

September 18, 2011
Matthew 20:1-16
The labourers in the vineyard

In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

That's not fair!

Jesus tells the story about a landowner who was hiring men to work in his vineyard. He hired some of them early in the morning, some in the middle of the day, and some he hired just before quitting time.

When it was time to pay the workers, he paid them all the same amount of money. The workers who were hired early in the morning began to complain, "Hey, that's not fair! You paid the workers who worked only one hour the same as those of us who worked all day." The owner of the vineyard said, "I am not being unfair to you. I paid you what I agreed to pay you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Are you jealous because I am generous?"

What is the point of the story that Jesus told? The point is that there are some people who trust in Jesus and serve him all the days of their life. What is their reward? Their reward is eternal life in heaven.

There are other people who live most of their life in sin. They don't serve the Lord at all. Then, just before their life comes to an end, they put their trust in Jesus and accept him as their saviour. What is their reward? Their reward is the same as one who has served the Lord all their life—eternal life in heaven.

Is that fair? We might not think it's fair, but if we got what was fair, none of us would go to heaven. The Bible says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". I don't know about you, but I'm glad that God doesn't give me what is fair, but gives me his love and grace, in spite of what I deserve!

What were the benefits for those who were chosen first? They had a guaranteed job to do until the end of the day, and knew that they would be paid for it.

Those of us who are Christians may have been brought for baptism as Mason was last week—when we were small children—or we may have decided later on in life to receive the sacrament of baptism.

In light of the wonderful gift of this amazing grace that God offers to all, you and I can think of "Back to Church Sunday", which we are marking here next Sunday, September 25.

As this is the beginning of the church season, it's a really good time for us to focus our attention on encouraging our family, friends and neighbours to come to St. Leonard's.

Do you know the story of the two neighbours who lived in houses side by side. On Sunday morning, they each left their house at the same time. The one man said to the other, “Good morning. I am going golfing, will you come with me?” His neighbour, who was a parish priest, said, “No, I can’t. I am going to my church to worship God now. Have a great time!”

The next week, on Sunday morning, the two men met again outside their houses. “I am off to play golf again, will you come with me today?” the first man asked. “No”, the other replied, “I am going to church. I hope you have a great game today.”

For the third weekend in a row the two men left their houses at the same time on Sunday morning. “I guess you know that I am off to the golf course again. Will you come with me?” the first man asked. “No, replied the priest, I have a service to take at my church.”

Then the first man said: “I have a question for you—Every Sunday when we meet I have invited you to play golf with me. Why have you never invited me to go to church with you?”

From today’s gospel, you and I have this great message of the unmerited gift of God’s grace and love to share with others.

The New Testament is full of encouraging passages that can help us in our mission of outreach to others.

As Paul says in his letter to the Romans, chapter 8, verses 38-39:

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life,
Nor angels, nor rulers,
Nor things present, nor things to come,
Nor powers, nor height, nor depth,
Nor anything else in all creation,
Will be able to separate us from the love of God
In Christ Jesus our Lord.

Whenever we gather together to worship God, we know that Jesus promised that he would be with us, saying,

“Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”
[Matthew 18:20]

In this way, God hears our prayers...

When we are afraid, Jesus says,

“My peace I give to you.
I do not give to you as the world gives.

Do not let your hearts be troubled,
And do not let them be afraid.
[John 14:27]

When we are discouraged,
Jesus says,

“Ask, and it will be given you; Search and you will find.
Knock, and the door will be opened for you.
For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds,
And for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.
[Matthew 7:7-8]

When we are frustrated, we can remember what Paul writes to the Corinthians...

“God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough
of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.
[2 Corinthians 9:8]

When we are depressed, Jesus says in his Sermon on the Mount:

Blessed are the poor in spirit (those who depend only on God)
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn,
For they will be comforted.
[matthew 5:3,4]

And, in summary, Jesus says:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, so that everyone who has faith in him will
have eternal life and never really die.
[John 3:16]

And so, as we leave this place at the end of this service we need to remember as we invite our
family, friends and neighbours to come to St. Leonard's next Sunday that Jesus says...

“Let your light so shine before others, that they may see the good that you do and will praise God
in heaven.
[Matthew 5:16]

Amen.

