



The apostle Paul in prison by Rembrandt - anagoria, Public Domain

September 20, 2026

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Written by
THE
FAITHFUL
DISCIPLE

Is 55:6-9 | Phil 1:20c-24, 27a | Mt 20:1-16a

GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

Writing to the Philippians while in prison, St. Paul feels complete peace about his fate. To stay on this earth means fruitful labor for him; to die means entering eternal life with God. Having lived apart from God in the past, he finds immense joy at being able to labor for the Lord, despite the suffering it entails. Upon first glance, the parable St. Matthew recounts in his Gospel offers a glimpse of God's generous mercy. But reading the parable alongside Paul's letter reveals another layer of meaning: Those who have more time to labor in the vineyard of the Lord are given a great gift – the chance to bear immense fruit. Our long hours laboring in the Lord's vineyard are not something we're meant to merely suffer through on our way to our eternal reward. Rather, they are an opportunity to be drawn into communion with the Lord. As with St. Paul, the joy that comes from realizing that we share in the very life and work of God is available to us now, not only in the life to come.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

Each of the vocations to which God calls us requires sacrifice and includes challenges. Living in humble obedience to the will of God is not easy, but it is full of peace. To focus only on the eternal reward offered after death disregards the love, peace, and joy of the kingdom that we are gifted *now*. We are invited to be laborers in the vineyard, co-creators with the Master of the universe. As we creatively and compassionately allow God's love to flow through us, we infuse new life and love into the world around us. When we truly believe that a life lived in Christ is the most abundant life, we stop asking what is fair and we begin to eagerly invite others to join us in the vineyard. Doing the will of God in this life is a reward unto itself.

STUDY

This week, return to the first reading from the prophet Isaiah. As you reflect on his call to “seek the Lord while he may be found,” consider the gift of God's love and presence in your life right now. And as we labor in the vineyard, keeping our eyes on the ultimate reward of eternity with our Creator, may we also recognize the immense gift of knowing, loving, and serving God in this life.