

Homily092417

## THE PARABLE WE LOVE TO HATE

### A Story.

There were three person and each of them was given the amount of \$10,000. There were no strings attached. They could use the money as each saw fit. They were encouraged to use the money wisely or to do some good. But they were totally free in their choices. They were each given the identical \$10,000. They started on an equal footing.

#1. She took the money and earmarked \$2500 to hold a great party for all those people who had been so good to her throughout her life and whom she was never able to thank appropriately in her own way of thinking.

#2. She gave each of her four children \$1500 because she was aware of the struggles they were having financially in their lives. She wanted to be able to help them out financially.

#3. She chose to invest her monies because she was a widow and she would need extra funds as she grew older.

At the end of the year there was an accounting.

Woman #1: Her \$10,000 was now about \$7,000.

Woman #2 Her \$10,000 was now \$4,000.

Woman #3 He \$10,000 was now almost \$12,000.

All three women used their funds in wonderful and good ways. But in the course of a year even though they had all started out equally they were now not very equal at all. But they were all content with the decisions they had made. So, the Question: Can we ever really be equal in such matters for very long at all? And they did nothing frivolous or selfish with their funds.

Now suppose the second woman had given one of her children an extra thousand because she knew that one needed more or was in more dire straits. Does that change the equation at all? While she was being more generous with one would the others see it that way? Or must everything that comes from our parents be divided proportionately? Equally? Does the money represent something else perhaps? Like, love. Less money means less love? Is that how we sometimes think? Do you see how suddenly expectations and personal assessments have entered the picture? And not for the good.

What if the first woman had children who resented her throwing her big thank you party but not sharing any of her newfound funds directly with them? Might there be some resentment? But would not the resentment derive from personal expectations on the part of the kids about what the parent should have

done with the money? I think we all get the idea. It is often our own expectations that we project onto others that fuel our discontent and resentment. And such is the heart of the gospel story today. Those workers weren't wronged but they felt wronged because they didn't get to share in the generosity that the others did.

Why is Jesus telling this story? What is his point? We get caught up in the "unfairness of the vineyard owner" towards the all-day workers that we miss the other important details. Notice, it is the vineyard owner himself, and no foreman, who goes out to the marketplace five different times that day. 6AM, 8AM, Noon, 3PM, 5PM. He goes out seeking to find workers for his vineyard but also those willing to work but who have not been hired. The accounting at the end of the day is not what happens at 6 o'clock in the evening. The parable is not about daily wages or how much pay we are owed. The parable is about our lives on earth but specifically it's about our last day. And when the vineyard owner comes out on that last day the story is all about what each person needs at the end of the day, at the end of his life. What is that? Why, it's forgiveness.

How much forgiveness? Whatever the person needs whether they have been hard working disciples all their lives or just made it in at the end by means of a death bed confession. This story is about how generous God is prepared to be with us no matter what we have or haven't done. The story is about how God goes in search of us all our life long. Some he connects with early and some late. But all need forgiveness and all are provided the same opportunity for forgiveness, the same "pay," so to speak. The owner is willing to accept our work even if it isn't very much. He desires us to help out in this vineyard we call earth especially as we are leaving it for good.

Sometimes this week get to a quiet place and look at your attitude about generosity and expectations that you have. Think about whether you believe how relentless God is in looking for you over and over again. Personally I have seen a lot of people die and I have seen many people come to believe that there was full forgiveness for them at the end even though they had not borne the heat of the day doing the Lord's work. Our own judgment will include our attitude towards God's generosity and who receives it. We can rejoice that that is who our God is. We can resent and grow bitter that there wasn't more for us. The choice is ours and the point of the story is right there.