

September 20, 2026—25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

If you own a business; if you are trying to find a salary scale for your employees; if you are looking for guidance on how to treat your employees, this parable is not for you! Anyone hearing this parable would think that there was at least a hint of injustice in the vineyard owner's actions.

In this parable, Jesus used the example of a man who hired employees to work in his vineyard. He hired the first group promising the usual day's wage—a Roman silver coin called a denarius. He went back to the marketplace throughout the day to supplement his workers, promising them a fair wage. The owner even went out an hour before dark and hired those he found there. The owner's method for paying them was bound to cause trouble. Those who worked the least amount of time were paid first and those who worked the whole day were paid last. As they were paid, they found that he gave everyone the same wage, no matter how many hours they worked.

Even though Jesus used an example from daily life that was familiar to the people, He is not speaking about just wages for employees; the denarius is a symbol for the kingdom of heaven. Different people answer the call to follow Jesus at different stages of life, just like the workers went to work at different hours of the day for the vineyard owner. Some will live their whole lives as faithful Catholics, while God touches others at some later point in their life, even for a few it will not be until the time of death.

No one can earn heaven; it is a gift. We can only hope for heaven because Jesus died on the Cross to free us from our sins and opened the gates of heaven for us. The soon to be Blessed Fulton Sheen once said that he thinks there will be 3 surprises when he gets to heaven. The first surprise will be that there are people he thought would make it to heaven but are not there. The second surprise is that there will be people who are in heaven that he thought would not make it. The third, and greatest surprise is that he himself made it to heaven! I think we can be fairly sure that he did make it!

We cannot earn or merit heaven, but we can reject the gift of eternal life. Any gift requires that the receiver accepts or rejects it. God gives us every grace and opportunity to choose Him. We are being tested by God to see if we will obey His commandments; if we will strive to live the Law of Love; if we will develop a relationship with Him through daily prayer and the sacraments. St. Paul wrote, **“Work out your salvation with fear and trembling”** (Phil.2:12). This is not the

kind of fear that makes one nervous and worried, sometimes called servile fear. St. Paul is speaking about the kind of fear that makes you stand up and take notice; the kind that makes you realize that this is serious business. Christian fear of the Lord means that we fear offending God by our sins because we love Him; it is sometimes called filial fear. If we do not repent of mortal sins, we reject God and the beautiful gift of salvation that He has graciously offered to us.

Isaiah told us in the First Reading, **“Seek the Lord while he may be found, call him while he is near. Let the scoundrel forsake his way; and the wicked his thoughts; let him turn to the Lord for mercy; to our God who is generous in forgiving”**. I promise you that God is not waiting to find you in mortal sin to condemn you; He wants to find you with a repentant heart, in the state of grace, so you can answer His call and go to heaven.

St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that he wasn't concerned about their judgment upon him, even though some were making false accusations, rather, he wrote them: **“I do not even judge myself. I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me”** (1 Cor. 4:3). He examined his conscience, and it was clear. Still, it is Jesus who is His judge. On the Day of Judgment, Paul continued, Jesus **“will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart”** (Verse 5). It is not the Corinthians or even himself who is the judge, but Jesus who knows the secrets of the human heart. That is why we do not despair at the death of anyone. Only God knows the state of a person's soul, so we trust in Him.

Last Sunday, I recommended making the Morning Offering when you wake up; offering all your prayers, works, joys and sufferings of the coming day to the Lord; giving Him the first thought of the day. This week, I am recommending the Examination of Conscience before you go to bed at night. It only takes a couple minutes to think through your day and examine what sins you committed in thought, word and action. Then tell God you are sorry for whatever wrong you have done and resolve to do better the next day. The daily examination of conscience also helps us to make better Confessions.

When we think of death, let's pray to have the attitude of St. Paul in the Second Reading this Sunday. He says, **“For to me, life is Christ, and death is gain.”** He is neither afraid to die, nor afraid to live. Death which in many ways is mysterious often does bring fear into our hearts. Not St. Paul; he continues, **“If I go on living in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. And I do not know which I shall**

choose. . . I long to depart this life and be with Christ, for that is far better. Yet that I remain in the flesh is more necessary for your benefit.” God has called us into His Church by faith and one day He will call us from this world. Let’s respond to His call with faith, counting upon His great mercy.