

Homily of Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time of Year A, 2020

Isaiah 55:6-9; Psalm 145:2-3, 8-9, 17-18; Philippians 1:20-24, 27; Matthew 20:1-16

In the first reading, Prophet Isaiah tells us that God's thoughts are not our thoughts or his ways our ways. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are God's ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts. St. Paul says, "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in the eyes of God" (1 Corinthians 3:19).

Jesus' parables are said to be earthly stories with heavenly meanings. The parable in today's Gospel is, definitely, full of heavenly meanings, and goes against the wisdom of this world. In the parable, those who worked all day in the vineyard received the same wage as those who worked for a few hours and those who worked for only one hour. Judging from human wisdom and standards, the landowner acted unfairly by paying all the workers the same amount.

However, Jesus did not tell this parable to teach employers how to pay workers. Jesus used the parable to teach us some lessons about the way of the Kingdom of God. Jesus was addressing the political and religious leaders and rulers of his time: the lawyers, the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the priests who prided themselves as custodians of the Law, and therefore claimed to have authority to decide who was fit to enter into the Kingdom of God. For them, the Gentiles were God's forsaken pagans and were damned, and had no share in the Kingdom of God. Jesus used this parable to correct this wrong notion. Jesus used the parable to teach that although the Gentiles received the message of salvation later than the Jews, the Gentiles would have equal share in the Kingdom of God. With this parable, Jesus taught the lawyers, the scribes, the Pharisees, Sadducees and the priests that he came to call sinners to repentance, and those who believed in him would merit the kingdom of God.

How does this teaching apply to us? In the second reading, St. Paul call this teaching "the Gospel of Christ." He tells us to conduct ourselves in a way worthy of the Gospel of Christ. The Gospel of Christ is different from the way of the world.

The way of the world is the privileged subdue the less privileged.

The way of the world is the strong subdue the weak.

The way of the world is the rich get richer, and the poor get poorer.

The way of the world is the winner takes it all.

The way of the world is greed and avarice.

The way of the world is exclusion and class.

The way of the world is superiority and dominance.

The way of the world is inequality.

We see these ways of the world, outrightly, in political, economic, social, and religious systems within and around us. Sometimes, too, what are presented as assistance or development are only devious means of dominance, controlling, exclusion, subduing, and taking advantage over and against the underprivileged and victims.

The way worthy of the Gospel of Christ is not to lord it over anyone (Matthew 20:26).

The way worthy of the Gospel of Christ is to guard against all kinds of greed (Luke 12:15).

The way worthy of the Gospel of Christ is, "Let the greatest among you be as the youngest, and the leader as the servant" (Luke 22:26).

The way worthy of the Gospel of Christ is, "Whoever had much did not have more, and whoever had little did not have less" (2 Corinthians 8:15).

The way worthy of the Gospel of Christ is, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

The way worthy of the Gospel of Christ is not to be conceited, provoking and envying each other (Galatians 5:26).

The way worthy of the Gospel of Christ is, "Be willing and generous to share" (1 Timothy 6:18).

The way worthy of the Gospel of Christ is, "Let your life be free from love of money, but be content with what you have" (Hebrews 13:5).

We are invited, today, to reject the ways of the world and embrace the way worthy of the Gospel of Christ. Then, our thoughts and ways will be guided by the thoughts and ways of God.

Lastly, Jesus says, "The last will be the first, and the first will be the last." This reminds me of a boxing tournament where the boxer who had only 50 points, knocked out his opponent who had 150 points, within the last twenty seconds of the fight. There are many instances like this. The unemployed men who stood at the market place did not walk away in disappointment. Some remained up till 5:00 PM! Their perseverance, patience, waiting, and hoping did not disappoint them. Therefore, be patient. Persevere. Keep hoping. Keep fighting. Keep trying. Keep praying. Do not give up. Do not walk away in disappointment. You may become a winner within the last twenty seconds. The Landowner will, surely, come and grant your heart's desire at an unexpected hour. All we need to do is to wait for the Lord! (Isaiah 40:31).

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