

25TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME YEAR A.

Matthew 20:1-16- Ferntree Gully Newsletter.

When Henry Ford started his car company in 1903, he took a business partner, James Couzens. Couzens was strong where Ford was weakest — administration, finance, sales, etc. Couzens contributed as much to the success of the Ford motor company as did Ford. Many of the best-known policies and practices of the Ford Motor company for which Henry Ford is often given credit were Couzens' ideas. So effective did Couzens become that Ford grew increasingly jealous of him and forced him out in 1917 in an argument over the future of the Model T. Couzens said the car was obsolete and that they should move on to other things. Ford disagreed, got rid of Couzens, and kept making Model Ts until he had nearly run his car company into the ground. — What happens, even to bright successful people, to cause them to hurt their own careers rather than share the glory with someone else? We call it pride, envy or ego. Today's Gospel tells us how the early recruits to the vineyard became jealous of the living wage given to the later recruits.

On the 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time and we continue reflecting upon the meaning of Christian discipleship. The dominant theme of the Scripture Readings of today is that God is outrageously generous and merciful, and that His wisdom surpasses our human categories of value and judgment.

In the first reading, the prophet Isaiah reminds the exiles in Babylon that their God is more merciful than they are, and more forgiving. He is ready to pardon the infidelity which has resulted in their exile. Their merciful God will bless them with material and spiritual blessings. Hence, Isaiah exhorts them, and us, to seek the Lord and to put aside evil ways in order to receive His mercy and forgiveness. In the second reading, Paul offers himself as an example of total submission to God's grace and God's will. He is ready to live continuing his mission if that is God's will. At the same time, he is ready to die and join the Lord if that is God's will.

In today's Gospel Jesus tells us the strange parable of a landowner who hired laborers at five different times during the course of one day to work in his vineyard but paid the same living wage for a full day's work to all of them. This story of the landlord's love and generosity represents God's love and generosity to all of us. It illustrates the difference between God's perspective and ours. God's provisions for our spiritual lives will never run out, and when we share our blessings with others, we tap into the inexhaustible Divine supply. This story shows us how God looks at us, sees our needs and meets those needs generously and mercifully. The parable also shows the mercy and generosity of God in allowing the later-called Gentiles as well the first-called Jews, His Chosen People, to enjoy the same eternal bliss of His Heavenly Kingdom.

The Scripture Readings present to us a consoling picture of Divine goodness, generosity and love. Equality, as we understand it, may convey justice. But it is goodness, generosity and love as personified by Jesus himself that enable us to go

beyond justice and share with those who are marginal, unfortunate and abandoned members of society. And lest we forget, even these virtues are gifts from God. In fact, there is nothing that we are and have that has not come from God. We cannot be envious or jealous because God is generous to someone else. His divine freedom sometimes sets aside our human expectations in a display those results in a God of surprises. The Gospel parable also tells us of the tender compassion of God. A person out of work is a tragic figure and all the late comers wanted some opportunity to work and God out of his generosity gives it.

This weekend, especially during this Covid19 restriction time, God calls each one of us to be a generous people. We know forgiveness is hard, but we see that real generosity is even harder than forgiveness. Generosity is a fight with human nature, with what we like to call fairness, but which can often turn into an angry resentment - not resentment against injustice, but against the grace God throws around however God wants to. When it happens to us, we praise God for his grace to us and our families. When it happens to someone else, as often as not, we get out the calculator.

Finally, we all are welcome to the Kingdom of Heaven; where new comers belong; where the last are first and the excluded are included; because God's thoughts not our thoughts. God's standards are not our standards. The readings of this Sunday, especially the Gospel, invite us to reflect on God's generous love, mercy and justice for all people without exception. That is God's standard that will be applied at the end of times. And this is the Good News of today. God bless you all....

JOKES OF THE WEEK

1) 1) **“All I want is my fair share.”** In the classic *“Charlie Brown Christmas Special,”* Sally is writing a letter to Santa Claus and in the process, generates an enormous list of toys she wants. Then at the conclusion of her North Pole-bound missive she writes, “But if that is too much to carry, just send cash.” When Charlie Brown sees this and despairs over his own sister's greed, Sally indignantly responds, “All I want is my fair share. All I want is what I have coming to me!”

2) **Gratitude for the grace of two teeth:** It was Thanksgiving season in the nursing home. The small resident population was gathered about their humble Thanksgiving table, and the director asked each in turn to express one thing for which they were thankful. Thanks, were expressed for a home in which to stay, families, etc. One little old lady when her turn came said, 'I thank the Lord for two perfectly good teeth, one in my upper jaw and one in my lower jaw that match so that I can chew my food.