

Go Into My Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16)

Today, the Church gives us the lovely parable of the workers in the vineyard. We have a generous landowner willing to invite workers into his vineyard at various times of the day - dawn (6:00 am), 9:00 am, noon, 3:00 pm, and 5:00 pm.

First, notice how much work there is to do! The landowner needs more workers for his vineyard. Naturally, we pray not only for more priests, deacons, and consecrated religious, but also for the baptized who willingly embrace their baptism and special calling to make Jesus known and loved. God bless all of you who pray for the faithful to embrace their various vocations! Earlier in Matthew's Gospel, our Lord told his disciples, "*Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field*" (Mt. 9:38). By virtue of your baptism, *you* are a laborer!

Second, it is interesting that the landowner is "surprised" that workers stand idle. There is plenty of work, but they are standing around! One wonders if this might be part of the conversation at our particular judgments. "I had all this work that needed to be done to advance my kingdom. What did *you* do?" One of my greatest concerns is not what I have done (as challenging as that is) but what graces I have *squandered* (failed to do).

Additionally, it's fascinating that the landowner began paying the workers hired last first. If the first workers had been paid first, they would have received their pay and went their way and been content. However, notice that by watching what others received (taking their eyes off the landowner), they developed an expectation of what they *should* receive. They brought out their "comparison charts." A gentle reminder that your value is derived from Christ, not from comparing yourself with others.

Furthermore, be careful about complaining or worse, becoming angry or bitter because God is so generous! Our Lord is free to be generous with His graces and to distribute them freely as He chooses. Grace is not earned, but a *gift*. You need not grind your teeth at God's generosity!

Finally, our Lord concludes the parable with the line: "*Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last.*" Those who put themselves first will be last. Those who put themselves last, i.e., at the complete service of others will be first in the kingdom of God. In short, those who conform themselves most to Jesus Christ will be first in His kingdom!

~St. Thérèse, pray for us!