

## September 24, 2023: Seventeenth Sunday After Pentecost

### Main Idea: All people are valuable to God.

This story is hard to hear. Many of us reading this consider ourselves the early laborers, working hard and deserving compensation for our commitment and loyalty. So to hear that people who worked less got the same as those of us who work more doesn't seem fair.

Let's look at fairness as it comes to wages. Some of the hardest jobs to do get paid the least: cooks, cashiers, amusement attendants, childcare workers, housekeepers, home healthcare aids, and recreational protective services (lifeguards). None of these jobs allows for consistent breaks, and these workers are on their feet all day.

Some of the highest paying jobs include several in the medical field, computer/IT, architects, marketing and advertising, financial managers, and executives. Certainly these jobs can be hard work. But do these people work harder? Do they deserve more pay for their 40 hours than others? It seems we don't pay for working hard as much as we pay for perceived value of that work. One way we might change this inequity is to change our perception of what's valuable to us. If we valued people over what those people can do for us, there might be more equity in pay.

Jesus valued people over what the people could produce. The people who were hired in late in the day were no less valuable than the workers fortunate enough to get hired early in the morning. All people deserve to be fed. God's sees value in all humanity and God's generosity is grander than we can imagine.

### Scripture Summary

Jesus told a parable that was hard to hear. Laborers hired at the end of the day were paid the same as the laborers that toiled all day long. But God's generosity is good news if you came late to the game.



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September 24, 2023  
Seventeenth Sunday  
after Pentecost

## GOD'S WORD for Today

### First Reading: Exodus 16:2-15

<sup>2</sup>The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup>The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.” <sup>4</sup>Then the Lord said to Moses, “I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. <sup>5</sup>On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days.” <sup>6</sup>So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, “In the evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, <sup>7</sup>and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your complaining against the Lord. For what are we, that you complain against us?” <sup>8</sup>And Moses said, “When the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the Lord has heard the complaining that you utter against him—what are we? Your complaining is not against us but” against the Lord. <sup>9</sup>Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, ‘Draw near to the Lord, for he has heard your complaining.’” <sup>10</sup>And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. <sup>11</sup>The Lord spoke to Moses and said, <sup>12</sup>“I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.’” <sup>13</sup>In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. <sup>14</sup>When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. <sup>15</sup>When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat.

### Psalm: Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45

### Second Reading: Philippians 1:21-30

<sup>21</sup>For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. <sup>22</sup>If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. <sup>23</sup>I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; <sup>24</sup>but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. <sup>25</sup>Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, <sup>26</sup>so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again. <sup>27</sup>Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, <sup>28</sup>and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. <sup>29</sup>For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well— <sup>30</sup>since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

### Gospel: Matthew 20:1-16

**20** “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. <sup>2</sup>After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. <sup>3</sup>When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; <sup>4</sup>and he said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went. <sup>5</sup>When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. <sup>6</sup>And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, ‘Why are you standing here idle all day?’ <sup>7</sup>They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard.’ <sup>8</sup>When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.’ <sup>9</sup>When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. <sup>10</sup>Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. <sup>11</sup>And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, <sup>12</sup>saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ <sup>13</sup>But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage?’ <sup>14</sup>Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. <sup>15</sup>Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ <sup>16</sup>So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”