

Baptism and continuing throughout your life through Word and Sacrament. To not serve in the Church is simply laziness.

But Jesus doesn't entertain or excuse their idleness. The master of the house simply says, **"You go into the vineyard, too"** (Mt 20:7). What's remarkable is that they go. They listen to His Word. The 11th hour sloths turned workers had faith. Perhaps we could say that the 11th hour workers had more faith than the first hour workers. Those hired last went to work without an agreed upon amount or even a promise that they would get whatever is right. They just obeyed and went. The first hour workers went to work relying on a pre-arranged contract.

When the work day is over, the master of the house summons the laborers. And he begins by paying those hired last, which is another inversion of how we'd expect things to work. Human nature always think the first workers should get rewarded first. And this is natural law, meaning this doesn't need to be taught. For example, my kids who race to bed every night think they always have to be first in bed or else they're the loser. Well, until they learned the "first is the worst second is the best" rhyme to justify being second place. But you get the point! The master of the house who first pays the last workers hired throws off the expected pattern.

After the master of the house pays the 11th hour workers an entire day's wage, Jesus continues the parable, **"Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius"** (Mt 20:10). Those hired first thought the exact same way we would. Again, natural law. If a misbehaving child receives a treat, the well behaved brother or sister knows to bargain, "Can I get more since I was good?"

I began the sermon by saying this parable is one of the clearest illustrations of God's grace. God's grace is not deserved. And He doesn't bestow it by standards of human measure. He gives what He gives to everyone equally, and it's more than we could hope for. When those first hour workers **"grumbled at the master of the house 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'"** (Mt 20:12), their complaint was fair. But God's grace isn't fair. And that's the point. He doesn't pour out extra grace to those who obey His Word better or sooner than others. He doesn't reward those who finish first in the race to bed at night or in an alpine skiing event at the Olympics or who signs up to volunteer the most at Church. The world gives gold, silver, and bronze medals and only to the winners. Jesus gives faith, the forgiveness of sins, and eternal life equally to all who hear His Word and don't reject it. Christ is the victor, and by faith we receive the bounty of His triumph over sin, death, and the power of the devil. **"God shows no partiality"** as Paul teaches in **Romans 2:11**.

God grants His grace equally to all who receive it. He forgives sinners great and small equally. It is a lie of the devil to think that your sins could be too great or too many for Christ to forgive. Your Jesus is bigger than the world's biggest sins. Your Jesus is greater than the world's worst transgressions. Take what Christ gives you joyfully no matter when it was or is in your life that He sends you to work. Rejoice when He gives the fullness of His grace to the 11th hour Christian. And rejoice when you receive the same. Because neither the 11th hour Christian nor you deserve any of it. Again, God's grace is not fair. He spreads it almost wastefully as we will hear in the Gospel reading next week.

As Christians sometimes do, after we receive the joy of serving the Lord in His vineyard, we can be tempted to dwell on the amount of time we wasted doing things before we got our priorities straight. Don't despair. So what if you haven't been working since the first hour of the day? Whenever it is the Lord sends you, whether it's the first, third, sixth, ninth, or eleventh hour, be content with the grace God gives you. Be content with the work God has given you to do. Don't dwell on all the things you didn't do yesterday. Repent. Trust in Jesus for forgiveness. And know your reward that Jesus earned by dying on the cross, and gives to you, is great in heaven. Lest the master of the house say unto you like he said to those first hour laborers, **"Take what belongs to you and go"** (Mt 20:14), repent and instead believe what He says to those who come in repentant faith, "Take and eat" and "Take and drink." To the contrite in heart Jesus does not send away, but instead beseeches to come. The grace He gives is more than we could ever hope for. The love He gives is more than we can ever understand. Receive it joyfully and get to work. In Jesus' name, Amen.