

"The grace of God" Matthew 20:1-16 Septuagesima 2026

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Our text for today is a parable, a story that the Lord told as an illustration of His teaching. As in Canada today, Palestine's economy at that time was based on agriculture. So, this illustration was very pertinent to the hearers of Jesus.

"For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man, the father of a family, who went out in the morning to set up laborers for his vineyard. And having agreed with the workers in a denarius per day, he sent them into his vineyard. "

The harvest was ready. The owner of the vineyard had a short time to collect the grapes and recover his investment. He needed many workers. So, he went out into the square looking for the workers all day, from the first hour to the eleventh hour. And he hired all for a denarius, the salary for a full day. It did not matter if a worker began his work the first hour or the last. The master was generous with his money for the risk of losing income if the harvest was not completed in time was very high.

There is a need for the workers in the vineyard of the Lord that is the mission field of the church. The Lord gave His church the task of proclaiming His gospel throughout the world, and said to them, "The

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harvest of the truth is many, but the laborers few; Therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10: 2)

However, the primary point of the parable is not the need of the workers in the vineyard of the Lord. Not all believers are called to publicly preach the Word of God and administer the sacraments. The Lord encountered most of his apostles as fishermen on the shores of the Sea of Galilee and said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." (Matthew 4:19) They left their nets to follow the Lord and to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Not all the faithful have to leave their families and their businesses to preach the Word and administer the sacraments in any part of the world where it is necessary. But everyone can take advantage of sharing the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ with their friends, family and co-workers.

For the point of the parable is all receive the same payment for their service in the kingdom of God. The owner of the vineyard hired all the laborers for a denarius. What is the payment in the kingdom of God? The promise of eternal life that we do not deserve. Eternal death is what we deserve. But the good news is that we will receive eternal life by faith in Jesus Christ.

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Some people grew up in a family where everyone was Christian. They received baptism in their childhood and their parents instructed them in the Word of God. Others did not grow up in a Christian family and found the Word of God the first time as adults. The Holy Spirit was active in the Word to touch their hearts and they received baptism as adults. All received the same grace of God in their baptism, no matter if they were baptized as children or adults. It is good to grow up in a Christian family, but it is never too late to repent of your sins and receive the new life in Christ.

It is our sinful nature to think that we deserve more from the hands of God after working long in the vineyard of the Lord. But God in His generosity and mercy deals with all equally, because Christ paid the price of our sins on the cross and rose again on the third day. Because of Christ's victory in the resurrection, one day we will be resurrected for eternal life.

When we forget who paid the price of our sins, there is danger of losing the promise. In our epistle (1 Corinthians 9: 24-10), St. Paul says thus: Do you not know that those who run in the stadium, all run, but one gains the prize? Run in such a way that you get it. And everyone who strives, he abstains from everything: and they, indeed, to receive a corruptible crown; But we, incorruptible. The Christian life is a

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competition, like a run in the stadium. And our Lord said unto us in the gospel to this day, Thus shall the first be last, and the last last: for many are called, but few are chosen.

But if all receive the same grace of God, why do not they all win the prize? For lack of preparation and attention. The winner of the race is the one who focuses on the end of the competition. At that time, the prize was a crown of wilting tree leaves. Our prize is the incorruptible crown, eternal life. But to rely on our own strength is to lose the run, because the promise is for those who trust Christ, not their own righteousness.

Also, St. Paul says: Our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed by the sea; And all in Moses were baptized in the cloud and in the sea and they all ate the same spiritual food; And they all drank the same spiritual drink; Because they drank from the spiritual stone that followed them, and the stone was Christ. But many of them were not pleased with God; Therefore, they fell down in the wilderness.

For us, baptism is like when the Israelites crossed the waters of the Red Sea from slavery to freedom. However, they did not immediately reach the Promised Land before a journey into the desert. All crossed the sea, and all received food and drink in the desert by the grace of God. For us the drink and spiritual food that is Christ is his

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blood and body with the bread and wine in the Holy Supper. But when we take God's gifts into account, we do not confess our sins and receive the nourishment of faith frequently and with faith, we slowly forget that we are saved by the mercy of God and not by our own works. In this is the danger of losing eternal life.

Thank God, if we remain in the faith, God is faithful and just to forgive us of all unrighteousness. In this is our hope and peace that surpasses all understanding. Amen.