

Septuagesima

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Preacher: Seminarian Ian Jarrells

[0 : 00] May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

From the moment we were brought into this world, we've been told many stories. These stories shape our lives, and they help us to make sense of the world as we go throughout it. The Greeks and other nations wrote myths to make sense of natural phenomena, such as the echo that we hear when we shout into the hills.

That's also how the beginning of Genesis operates. Since most of the Abrahamic world was pagan, they would need to be educated on the way the world works. It is not many gods that create the world and operate within it. Rather, it is the one God who made all things.

He has made the earth a place to dwell and has made human beings to worship him. The first couple rebelled and sinned against God, and he cast them out of the garden.

This is why we have sin and strife in the world today. The creation story helped them and helps us to make sense of what we see. Our culture also tells us stories about how the world works.

[1 : 15] We learn from a very young age that everything comes with a price. Even some friendships exist with equal reciprocity. If you don't scratch my back, I'm not going to scratch yours.

If you don't give me any respect, I'm not giving you any respect. These maxims are proved by the stories we tell about ourselves and the stories we hear from our peers and society.

Our daily lives are the stories that reinforce our cultural values. Perhaps this is the reason why our Lord taught largely through parables. Our gospel text today is a parable.

One of many that speaks about what the kingdom of heaven is going to be like. In this parable, there is a landowner who provides work for people in his vineyard. There are some that start work at the beginning of the workday, others that come later, and finally, those who come near the end of the day after they were found by the landowner's steward.

The ones who started work at the beginning of the day were promised a day's wage, a denarius, for completing their work. Everyone else who came late was promised a wage that was right, or was just according to their work.

[2 : 29] At the end of the day, they all got their pay, starting with the people who started later and working back to those who began work at the beginning of the day. Everyone received a denarius, a full day's pay.

So those who worked the whole day thought they were going to make more than a day's wage. When they received exactly what everyone else got, they were upset. Why do those people get the same wage if they worked less than we did?

The landowner responded by asking if it was wrong for him to do what he wanted to do with what he had. After all, he did give them what he promised. After finishing the parable, our Lord ends it with these words.

So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few are chosen. If this parable is likened unto the kingdom of heaven, it speaks of God calling people to work for him so that they may receive his gift.

Notice how all people receive the same thing, no matter whether they started working at the beginning of the day or towards the end. The first thing that we can learn from this parable is that God has no partiality with people.

[3 : 40] Anyone can come to him to receive his mercy and his forgiveness. St. Paul says in his epistle to the Galatians that as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. He says similarly elsewhere in his epistle to the Romans.

God will render to each according to his deeds. Eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality.

But to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish on every soul of man who does evil.

Of the Jew first and also of the Greek. But glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greeks.

[4 : 41] For there is no partiality with God. Those who began the work early, the Jews, receive what they were promised if they continued steadfast in the Lord.

But God welcomes all peoples, us Gentiles, who have started the work later. We, as those who have been grafted into the same root, which is Christ, will receive the same blessings and promises that Jews received because we are all spiritual sons of Abraham.

Our collect for today beseeches God to hear us and forgive us our sins because we are truly his people. We are delivered by his goodness. We receive the same reward for our efforts, which is Jesus Christ himself.

We are true members of the kingdom of heaven because of the mercy and goodness of our God. If earthly fathers know how to give good gifts to their sons and daughters, the gift we will all receive from God will be beyond compare to anything we have ever received.

The second thing we should take away from this parable is similar to what we can learn from the parable of the lost son or the prodigal son. Remember what the elder brother said when the younger brother returned home.

[5 : 58] He heard all the dancing and partying that was happening because his younger brothers would turn and he was angry and would not go into the house. When the father came out to plead with him, the brother responded with these words.

Lo, these many years I have been serving you. I never transgressed your commandment at any time. And yet you never gave me a young boy that I might make merry with my friends.

But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him. The father responds and says, son, you are always with me and all that I have is yours.

It was right that we should make merry and be glad for your brother was dead and is alive again and was lost and is now found. In our parable of the landowner, those who worked in the vineyard the whole day were upset that those who worked the least received the same payment.

The owner replied by saying that he has the right to do what he wants with what he has. His mercy and generosity have caused others to be jealous. Let us take caution to avoid being the ones who are upset that those later in life have received mercy, even though many of us have been in the kingdom from a young age.

[7 : 14] Instead of complaining that our social club isn't filled with who we want, may we praise the Lord for every lost sheep that comes home and become ambassadors to the world, seeking to bring more workers to our Lord's vineyard.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.