

16th Sunday after Pentecost September 20, 2020

15th Sunday after Trinity Proper 20 (25)
Lectionary Year A – the Gospel of Matthew

Living the Lutheran Lectionary

A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.

An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.

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Are You Envious Because
I am Generous?
Matthew 20:1-16

<https://pastormandi.com/sermons/gospel/are-you-envious-because-i-am-generous-matthew-201-16/>

Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 555 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 377

“Salvation unto us has come”

Paul Speratus* (1484–1551), a colleague of Luther and a significant contributor to the efforts of the Reformation, fashioned this hymn from the gut-wrenching threads of experience. Speratus was an ordained preacher who was expelled from several cities for his evangelical preaching. He was excommunicated for preaching salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and was eventually arrested, imprisoned and condemned to death. He did manage to escape his captors, and in this freedom was used by the Lord to great ends...

The language and tune of this hymn are borne along with what is seemingly a sigh of blissful relief. There is so much joy, it appears that Speratus cannot stop writing stanzas, and so we are given a hymn with ten stanzas of great substance. Let's consider a few of these stanzas. **Stanza 1** does a wonderful job of telling the reader the purpose of the joyful hymn to follow. **Stanzas 2–4** drop us into the dirty reality of the Law's requirement, our sinful condition, and our helpless standing against it...**Stanza 5** is a significant turning point in the text of the hymn, setting the stage for the Christian to sing the remaining stanzas with confidence and certainty...The remaining **stanzas (6–10)** reintroduce the Church to familiar terms... **The hymn ends with a Trinitarian conclusion...**" study by Christopher I. Thoma

➤ <https://www.lcms.org/worship/hymn-of-the-day-studies>

➤

*Learn more about Paul Speratus and his parallels to Paul's situation in today's Philippians reading at <https://www.bach-cantatas.com/Lib/Speratus.htm>

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tg4sbwYsj4> Organ prelude by "Walter L. Pelz, from the organ book A Reformation Celebration: Organ Preludes on Sixteenth-Century Hymns", Concordia Publishing House
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gBXooSlKmB8> Koiné "The Vine" © 2011 Koiné
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSRMAr4K_gY Choral presentation, "Heirs of the Reformation: Treasures of the Singing Church" © 2008 Concordia Publishing House
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pjCMmq7o0Uk> Cantiques Karaokés

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001
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O. T. - "Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near"

Psalm – "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?"

Epistle – "Only let your manner of life be worthy^[d] of the gospel of Christ"

Gospel – "***Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?***"

Isaiah 55:6-9; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), Exodus 16:2-15 or Jonah 3:10 – 4:11 (Next week: Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32; RCL, Exodus 17:1-7 or Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32)

➤ *Verses 1-5 were the reading for Proper 13*

<https://bethlehemlutheranchurchparma.com/BibleStudies/51358/DownloadText>

“Grace isn’t Fair!” – and aren’t you glad? “Fairness” deals with “rewards and punishments,” keeping score. If God dealt with us in “fairness” we would have no hope, no forgiveness, no salvation. “Fair” means we get what we deserve; “Grace” means we get what we don’t deserve. It is “By grace that we are saved through faith.” (Ephesians 2:8)

In our first Scripture reading we read: “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8-9) And again this weekend, we rejoice greatly that God’s generous ways are not our ways (of what we consider “fair”), as Jesus again illustrates in “The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard.”...

➤ <https://holycrosslutheran.net/grace-isnt-fair-isaiah-556-9-matthew-209-16/> Pastor Dan Meyers, Associate Pastor, Holy Cross Lutheran Church and School, Wichita, Kansas.

The Compassion of the LORD VERSES 1-13

55 ⁶ “Seek the LORD while he may be found;

call upon him while he is near;

⁷ let the wicked forsake his way,

and the unrighteous man his thoughts;

let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him,

and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts,

neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.

⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth,

so are my ways higher than your ways

and my thoughts than your thoughts...

¹¹ *so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;*

it shall not return to me empty,

but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,

and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it...

A passage in Isaiah talks about seeking.

"Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near." (Isaiah 55:6)

What does it mean to "seek the Lord"? The verb means "to seek with care, with diligence."

Here it seems also to have the sense of "worship."[\[1\]](#)

[1] "Seek" in verse 8a is the Qal imperative of *dārash*, "to seek with care, inquire, require." It is a frequent parallel and equivalent of *bāqash*, "to seek, require, desire" (Piel and Pual). To seek God can also connote an inquiry after knowledge, advice, insight, into a particular problem. Inquiry could be made through a prophet or priest. In the Old Testament, it often refers to praying to the Lord (Genesis 25:22), sometimes seeking a word from the Lord -- advice, direction, knowledge (Leonard J. Coppes, *dārash*, in R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* ("TWOT"; Moody Press, 1980)#455). William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, based on the Lexical work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans / Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), p. 75 sees in *dārash*, the meanings of "worship," "turn in petition to" used 75 times in the OT, and occasionally "seek a word from," among others.

**"Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near."** (Isaiah 55:6)[4]

It's dangerous to put off seeking God to a more opportune time. I've talked to many people who wished they could redo whole seasons of their lives, but it's too late now. There is a time to seek him, and that time is now. Tomorrow you may not feel that same hunger and intensity. Whole years may be lost to intimate communion with the Lord. Don't put it off; do it now!

There was a time -- only two years into their sojourn in the Sinai desert -- when the Israelites could have gone into Canaan and conquered the land. But they rebelled, refused, and spent the next 38 years in the desert. There was a short window of time during which they could obey, but it was fleeting, and they chose wrong (Numbers 13-14). "Today, if you hear his voice..." -- respond (Hebrews 3:7; Psalm 95:7).

"Behold, now is the favorable time;
behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2)

Back to Isaiah 55. Now, Isaiah describes what is necessary for his people to seek the Lord with whole hearts.

"Let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the LORD..." (Isaiah 55:7a)

People are called on to forsake their way, their path, the lifestyle that they are pursuing.[5] "Forsake" is a strong word.[6] We prefer half-way measures, but the Lord calls for full repentance. We must leave the wrong or sinful pathway, and start walking on the right and righteous one. Repentance requires a lifestyle change...

Our thoughts are the precursors and motivators of our actions. We can burn with anger inwardly, and try to be nice on the outside, but people aren't usually fooled...

God invites us to think like he thinks. To think his thoughts.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9)

Yahweh asks us to become like he himself is...

We purify our thoughts by letting them be cleansed by constant attention to the Scriptures, which is a way to think God's thoughts after him...

At the same time, we train ourselves to turn away from and reject thoughts that are wrong so they don't take root in us. We can't prevent thought temptations, but we don't have to embrace them. Martin Luther said, "You can't keep a bird from flying over your head, but you can keep him from making a nest in your hair."...

We are called to "return to the Lord." The Hebrew verb used here, "better than any other verb, combines in itself the two requisites of repentance: to *turn from* evil and to *turn to* the good."

<http://www.joyfulheart.com/maturity/seeking-god-diligently.htm> "Copyright Ralph F. Wilson <pastor@joyfulheart.com>. All rights reserved. Used by permission."

Psalm 27:1-9; RCL, Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45 or Psalm 145:1-8 (Psalm 25:1-10; RCL, Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16 or Psalm 25:1-9)

"One of the themes that weaves its way through Psalm 27 is the belief that true salvation is to be found only in the presence of Yhwh. The speaker desires to dwell in the house of Yhwh so that he can see "the beauty of Yhwh" (27:4). And he knows that in His house, Yhwh will protect him from his enemies (27:4-6). When he feels threatened, he is determined to seek Yhwh's presence, and he asks Yhwh not to hide His presence from him or to forsake him (27:8-9). And the final encouragement from the speaker is to "wait for Yhwh" (27:14)..."

➤ <https://blog.cph.org/study/psalm-27-true-salvation-in-god> Post adapted from *Concordia Commentary: Psalms 1-50* copyright © 2020 Concordia Publishing House. All rights reserved.

The LORD Is My Light and My Salvation Of David. Verses 1-14

(Safe in the Shelter of the Lord Verses 1-6*)

27 The LORD is my light and my salvation;

whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold^a of my life;

of whom shall I be afraid?

²When evildoers assail me

to eat up my flesh,

my adversaries and foes,

it is they who stumble and fall.

³Though an army encamp against me,

my heart shall not fear;

though war arise against me,

yet^b I will be confident.

⁴One thing have I asked of the LORD,

that will I seek after:

that I may dwell in the house of the LORD

all the days of my life,
 to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD
 and to inquire⁴ in his temple.
⁵ For he will hide me in his shelter
 in the day of trouble;
 he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
 he will lift me high upon a rock.
⁶ And now my head shall be lifted up
 above my enemies all around me,
 and I will offer in his tent
 sacrifices with shouts of joy;
 I will sing and make melody to the LORD.

(Hear Me, Teach Me, Lead Me 7- 14*)

⁷ Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud;
 be gracious to me and answer me!
⁸ You have said, “Seek⁴ my face.”
 My heart says to you,
 “Your face, LORD, do I seek.”⁴
⁹ Hide not your face from me.
 Turn not your servant away in anger,
 O you who have been my help.
 Cast me not off; forsake me not,
 O God of my salvation!...

*¹⁴ Wait for the LORD;
 be strong, and let your heart take courage;
 wait for the LORD!*

- a. [Psalm 27:1](#) Or *refuge*
- b. [Psalm 27:3](#) Or *in this*
- c. [Psalm 27:4](#) Or *meditate*
- d. [Psalm 27:8](#) The command (*seek*) is addressed to more than one person
- e. [Psalm 27:8](#) The meaning of the Hebrew verse is uncertain

*[Psalms](#) by James Limburg, 2000, [Westminster Bible Companion](#)

“...Like Psalm 40, the lectionary psalm for the Second Sunday after Epiphany, Psalm 27 seems to be made up of two originally separate psalms: an Individual Hymn of Thanksgiving in

verses 1-6 and an Individual Lament in verses 7-14. The lectionary reading traverses the two sections, however (vv. 1 and 4-9), and thus calls for us to read Psalm 27 as an integral whole rather than as a juxtaposition of two distinct psalms. Two factors suggest that we read Psalm 27 in such a manner.

First, a considerable shared vocabulary links the two portions of the psalm: "my salvation" in verses 1 and 9; "foes/enemies" (Hebrew 'oyeb) in verses 2 and 6; "adversaries" in verses 2 and 12; "heart" in verses 3, 8, and 14; and "seek" in verses 4 and 8.

Second, as in the case of Psalm 40 (see the commentary for Psalm 40 at this website), we may be permitted to read the Individual Hymn of Thanksgiving in verses 1-6 as part of the "Expression of Trust," one of the five elements of a Lament Psalm, which consists of the following: **(1) an Invocation**, in which the psalmist cries out to God to listen (27:7, 8, 9, 11); **(2) a Complaint**, in which the psalmist tells God what is wrong (27:12); **(3) a Petition**, in which the psalmist tells God what the psalmist wants God to do (27:7-9, 11-12); **(4) an Expression of Trust**, in which the psalmist recounts what God has done in the past so that the psalmist has hope that God will help again (27:1-6, 10, 13); and **(5) an Expression of Praise**, in which the psalmist celebrates the goodness and sovereignty of God (27:14).

...Psalm 27... examined as a consistent whole, a statement by a psalm singer of the nearness of God's deliverance (verses 1-6) and the confidence that God will again come to the singer's aid (verses 7-14)..."

- http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=829

[Nancy deClaisse-Walford](#) Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Languages, McAfee School of Theology, Mercer University, Atlanta, GA

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"One of the brightest jewels in the Psalter is the Psalm 27.

It's situated on the third Sunday of Epiphany but could be read and pondered with great profit and joy any Sunday, or at any moment. *(Repeat of this Sunday in Year A)*

How profound is the first verse? "The Lord is my light." In ancient times there were two kinds of light: the sun and the lamp. First, the sun: brilliant, unable to be stared at, and, like God, the sun gives light, warmth, and life, and highlights beauty. No wonder pagans worshipped the sun. God's first concoction, and God's most primal gift to us, is light. On Day 1 of all history, "God said, 'Let there be light'" (Genesis 1:3). John echoes, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5)...

"One thing I asked of the Lord; that will I seek after; to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple" (verse 4) is one of the Bible's most eloquent, emotionally powerful, visionary verses, well worth memorizing, or installing as your life's mission statement, etching it into the core of your soul.

We ask a great many things of God, of ourselves, of others, and of life. But really, there is just "one thing" that finally matters, and to garner everything else but miss out on the one good thing would be tragic. To the rich young man, who was not only successful but also diligently religious, Jesus said "One thing you lack" (Luke 18:22). Martha busied herself preparing a multi-course feast for Jesus, but he said, "One thing is needful" (Luke 10:42) -- and he didn't mean just one dish. Jesus spoke of a merchant who sold everything just to purchase the one fantastic pearl (Matthew 13:45)...

The Psalmist adds another intriguing nuance: the one thing? “To behold the beauty of the Lord.” Not merely to see the Lord, which would be incredible, and stupendously wonderful. But it is “the beauty of the Lord.” When we see beauty, it’s hard to look away. We must have it. We do not notice competitors for our attention...

...a wise course might be to surrender on the work, and yield yourself to the Psalm or maybe even in worship just to let the Psalm stand on its own, and let the people listen and marvel while you let it do its own lovely work.”

- http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1872
[James Howell](#) Senior Pastor, Myers Park United Methodist Church, Charlotte, N.C.

Philippians 1:12-14, 19-30; RCL, Philippians 1:21-30 (Philippians 2:1-4 (5-13) 14-18; RCL, Philippians 2:1-13)

“...The Indomitable Gospel. In case you are wondering what the word “indomitable” means, it means, “impossible to subdue.” And that is what the gospel of Jesus Christ is. It is unconquerable, and it is indomitable. I want to begin by reading ... verses (12-14) that in our English translation is one sentence.

“Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.”

He says at the end of verse 14, please let your eye see this, “because of my imprisonment.” No imprisonment, the church in Rome remains flat. No imprisonment, Caesar’s household remains a hellhole. No imprisonment, no one on the streets of Rome is talking about the gospel. But because of Paul’s imprisonment, the elite of the elite, the praetorian guard, are being won to faith in Jesus Christ. Because of Paul’s imprisonment, the word is spread throughout Caesar’s own household, and the saints in Caesar’s household are greeting the saints in Philippi. And because of Paul’s imprisonment, the word on the street is Jesus Christ, and people are talking about the Lord. And because of Paul’s imprisonment, the church in Rome has new boldness and new courage, perhaps as they’ve never had before, to speak the word of God without fear. This was God’s sovereign purpose.”

- <http://www.onepassionministries.org/transcripts/2015/11/30/the-indomitable-gospel-112-14> Dr. Steven J. Lawson is President and founder of OnePassion Ministries, a ministry designed to equip biblical expositors to bring about a new reformation in the church.

Greeting Verses 1-2

Thanksgiving and Prayer Verses 3-11

The Advance of the Gospel Verses 12-18a

¹² I want you to know, brothers,^[a] that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, ¹³ so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard^[b] and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. ¹⁴ And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word^[c] without fear.

¹⁸ What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

To Live Is Christ Verses 18b-30

Yes, and I will rejoice, ¹⁹ for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, ²⁰ as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴ But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

²⁷ Only let your manner of life be worthy^[d] of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸ and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. ²⁹ For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, ³⁰ engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

- a. [Philippians 1:12](#) Or *brothers and sisters*. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, the plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") may refer either to *brothers* or to *brothers and sisters*; also verse [14](#)
- b. [Philippians 1:13](#) Greek *in the whole praetorium (also in NASB)*
- c. [Philippians 1:14](#) Some manuscripts add *of God*
- d. [Philippians 1:27](#) Greek *Only behave as citizens worthy*

"Paul was held either in a Roman building (Acts 23:35) or under house arrest (Acts 28:16). There's some dispute about where he was -- Rome, Ephesus, or Caesarea. There's something to be said for each view, though the traditional view that he wrote from Rome seems stronger to me. Fortunately, it makes little difference to how we are to understand his letter. Wherever he was, he was not alone, but "with a soldier to guard him" (Acts 28:16).

In the Roman world Paul's imprisonment was legally not considered a penalty for a crime, but a sort of "holding tank" used to detain those awaiting trial or execution.[\[28\]](#) Presumably, Paul was imprisoned in Rome awaiting his trial before Caesar himself (or one of Caesar's personal representatives),[\[29\]](#) which was a right he claimed as a Roman citizen. Though guarded during this time, he was granted freedom to entertain guests (Acts 28:17, 23, 30) and carry on his preaching and teaching, at least to those who came to where he was (Acts 28:17-31). Ramsay tells us that a light chain fastened Paul's wrist to that of the soldier.[\[30\]](#) J.B. Lightfoot explains:

"According to Roman custom he was bound by the hand to the soldier who guarded him, and was never left alone day or night. As the soldiers would relieve guard in constant succession, the praetorians one by one were brought into communication with the 'prisoner of Jesus Christ,' and thus he was able to affirm that his bonds had borne witness to the Gospel 'throughout the imperial regiments.'" [\[31\]](#)

The soldiers here were members of the *praitōrion*, "the praetorium," variously translated, "palace guard" (NIV), "palace" (KJV), and "imperial guard" (NRSV). Originally, the word referred to the praetor's tent in camp, with its surroundings. Over time it came to designate the governor's official residence, as reflected in the gospels,[\[32\]](#) and finally, as in Philippians, the *members* of this elite guard.[\[33\]](#)

Can you imagine being a soldier alone with and chained to the Apostle Paul for a straight six hour shift? Many soldiers, no doubt, became Christians as a result, and their influence began to spread throughout their entire unit, to their families, and beyond. Whether or not they became Christians, they all knew that Paul's imprisonment was because of his testimony for Christ, not because he was some kind of political prisoner.

No wonder Paul declares: "What has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel" (1:12). "To advance" (NIV), "furtherance" (KJV), "to spread" (NRSV) is the Greek noun *prokopē*, "a movement forward to an improved state, progress, advancement, furtherance."[\[34\]](#)

We might be tempted to complain about our difficult situation. Not Paul. He knew that it wasn't about him, but about Christ and his kingdom. And so he sees progress rather than difficulties."...

- http://www.jesuswalk.com/philippians/2_proclaimed.htm Dr. Ralph F. Wilson, director of Joyful Heart Renewal Ministries. He has an intense interest in using the Internet to teach the Bible and to train disciples.

Matthew 20:1-16: RCL, the same reading (Matthew 21:23-27 (28-32); RCL, Matthew 21:23-32)

(You might want to read Chapter 19 since the lectionary skips it entirely.)

The “parable of the laborers in the vineyard” is unique to Matthew. The stories that surround this parable -- the rich young man/Peter’s claim to have “left everything” and Jesus’ third prediction of his death/James & John’s request -- were consecutive stories in Mark. Matthew’s inclusion of this parable interrupts that narrative flow. In Matthew’s narrative context, Jesus’ parable seems to be a story directly (connected) to discipleship issues, possessions, and authority.

Matthew’s placement was significant. In the larger narrative sequence, this “parable” was exemplified. For example, in the preceding story (cf. 19:23-29), Peter claimed, “we have left everything and followed you” (19:27). This kind of dedicated service to Jesus will reap a reward (cf. 19:28), but these rewards are not just for the immediate disciples but for all who have followed, since “many who are first will be last” (19:30). In like manner, in this week’s story, special privileges were downplayed.

The parable also played out in the story that followed the parable (21:17-28): Jesus predicted his death to the disciples for the third and final time (cf. Matthew 16:21; 17:12; 17:22-23). Right after this prediction, the mother of James and John requested special privilege for her sons (rather than a direct request from James and John themselves, as in Mark 10:35-45). They, too, “have borne the burden of the day” since they’ve been with Jesus from the beginning of his mission...”

- http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2157
Emerson Powery Professor of Biblical Studies, Messiah College, Grantham, PA

“The Holy Gospel beginning in the 20th Chapter of St. Matthew”

Laborers in the Vineyard Verses 1-16

20 *“For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ² After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius^[a] a day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³ And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴ and to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.’ ⁵ So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. ⁶ And about the eleventh hour he went*

out and found others standing. And he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’⁷ They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’⁸ And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.’⁹ And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius.¹⁰ Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius.¹¹ And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house,¹² 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.’¹³ But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?’¹⁴ Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you.¹⁵ Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?’¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first last.”

Jesus Foretells His Death a Third Time Verses 17-19

A Mother's Request Verses 20-28

Jesus Heals Two Blind Men Verses 29-34

- a. [Matthew 20:2](#) A denarius was a day's wage for a laborer
- b. [Matthew 20:15](#) Or is your eye bad because I am good?

“This is the Gospel of the Lord” **“Praise to You, O Christ”**

“Sometimes the good sermon is the one that gets under people’s skins and bothers them. Sometimes we preachers even want this, which is why it can be disappointing in its own way some weeks to have people at the church door say “I really enjoyed that sermon, pastor!” You want to reply “I was hoping it would bother you!”

In Matthew 20, Jesus is trying to bug us a little. It is one of those times in the Bible when if Jesus can get us a little upset, it creates a teachable moment. This story is calculated to offend.

Like most parables, the basic story is very simple and very mundane...

This parable is so memorable that we are tempted to forget it has a wider context in Matthew's gospel. It comes as part of a larger package of stories and incidents that drive home the idea of "the first shall be last." First Jesus took little children to himself in Matthew 19:13-15 to point out that their lowly, humble status somehow has something to do with receiving the kingdom the right way. Then the Rich Young Man shows up as a foil to a child-like nature. Jesus sadly has to undercut this young man's ideas on self-help salvation to make the point that salvation is all about God and so all about grace. Now this parable in Matthew 20:1-16 drives home that same point and is followed by yet another prediction by Jesus that it would finally take nothing short of his own death to make just that free and saving grace available. But the whole section climaxes in Matthew 20:20-28 when the disciples reveal how clueless they still are on this fundamental dynamic of the gospel as the mother of James and John tries to reserve seats of honor in Jesus' kingdom for her two boys, leading the other disciples to get ticked off, thus leading Jesus—one more time—to try to get through their thick skulls that the world's way of reckoning value must not be their way. But was anyone really listening?

- https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/proper-20a/?type=the_lectionary_gospel
Scott Hoezee

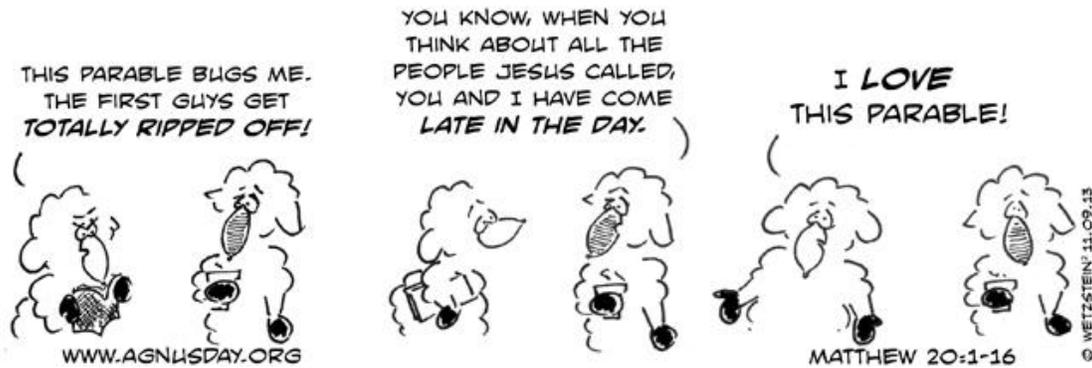
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"In our Gospel lesson for today, Jesus tells a story that reflects a completely different way of looking at things. It is a story about a vineyard owner who pays his workers on the principle of generosity, rather than on the principle of merit. And this story is supposed to illustrate "the Kingdom of Heaven." That phrase might lead us to think of this as some kind of otherworldly realm, but that is not the case. In Matthew's Gospel, "the Kingdom of Heaven" is just a more reverent way of saying "the Kingdom of God." They both refer to the same thing: a way of living that puts into practice God's justice and peace and freedom for all people. It is the goal toward which everything in Scripture is moving. It is the hope that continues to inspire faith and love on the part of those who seek to live as the people of God. (Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 97-99)....

The "Kingdom of Heaven" that Jesus talks about is a strange kingdom indeed! It operates completely differently from the way things work in our everyday lives. In the strange kingdom Jesus envisions, "the last will be first and the first will be last." In this strange kingdom, those who are deemed godless gain entry ahead of those who are supposedly godly and righteous. In this strange kingdom, little children are the example by which we all must measure ourselves. In this strange kingdom, those who serve are the ones who are viewed as great. It is a strange kingdom indeed! How can this kind of kingdom survive in a world where the first are first and the last are last? What was Jesus thinking in advocating this kind of kingdom as the ideal for those who seek to be the people of God?

I think the point of it all is that the grace of God, God's unconditional love, and God's unfailing mercy, are gifts that we can never earn..."

- <http://thewakingdreamer.blogspot.com/2011/09/nothing-to-earn-mt-201-16-1-i-have.html> Alan Brehm "Member of the human race, granddad, dad, avid cyclist, yoga practioner, music lover, PCUSA (Presbyterian)pastor."

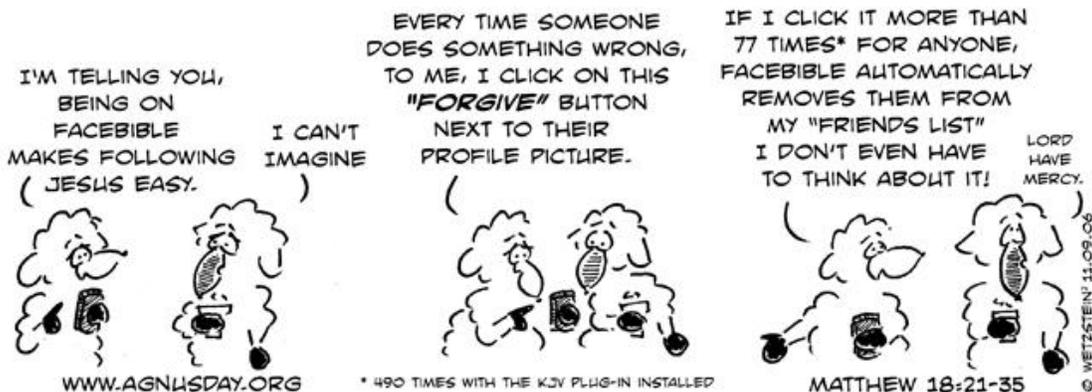


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The Matthew Challenge What if you found an audio version and listened to 2.3 chapters per week or about 13 verses per day?

Weekly review thoughts

The boys are currently masked and social distancing. This little ante pandemic throwback was just too popular not to reprise.



“So do you really want what you deserve? Because God says, “Be holy like I am holy.” Do God is not fair with us. And you can breathe a sigh of relief instead of a cry of, “That’s not fair.”

Its interesting because if you want to talk about what’s not fair all you have to do is look to the section right after this where Jesus tells his disciples that when he is in Jerusalem he would be betrayed, and condemned to death, and flogged, and then he would be crucified. But that wasn’t fair because Jesus was innocent. But that is exactly why he became man so that he could take on your sin all the times that you questioned God’s fairness... That’s getting what we don’t deserve.

He said that the last will be first and the first will be last. And that is exactly the way God made it. The first, the God of the universe, became last, so that the worst of sinners could become first. Jesus became like us so we can become like him, sons of God. And you’re right, it’s not fair. It’s grace because we are getting something we don’t deserve...”

- <http://www.nnyredemption.com/podcast/matthew-201-16/> Aaron Goetzing is the first full-time pastor at Redemption Lutheran Church, Watertown, NY