

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A) Homily
St. William, Champion | September 20, 2020 | Deacon Bob Mintus
Is 55:6-9 | Phil1:20C-24, 27A | Mt 20:1-16A

This past weekend, I enjoyed the opportunity to watch football again. But as I was watching, there were times when I thought to myself, “Why don’t they do this instead? Why do they keep trying to run the ball?” Part of the fun of sports includes trying to think about where the coaches and players could do things differently. And it’s funny to think that for most armchair quarterbacks, we watch a couple of games each week, and we think we know more about the game than coaches and players who are paid millions of dollars, many of whom have been involved with the game since their teens. These are professionals who eat, drink, and sleep football, many of them putting in 60-80 hours each week to get ready for the next game. To be honest, many of these people have probably forgotten more about the game than many of us watching on the sidelines will ever know. That is the kind of difference that the prophet Isaiah speaks of when he says that God’s ways are so high above our ways.

Our Gospel today gives us an idea of how different our minds are from the mind of God. The parable of the landowner and the workers is one that is familiar to most of us. And still, every time I read this Gospel, I keep wondering why God treats all the workers the same. Was this parable addressed to the pious people who were following Jesus, but were intolerant or looked down on those who they considered to be less virtuous? Or was it written to those who were of Jewish background and didn't want to share the Messiah with those who were Gentiles?

In fact, the parable gives us a view of what it will be like when we come to meet God at the end of our earthly journey. I suspect that some people will be very surprised, if not shocked, when they find out who will be spending eternity with them in Heaven. We may find that there are convicted criminals and other people who we might not think of as worthy. Yet we are reminded that God's grace reaches out to all people and it is possible for someone to turn to Him even right at the very end of their life. But just like the audience who heard this parable probably thought... that doesn't seem fair!

We have to be careful when we are viewing things from our human perspective for two reasons... First, it's easy to get caught up in comparing ourselves to others. We may find ourselves trying to keep score and look down on others, or be dissatisfied with ourselves because we think that we don't measure up. Second, it's easy to think that Heaven is a reward that is given for a life that we lived well. We don't earn salvation ourselves, and if we look at ourselves honestly, everyone here is a sinner. We are only saved through the mercy of God and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We are not perfect people – we are imperfect people who have been forgiven. And yet, there are times when we are not sure if we want to play armchair quarterback and critique others, or get into the game, and actively live out our faith among our brothers and sisters, recognizing that God's gift of salvation is open to everybody.

This week, may we look at the gift of salvation with gratitude. May we never take it for granted, and may we always work to share its good news with our brothers and sisters.

