

God's Ways, Beyond All Compare

September 20, 2020, 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Gospel of Matthew 20:1-16

Fr. Brad

In our Gospel, **envy** or **jealousy** are addressed. Where do they come from? They are experiences that are often rooted in fear - fear of being left alone, of being left out or, of not being included which, in turn, quickly sprouts into feelings of 'not being good enough'? We can feel less than. These are all too common feelings we experience in our human weakness.

We see how the two year old child commands the attention of Mom after sensing he/she is losing her complete and undivided attention.

Also alluded to in the Gospel and common too in our world, is the issue of **entitlement** which is often a manifestation of a certain arrogance and lack of humility and of gratitude.

When we find ourselves beginning to work more for ourselves than for the greater good, the common good, we are working out of a sense of entitlement - - seeking reward for ourselves.

Working under such an illusion breeds self-interest, lack of gratitude and humility and thus a greater rift between us and the ways of our calling as Christians.

The workers in our Gospel who worked all day and were resentful of those who worked less for the same pay, are a lot like the older brother in the prodigal son story.

With such an attitude one may be still doing the right things, but mostly out of bitter duty but secretly, envying the amoral.

In a way such thinking comes from a place that still sees life away from God's house as fuller than life inside God's house.

We are kind of like embittered moralizers.

We can probably see ourselves in this light at times. Think of times when you- - perhaps, look down on people who appear to be living less disciplined lives than you are, they seem to be looking for the good times all the time and not bearing down with hard work or consideration of other peoples' feelings.

But, not only are we invited to respond more gently to those whom we resent, we need to be gentle with ourselves for thinking that way. As Ronald Rolheiser puts it, such thinking is 'an occupational hazard for good, faithful persons.

The truth is that we can be people who have everything and enjoy nothing, because we are watching what everybody else is getting.

To experience life as a true child of God means that we find joy in every other person who finds their way into that love.

If we don't find joy in that, we must reflect on the notion that - - part of us does not feel like we are fully a part of that joy ourselves yet.

So the next time any of us I feel like crying out favouritism, ponder where that is coming from.

Are we able to open our hearts wide enough to realize that in the grand scheme, that same favouritism applies to us?...that God has been and continues to desire to be overly generous to us as well - - that God's love for us is the free gift that belongs to all?

Perhaps it is we are reacting to the injustices in the world of which there are many, that we are suspicious of unjust favouritism which comes in many forms in this world. Perhaps the Master divvying out the rewards is perceived as being overly generous to some and under appreciative of others when seen through the eyes of a broken world where there is much deceit and lack of generosity. But we cannot allow ourselves to get lost in such thinking.

Interesting how had the 'all day' workers not known about the equal payment of the others who worked less, they would have been perfectly content with what they received and would NOT then have felt underappreciated.

Our limited human minds only afford us a limited small sense of what is right. And we must humbly learn to live by that reality. WE ARE CALLED TO PAY FOCUSED ATTENTION ON OUR OWN RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND NOT STRAY BY TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW GOD IS WORKING OR SHOULD BE WORKING IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS.

In a world ruled by a mix of both generosity and self-interest, we must be mindful of the words of the first reading "for as the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Put in the grand scheme of **eternal life**, the conflict and resentment generated by fear and worry over not having enough or of others getting more than me, dissolves very quickly.

So we need to catch ourselves when we are triggered into the impulsive reaction of complaint or resentment stirred when we perceive others as having more than us. It is such a colossal part of the reason for unrest and violence in the world both globally and in our personal lives.

The spirit of the Gospel and of the early Church was one of open sharing **without fear of not having enough or of being left out**- - true community. In God's world there is an over abundance of what is most important if only we would allow God to lead. This is the world which we as followers of Christ, try not only to live by, but inspire others to live by as well - - mindful of the world we live in which cries out in fear of insufficiency.

Faith, not fear, and embracing the presence of God's Love, brings life in abundance.