

September 23, 2017

Our gospel today, is very unpopular in America, because it seems to be unfair. Union people, hate this gospel because it's unfair. Most people that work, hate this gospel because it's unfair. And yet, God always asks us, "is it my ways that are unfair, or yours?" This gospel shows, our ways are unfair. The owner happens to be God. Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is like this, he didn't say the earth. But you know, each of us, raised in America is raised with a merit system. The more we do the more we expect. If I work ten hours, I want overtime. The more we do the more we expect, and yet, we project that on God, and we can't. God cannot be made equal to us. And, that's what we do, so many times. We make God in our own image. And of course, that's idolatry. The landowner has a vineyard. In the Holy Land, the vineyard harvest takes place in September, this month. They wait until the very last minute to harvest the grapes because they are the sweetest. But at the same time, they're gambling. The rain storms could come through and damage the crops at any minute. There is a trade-off here. The landowner could very well need to hire so many laborers because he sees the clouds coming, and he wants those grapes to be as sweet as possible. They liked sweet syrupy wine because they diluted it. Anyone who has ever drank Manischewitz straight, you might as well drink Aunt Jemimas pancake syrup straight. The wine is not meant to be drank straight, it's meant to be diluted. That's why they did that, they diluted it so they would have more of it, but also, they knew about alcohol content. They wanted the grapes to be as sweet as possible. This landowner goes out to get day laborers. We still have day laborers in this country. Men who are not able to be hired by a company, hang out in a certain spot, and they're hired by the day. Over off of the 202 and Arizona Avenue in Chandler, that spot at the Circle K, has been a day laborer site for decades. You drive by and these men are just waiting for somebody to drive up and say, "I need 2, or I need 4 people to work." And if they don't get their job, then their family doesn't have enough money for some things. These laborers in Israel, if they did not get work that day, their families starved the next day. There was no food. There was a usual daily wage that provided food for the family the next day. So he goes out and gets them and they agree to a contract, a verbal contract. I agree to work for you for the usual daily wage. But then the landowner goes out again, several times. And it's interesting that these times coincide with the Orthodox Jewish hours of prayer, throughout the day. Muslims are not the only ones who pray multiple times throughout the day. The Orthodox Jews pray multiple times. When I was in a plane from Tel Aviv to New York, they would get up about every two hours and the men would be putting on their prayer shawls and bowing like this and praying (because at the name of God they bow), and they're bowing the hole time and they are blocking the aisle, and they don't care. They have to say their prayers. At these times for prayer, the landowner goes out and hires more workers. And he gives them the verbal contract. "I'm hiring you for the usual daily wage, is that Okay?" "Yes." And then he goes out the last two times and he asks them, "Why are you still here, why aren't you working?" Why does he do this? Because he wants to determine their desire to work, their desire to be with him. So he hires them. And then, the last group, they get hired for one hour, and get paid the usual daily wage. The landowner could have avoided this whole problem, by paying the last first. The first would never know what those guys were paid. But he turns it around. He wants them to witness how generous he is. He wants them to see the munificence he has, he wants them to see that he is very generous, and a good person. And what happens? The usual grumbling. "How could she win the lottery? She doesn't need it, I need it." "I'm playing for my church." Yah, right. We grumble when other people have good fortune. The first were getting paid. Their families were going to eat. The last were getting paid. Their families were going to eat. The first are complaining about the good fortune of the last. There is a deeper part of this story. This is a story of heaven. This is a story of God. It's not a story, here on earth. God goes out at all hours to bring people into heaven. Yes, there are people that convert on their death bed. Is that fair? That we have to live our whole lives "good" and try to be good, and they do all these "wonderful things", and they get to go to there at the same time.

No, not in this world's viewpoint. But in God's eyes, all He cares about is getting people to heaven. All He cares about is bringing His little children into the house. He wants everybody there. So, in God's eyes, there is no "fair", or "unfair." There is only love. Only love. And these guys, that came in first are complaining? They stand a chance of losing heaven. Because God calls them a name. He says, "My friend, are you upset because I am generous?" Who does He call friend, in the gospels? Who gets called friend by God in the gospels? Jesus calls Judas friend. Friend, do what you have to do. In the gospels, friend, is not a nice term. If God is calling you friend, in the gospel, it's a warning shot. It's a bad thing. So, these guy that have been complaining, God said in the gospels and in the Old Testament, "idle words, you fool, you idiot, will get you out of heaven faster than anything else." My friend, watch what you say. My friend, don't be judgmental. My friend, shut up and say thank you. God is warning them. And he is saying, "are you upset because I am generous?"

When I say that Hitler can be in heaven right now, how many people like that thought? Not very many. But, he could have repented and said an act of contrition in the bunker, before he died. Because, he was, Catholic. Same thing with Stalin and Lenin. Same thing with Tito in Yugoslavia. Same thing with all these guys, that we don't like. Everyone says, "well John Wayne, look at his life, drinking and buying his big boat, having multiple wives, and all this." He converted on his deathbed and was baptized right before he died. Is that fair? Not in our eyes, but is it fair in God's eyes? Yes. Let me give you an example. If the goal is to get to heaven, then whatever it takes, we should get to heaven. Even if it happens at the last moment.

Four brothers lived in a house together, after their parents died. Two brothers were home and the house caught on fire. They started doing everything they could to put out the fire. Called the fire department. Then, they called their third brother, he was five miles away at work. He dropped everything and came to help them put out the fire. Then, they called their brother who was five hours away. He drove like a bat out of hell to get there, to help them put out the fire. They eventually got it done and were able to save most of the house. Afterwards, they sat down in an undamaged section, on a couch, and they were thankful that they had all worked together to put out the fire. What if the first two had said, "well wait a minute, you two shouldn't get credit because you weren't here first, we worked harder than you to put out the fire." Does that sound like it should be alright? No. They had a mission to put out the fire and they didn't care who arrived. The goal was, to save the house and they did it. It didn't matter when anybody showed up, they were thankful they were there. Heaven's the same way. It doesn't matter how you get there and when you get there, all that matters is that you are there. The goal. It's the same thing as if I say, "Father Alan Garcia over in Casa Grande has only been ordained two years, I've been ordained twenty and yet they are calling him a priest? How can they call him a priest, he hasn't done his time?" Does that sound smart? Does that sound intelligent? No, that's not right. Because he has earned his way into the priesthood. Is it his fault he was born 30 years after me? No, it's not. The goal is, if God calls you to the priesthood, get in the priesthood. My friend, God rest his soul, Father Bill Taft, he was ordained at the age of, 72. He went to Bishop Moreno and he said, "Bishop, I'd like to be a priest. I was a school teacher for 40 years, I was married, I've got six kids, and I feel God is calling me." What did Bishop Moreno say? "No, I'm sorry, I can't do that because you don't fit into the retirement plan." So Father Bill says, "Well, I have a good retirement, how about if I pay my own way through the seminary?" Bishop says, "You're on!" He was ordained at 72 and he served for ten years before he died. It didn't matter, the goal was to be a priest and he made it. The same thing with heaven. The goal is to get to heaven, any way we can, any time we can. So, if some people take a little bit longer, so what. They are there. Doesn't matter. John Wayne got there at the end of his life, we're doing it during the middle of our life, how much time is that? Not much, compared to eternity. So, when Jesus gives us this parable, He is telling us, "look at it through the eyes of God." The goal is

heaven, to be with him in heaven. Nothing more, nothing less. Some people are going to take longer to get there, some people are going to show up at a different time. The amazing thing is going to be the people that get there. We have the general judgment at the very end, we all come before God. We're going to look around and go, "what are you doing here?" And they're going to point their finger and say, "what are you doing here?" But, the goal has been met. We're all going to be in heaven. So we can't hold God to our earthly standards. We have to look at the mission, the goal. In God's eyes, there is only one goal, get into heaven.  
God bless you.