

# Septuagesima

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Preacher: Seminarian Ian Jarrells

[ 0 : 01 ] 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.

Please be seated. Last week, Father Miller gave a homily on the Roman centurion who asked the Lord Jesus to heal his servant.

In that request, he showed a humility that we should all have towards God. We are not masters over life and death. God is. Therefore, we should cling to him.

Today, on Septuagesima Sunday, there was another lesson that we can learn about what it means to be in a season of penance. It is about the generosity of God that far exceeds our expectations and leads us towards our humility.

In our Gospel text, a landowner hires laborers to work in his vineyard at the beginning of the day. The workers agreed to work for a denarius, a day's wage, and they started on their day.

[ 1 : 06 ] Various times throughout the day, he goes to the marketplace and sees others who are standing idly by, doing nothing. He tells them that he will hire them to work in the vineyard, and whatever is right, he will give to them.

One hour before the workday is over, the landowner decides to go back to the marketplace. He sees that there are more people there. Why have you been standing here idle all day?

Because no one has hired us, say the people. The landowner tells them to also go into the vineyard, and will give them what is right at the end of the day.

At the end of the day, the landowner starts giving the wages that are due to the laborers. First, he pays those who started working most recently, and finishes with those he hired at the beginning of the day.

To the surprise of the day-long laborers, the landowner paid a whole denarius to the ones who only worked for an hour. Well, that's good news for us.

[ 2 : 06 ] That can only mean that we'll be receiving much more than what they got. After all, we deserve more than them. We worked the hardest. At least that was the expectation of the day-long laborers.

In a society that lives, moves, and has its being through transactional relationships, I can imagine that we could easily say something similar.

Every action is met with a kind of response, either towards merit or towards condemnation. The concept of benevolence or of mercy is not the hallmark of our nation, which is ironic considering the common understanding that America is a Christian nation.

Social media contributes no good things to this reality. Transactional relationships are what keep the money in the pockets of those who seek to control the masses with Facebook, Instagram, and whatever form of social media.

If you're looking for grace, you won't find it there. Share your opinion, and you'll find out that people are not trying to hear you, but are either trying to lavish praise on you or to condemn you and tear you down.

[ 3 : 16 ] These interactions in the virtual world spill into the real world, catechizing us to see ourselves as more worthy than the person who is standing right next to us.

I deserve more because of what I've done. I'm worth more because I've done more. It is this mentality that we have been taught, and it is the same mentality that Jesus is speaking about in his parable.

To their surprise, the laborers who worked in the vineyard for a whole day did not get more than a denarius. They got exactly the same as the ones who worked for an hour. How monstrous.

Who does this guy think that he is? He's being unjust to us and sees us as no better than they. In response to the complaint of the workers, the landowner says, Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things?

[ 4 : 21 ] Or is your eye evil because I am good? It is at this moment that we are confronted with grace and mercy that transcends our imaginations.

It would have been just for the landowner to give less than a denarius to those who do not work the full day. In fact, that's what we would have expected when he told them that he would pay them what is right for them to receive.

But justice is not separated from mercy in the action of God. God enacts justice when he gives the hired laborers more than they deserve.

It is his nature to give generously. And the gift that he wishes to give you and me is himself. And in fact, he does that generously in the Eucharist.

To those who think they deserve more than God himself are mistaken and see good as evil. You see, God is the landowner. And he wishes to hire us as workers for his field.

[ 5 : 23 ] There are many who have come before us and there are many who will come after us. Some of us will have worked our whole lives before we receive our reward. While others will have worked for only an hour before they receive theirs.

God is generous to both. He is generous to all. We don't deserve what God has given us, even if we serve him our whole lives. Friends, this is good news.

It is good news because our God does not do relationships transactionally. He does relationships generously and mercifully. And he gives us more than we deserve.

When we commit to the understanding of this truth, we will begin to see ourselves for who we really are. Lowly people in need of a God who desires to make us like himself.

This generosity from God leads us towards humility. Let us accept it with open hearts. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

[ 6 : 23 ] Amen.