

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

It is a horrible condemnation that God proclaims over the workers called first, those who complain against Him: “Take what is yours, and go your way.” Pray God that in His mercy He would spare each of us such a terrible sentence. Pray that according to His grace and promise, He would not give us what we’ve earned.

For if we’re honest, each of us knows what we have earned from God. The “Thou shalt” and the “Thou shalt not” that proceed from God’s Holiness, the Ten Divine Commands scribed on Sinai’s stony Tablets by God’s fiery finger, testify against every man who wears Adam’s flesh. And that includes each of us.

And yet God is a God of grace. He is a God of love, the source of all true love. And in that love, He calls men to work in His Kingdom. This day He teaches you about Himself in the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard. The Parable is an answer to Peter, who asked the Christ “See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?”

Peter’s question is asked in earthly terms. Like a nervous accountant, he’s projecting return on investment. He has carefully counted what he has given up. He wants to know what he gets. He wants to know the reward of following Jesus. That’s not all bad. The Lord certainly teaches that we should “count the cost” in an effort to calculate whether we can finish the work we undertake in His Kingdom. But the economy of the Kingdom of Heaven is not like the economies of fallen men. Earthly math doesn’t work in God’s Kingdom.

In response to Peter’s rather fleshly question “...what shall we have?” The Lord gives a heavenly answer: "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life... For the Kingdom of Heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard."

The Parable clearly reveals that in light of the boundless grace of God and His Goodness, the envy and hubris of men is uncovered. Men don piety and respect and even thankfulness like an overcoat. But it can’t cover what is in their heart. Whitewashing a tomb doesn’t make it clean inside. So the true nature of fallen men is exposed by their reaction to the landowner’s amazing generosity.

The landowner did what he said he would do. He paid the workers what he had promised. But that wasn’t good enough for first workers. They were dissatisfied because they learned that their reward was the same as that of those called last. They became jealous. They complained against the landowner, even though he had kept his promise.

They compared their salary and their efforts to those of the other workers, and they found themselves worthy of more. So it is with the fallen flesh. They forgot their agreement, and envy got the better of them. But it is not just the workers in the Parable. It is true of each of us. Each of us have overlooked the gifts that God has given us, have minimized what we have, and

enviously eyed others who seem to have received more. Fallen men are like spoiled children. So the Lord condemns them, and you, with a question: "...is your eye evil because I am good?"

The Kingdom of Heaven is not like the kingdoms of men. Fallen human reason, the desires of the sinful heart, are exposed in the face of holiness. The landowner demonstrates pure grace in his reward of all the workers. It is lawful for him to do what he wishes with his own things. And Truth be told, what He wishes to do is to reward all men for the work of One Man. But like the workers in the Parable, most men will not receive it.

So those who complain are still paid. They're paid what they earned. They are ordered to take what is theirs and go. It's a death sentence. But still God keeps His promise. Upon the last God bestows grace. For in His Kingdom the last will be first. Not Moses, not the Prophets or the Patriarchs, those called first, but the Apostles, those called last, Peter, will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

The denarius is the reward of salvation. It is a free gift of mercy. It is God's free Gift to you. You receive the reward earned by Another. You receive the reward of the One who endured the searing heat of His Holy Passion. That's what faith does – in thanksgiving receive what Christ has earned, in faith receive forgiveness for sins, forgiveness even for the sins of jealousy and envy.

Faith receives imputed righteousness with joy. You receive Christ's forgiveness, Christ's righteousness, the same salvation given to Moses and the Prophets and the Patriarchs and the Apostles, although your time in the vineyard pales in comparison to theirs. And faith is content, faith returns thanks and praise, for the Good Gifts of God. And faith marvels at the gifts God has bestowed upon others, not envying what they have, but praising God for His grace.

For it is the Lord Himself who is the most Faithful Worker, the Faithful Servant, the Suffering Servant. It is the Lord Himself who worked the hardest, suffered the longest, and bore heat that no other man could bear – the searing heat of the unmitigated wrath of God poured out on Calvary.

He who is truly First, He who is before all things, He who with the Father and the Spirit is without beginning or end, He made Himself last. He made Himself last by taking on the sins of the world, by taking on your sins, covering Himself with transgression, and standing before the Father to make atonement for the sins of the world.

He made Himself a worm and no man, despised, rejected, forsaken, last - dead last. He took the lowest place, the place of shame and dishonor, the scourge and cross and tomb. You see, it is lawful for God to do what He wishes with His own things – to give His Son unto death to fulfill the Law for you.

He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

And that Holy, Precious Blood covers you. By it you receive the denarius of salvation. You are washed into righteousness and holiness in the flood of the font. You receive the full reward Christ earned for you.

And of that Blood you drink, of His Body you eat, in the heavenly foretaste He brings to you, His elect, His redeemed, the brethren among whom Christ is the Firstborn, you who are conformed to His Image, He the Firstfruits of the harvest of righteousness soon to come. You drink of the Spiritual Rock, which is Christ. And in Him, with you God is well pleased. So come, take and eat, take and drink. Take Christ, for He makes what is His yours. And whatever is right, you will receive.

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.