

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
Are you envious because I am generous?

Isaiah 55:6–9; Psalm 145:2–3, 8–9, 17–18; Philippians 1:20c–24, 27a; Matthew 20:1–16a

Dear brothers and sisters,

The parable of the vineyard about the Kingdom of God has often made me pause and reflect during my years in ministry. I hope it encourages you to reflect as well. This story is meant to touch us and reveal the resistance that can hide in our hearts. We know God is love, but do we love as he does? We know God forgives, but do we forgive as he does? We know God always wants what is best for us, but do we want the same for others?

Today's gospel offers important, sometimes difficult, lessons about how God thinks and what he values, as seen in the parable of the vineyard. In the story, the vineyard owner welcomes everyone willing to work and pays them all the same wage, even those who arrived late. The workers who labored longer complained, believing it was unfair. They felt they deserved more because they worked longer. But the vineyard owner responds with love and mercy that transcend what we can understand. This is the God we believe in. We may never fully grasp God's mercy, but we know his ways are much higher than ours. Our complaints do not diminish his love and mercy. He wants us to be glad that others joined and received the same reward, even if they came late. As God said in our first reading, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways" (Is. 55:8). It is not easy to think, love, and care as God does, but we can build our lives on his great love for us. In God's vineyard, what matters most is not how much or how long we work, but how much love we put into it.

In real life, people often complain, especially those who started early and worked longer. We should try to understand why. Notice the question the vineyard owner asks: "Are you envious because I am generous?" (Matt. 20:15). This question is for all of us. However we answer, it reveals the jealousy that can hide behind our sense of fairness. When we reflect on this question, the story becomes personal, and we see how envy can lead us to resist God's ways. Envy leads to bitterness and keeps us from being happy for others when they are blessed. Where envy and selfishness are present, confusion and all kinds of trouble follow. It can fill our minds and lead us into sin. Envy becomes a mortal sin if we wish serious harm on someone else (cf. James 3:14, CCC 2539).

So how can we deal with envy? Here are some practical ideas to try this week. These steps help us show Jesus more clearly in our lives, as St. Paul writes in his letter to the Philippians, "Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death" (Phil. 1:20).

First, we need to admit that envy hurts us. The person who holds onto envy is the one who gets hurt first. It is like a boomerang that always comes back. When we are filled with envy, nothing tastes good and nothing feels joyful. People who are envious often sigh, groan, and feel sad; envy can trouble us day and night. When we see how pointless envy is, we can avoid falling into negative thinking.

Second, we should learn to laugh at ourselves and stop comparing ourselves to others. Whether we feel jealous of someone's success or think we are better, we fall into a trap. Constant comparison can slowly poison our hearts. Remember, someone else's success does not diminish your own. God has a special plan for each of us. Choose gratitude over envy. Offer encouragement instead of jealousy. As Saint Paul says, "Rejoice with those who rejoice" (Romans 12:15). When we celebrate others' blessings, our hearts find peace with God.

Finally, we need to humble ourselves before God and ask him to help us focus on his amazing love for everyone. We should remember our own faults, even those no one else knows. We should avoid

speaking ill of others and instead choose to do good, even when it is difficult. As our patron St. Therese said, "You know well enough that our Lord does not look so much at the greatness of our actions or their difficulty but the love with which we do them."

It is a privilege to be part of the Lord's vineyard. We are not just workers; we share in the life and greatness of the vineyard's owner. God comes to us in a humble and simple way through the Holy Eucharist. His greatness is hidden in this gentle form to reveal his tenderness, so that when we receive him, we are not afraid but filled with awe and wonder. When we receive Jesus, we receive the kingdom itself. If we truly receive the Holy Eucharist in faith, there is no room for envy, only for doing good with great love for others.

God bless you!

Fr. Manny Hewe, Pastor