

St Pius & St Anthony Homily 25th Sunday Ordinary Year A1

What is your reaction to today's parable of the vineyard workers? Usually, I hear one of two reactions. Either the first of which is "Hold on a minute, I'm calling the union steward and filing a grievance." Or, someone feels like if you can't beat it, join them, and they say "Sign me up for the 5:00 pm shift!" (*What do they say all the time in business circles, "Work smarter, not harder!"*)

Is there anything that might justify such disparity of treatment for the workers? Well, I don't know the exact range of work and how hard the first workers applied themselves on this vineyard farm, but I imagine that since the owner continued to go out and hire on **more and more** workers throughout the day, something wasn't going right, to lead him to keep on seeking additional workers. **Maybe**, the earlier crews were in over their heads with the amount of work, or perhaps they were slacking off, not showing much initiative in their work (*if you know what I mean?- When I worked for the airport charter service in Owensboro, their airport hangars were at the end of a long, long private drive. And I know just how long the road was because I had to walk it and weed-eat the ditch-bank edges along the road- but my point is that I could always tell the 'hourly workers' from the 'salaried workers' because of how fast they drove down the drive especially after lunch—the hourly workers were 'race-car speed driving' to get back on the clock- and I hoop they worked with that same eagerness, = they showed to get back to work!)* **Or Maybe**, we can see this fam in a different light if the owner **had** to go out and hire additional workers, because his initial crews weren't going to make a deadline. Might we think of this whole story differently, if we were told that the owner had to load a boat with grapes at the port for shipping the next morning, or else the deal falls through and nobody gets paid! In that case, being pushed by a deadline to finish the job or lose the contract, then a wise owner will do anything (yes, even offer sweeter deals to new workers to make sure to bring on extra hands to finish the job). At the beginning of the work day, the owner was tighter with his spending, and watched his expenses closely, even payroll, but as the deadlines approached, he loosened up spending to simply wrap up the deal, so that every worker gets something out of the deal (getting everyone paid).

But if we set side all of this 'business talk, Jesus may be up to another point altogether by saying the Kingdom of God is like this vineyard. I suspect the whole parable really isn't about money or pay at all. Jesus said he was comparing the Kingdom of God to this vineyard work, so what specifically about vineyard work is like the Kingdom of God? I think Jesus is not after increasing the 'produce' of the

vineyard or the 'pay of the worker' as much as He is about bettering the position and approach of the persons working in the vineyard. He wants that personal investment of a worker, enjoying the work and applying themselves enthusiastically to their craft – that is true Kingdom Work – having one's heart in the work. What is most important about the Kingdom is not the pay, but the simple privilege of being counted in it ourselves. It is a blessing to simply be on the employment rolls to begin with! And since I love what I'm doing, and doing it for God, then Jesus is trying to **form workers in His vineyard who want to be there** for the joy of it, not the pay in it. Jesus desires the work ethic and approach among His fellow-workers in the vineyard to be one that expresses delight in the work itself. He loves the attitude and disposition of someone called to the vineyard who says, **'I'm just happy to be here'** or even them saying, **"I can't believe they pay me for doing this- I love what I do."** If our heart is truly into serving God, with whatever the job is that He called us to, then who is counting the cost or hassling over details? This is similar to the story told about the bricklayers. A gatekeeper watched men keep bringing loads of bricks into the city, and so he asked one of them coming in, "What are you doing?" and the worker responded, "I'm hauling these stones, that's all". Then to another man he asked the same question, "What are you doing?" and that man responded, "Building a wall I think – it's a job". Then as a third man passed whistling, he asked again, "What are you doing?" And the man enthusiastically said, "I am raising a great cathedral." *Now this last laborer, he knows who and what he is working for!*

Interestingly, I remember back in the 9th chapter of Matthew (9:37-38), Jesus said, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so, ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest." Jesus is telling us, that when it comes to working for Him in Vineyard of the Lord, we should be happier for more and more workers anytime they are added to the team (the larger the crew, the better for everyone it is). He wants us to readily welcome more hands on deck, and that as good Kingdom workers, we ourselves don't count the cost or nosily meddle in each other's pay scales. For us, it all comes down to being thrilled to even be considered for work on the ranch with Him. If I truly know what God has done for me (the privilege of it, not the pay for it!) by calling me into His vineyard, then, I want that for everyone. So, whatever it takes to complete the harvest, I am glad for others to share in this. Again, I am thankful just to be included myself!