

The 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year A – 9/20/2026 – Msgr. Peter Quang Nguyen

First Reading – Isaiah 55:6-9: Seek God while He's close; abandon wickedness. Turn to the merciful Lord. His thoughts surpass ours, as heaven is above earth. His ways and thoughts are beyond ours.

Responsorial Psalm – Psalm 145: Daily I'll bless and praise You, O Lord, forever. Your greatness is beyond measure. You're gracious, merciful, slow to anger, kind, and just. You're near to all who call upon You.

Second Reading – Philippians 1:20C-24, 27A: In life or death, I magnify Christ. Life means fruitful labor. Caught between longing for departure to be with Christ and staying for your benefit. Live worthily of the gospel.

Gospel – Matthew 20:1-16A: The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who hires laborers at different times. Those who worked only an hour received the same wage as those who worked all day. The landowner's generosity teaches that God's ways are not based on human standards of fairness.

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

“That’s not fair!” How many times, in the course of a given day, have you heard someone protest, ***“That’s not fair!”***

- Children on a playground shout when they detect a foul play, *“That’s not fair!”*
- Siblings doing household chores may complain, *“I’m doing more than my share of the work!”* or *“My chores are more difficult; that’s not fair!”*
- Students at school may resent the extra attention given to a classmate... *“She’s the teacher’s favorite; that’s not fair!”*
- A brother thinks his piece of pie is smaller than his sister’s — *“That’s not fair!”*
- Someone at work, whom one feels is less deserving of it than oneself, receives a raise in salary: *“I have seniority. I’ve been here longer; that’s not fair!”*
- The coach of the Little League baseball team always puts her child in as starting pitcher; other players are annoyed... *“That’s not fair!”*
- Taxpayers bristle at the fact that increasing numbers of people are applying for and receive *welfare* from the government... *“I have to work hard to make a living for me and my family. So should everyone else... that’s not fair!”*

In each of these several examples, human sensibilities regarding fairness and patience have been offended, precisely because of the fact that they *are human*.

Most of us think that good work, seniority and experience should be equally rewarded, that all should be subject to the same rules, like *“First come, first served,”* that everyone should be treated impartially and that there should be no exceptions and no favorites!

Therefore, when confronted with a situation such as that put before us in today's Gospel parable which tells of identical wages being given for different numbers of hours of work, our sense of fairness is provoked. This is probably one of the most controversial parables ever uttered by Jesus Christ, creating heated debate about the unusual generosity of a benevolent vineyard owner.

To understand this Gospel passage, one must first distinguish between human concepts of justice and God's goodness.

Indeed, by the standards of economics, the employer in the parable would face bankruptcy due to his unconventional wage-paying methods, and no worker would ever dare seek employment with him again.

However, this is a parable—a story grounded in possible reality, used to convey a profound truth through a comparison with everyday life. Jesus uses the story of the vineyard to illustrate the mystery of the Kingdom of God.

We are the laborers honored to be invited by God into the vineyard of the Church. Some among us were fortunate enough to enter the Lord's vineyard very early—at the dawn of our lives—while others, due to various circumstances, were called only as the day was drawing to a close. Yet, the timing matters less than the fact that we have been lovingly invited into God's vineyard; therefore, let us strive to work with all our heart and devotion in response to His loving call.

Each of us is welcomed into the Church at different times: some have the honor of becoming God's children the moment their parents bring them for baptism (the morning); others join catechumenate classes or convert upon marriage (the ninth hour—midday); some return in old age or sickness (the eleventh hour—dusk); and some receive the grace of conversion while on their deathbed (the final moment). Yet, the shared reward for all is the same Faith, the same Baptism, the same Holy Spirit, the same Salvation, and the same Kingdom of Heaven. Whether one embraces the faith at the very beginning or at the hour of death, all share in the same salvation found in Jesus Christ, the same Heaven, and the vision of the one true God. This is the meaning of the "single denarius" given to all God's people—as children of the Church and citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Where there is mercy, the strict boundaries of justice no longer apply; tax collectors and prostitutes, those who came early and those who came late—God grants them all the freedom to press forward and receive salvation. God is so generous and rich in mercy; what about us?

God does not treat us according to our own standards of justice, for our merits are nothing compared to the sins that offend His supreme holiness. On the contrary, we all receive redemption not because of our own religious merits, but because of His Goodness. This is the essence of "justification": one cannot rely on perceived merits to demand a reward from God or to compare oneself unfavorably with others in His sight; rather, salvation is a gift bestowed by God. What matters is faithfully fulfilling one's duties before Him.

Lord Jesus, help us always to realize that every grace comes from Your love rather than our own merits, so that we may always offer You thanksgiving and never succumb to arrogance or envy toward our neighbors. Amen.