

Commentary on the Readings for September 24, 2017

The 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Have you ever wondered why some people "get all the breaks" and others seem to have bad luck all their life? In biblical times, those who were rich or prosperous, or just good-looking were considered to be favored by God. Those who were poor or ill or in some way disabled were automatically, but unjustifiably, considered being sinners punished by God. On the other hand, there are countless stories where God is overwhelmingly generous with many; but such stories don't seem to get much recognition. The readings for today give us a good example of God's generosity, yet we seem to focus on the "unfairness" of the landowner in the Gospel. The unions would surely be after him in today's environment. We must remember that this is a parable, a "story" with a message. So what is the message?

The **First Reading** is from the *Prophet Isaiah (55:6-9)*. Here we have the prophet preaching to his congregation the virtues and generosity of God, citing: "God's ways are not like mankind's ways." We should be thankful for that and remember it when we feel that we are being treated unfairly, and then ask ourselves, "*What is going on here? Why is God treating me this way?*"

The **Responsorial Psalm (145:2-18)** is a prayer in which the psalmist praises God for His goodness, compassion and generosity. However, with God there is always some qualification in His instructions or offerings. In this case it is "*...to all who call upon Him in truth.*" We can't ignore Him for most of our life and then expect Him to answer our needs when we call.

The **Second Reading** is from Paul's *Letter to the Philippians (1:20-27)*. "Philippians" is all about humility. In this passage, Paul is saying that he is so grateful to Jesus Christ for bringing him to this stage of his life that it makes no difference if he, Paul, is dead or alive. To Paul each has its merits, and so he gives his body, his very life to Christ in thanksgiving; and he asks that we do the same. Wow! That's a tall request, but it is truly worth the effort.

The **Gospel Reading** is from *Matthew (20:1-16)*. In this passage, Jesus is giving us a lesson on what the kingdom of heaven is like. When the Bible uses the word "like" it does not mean "the same as." So we must look for a similarity or likeness. In this story, the similarity is the landowner who is somewhat like God the Father. God can be as generous as He wishes to those He loves and even to those who He might not totally approve of. This might be the way He is working with someone to bring them around to His way of thinking. So we must not look with longing at someone who is rich or powerful or good looking. Who knows, behind the façade there could be all kinds of problems. If we have needs, either spiritual or temporal (and who doesn't?) we should call upon our generous Lord and God for mercy and help, but we should also see to it that our spiritual house is in order. Then, let the "chips fall where they may." Just something to think about during your Prayer Time this week! Oh, and the message? I'll also leave that for you to think about. **MFB**