdom. Amen

Prayer before Worship

Almighty God, who pours out on all who desire it, the  
spirit of grace. Deliver us, when we draw near to you,  
from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind, that

with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may  
worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ  
our Lord. Amen

Hymn to be sung during the consecration:

Father I adore you,  
Lay my life before you,  
How I love you.

Repeat twice with second verse starting with Jesus  
and third verse starting with Spirit.

Prayer for Peace

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn  
but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So  
mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that  
all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince  
of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominions  
and glory, now and for ever. Amen