



Parable of the vineyard – the Payment of the Labourers

By a follower of Andrea del Sarto [Downloaded from https://www.sothebys.com/](https://www.sothebys.com/)

20 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ² He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

³ “About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. ⁴ He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ ⁵ So they went.

“He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. ⁶ About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’

⁷ “‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered.

“He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

⁸ “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’

⁹ “The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. ¹⁰ So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. ¹¹ When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ¹² ‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’

¹³ “But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? ¹⁴ Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. ¹⁵ Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’

¹⁶ “So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

(Matthew 20:1-16)

Silence, Prayer, And Communion Ending 9.30 a.m.

Silence

A time for thought...reflection...prayer

Prayer

Loving Father, whenever we start to get offended by your generosity or open-mindedness, give us grace to repent and join your rejoicing. Guard your church against self-righteousness and all the human rules and limits that we impose but which you would not own. Instead, keep before us the rule of love.

Lord, hear us

Lord, graciously hear us

Bless all employers with a spirit of fairness and generosity. We pray for those who have to queue for work and those who depend on state benefits. We remember those who are without work, those on low incomes, those whose employment is insecure, those who are on zero hours contracts, and those unable to find work because of any prejudice against them. We pray for young people looking for their first job: may they find satisfaction in their employment and a fair reward for their efforts.

May those who are prosperous be generous in sharing their resources with those in need. We pray for aid and relief organisations, especially those coping with refugees and bringing warmth, generosity and hope to those who have little else to cling to.

Lord, hear us

Lord, graciously hear us

Lord we give thanks for our own work, for the opportunity to serve others, and for our homes. We pray for all those who supply our needs and pray they are fairly rewarded, thinking especially of small farmers both at home and overseas.

We remember those who know what it is to go hungry when there is no work, those who are in debt and those who are homeless. May they never lose hope or self-respect as a result of their difficulties.

Lord, hear us

Lord, graciously hear us

We remember those who are unable to work as a result of disability, for the handicapped and chronically sick who exist on permanent sickness benefit, and for those who are unable to work because they are caring full-time for a loved one who is ill.

In silence we remember before you those in this parish who are ill, awaiting medical treatment, or recovering from illness or treatment.

Grant them, and those who care for them, the strength and courage to cope and we pray that they may soon return to health and wholeness.

Lord, hear us

Lord, graciously hear us

We give thanks for those who have inspired, instructed, nurtured or encouraged us and so helped us to grow in faith.

We pray for all who labour faithfully for your harvest, for Christian ministers, church leaders, missionaries and evangelists, for those who work with young people, and for Pete, our churchwardens and for the PCCs of this benefice.

May all who work for your kingdom rejoice in the good times and successes and find strength when the going is tough, always putting their trust in you.

Lord, hear us

Lord, graciously hear us

Finally Lord we bring before you the people of Israel and Gaza, Russia and Ukraine. May those in power act with wisdom and magnanimity for the good of all in their country and help bring about a just and lasting peace.

Lord, hear us

Lord, graciously hear us

The Diocesan prayer for this week (the Collect for Ash Wednesday), which we say together:

**Almighty and everlasting God,
you hate nothing that you have made
and forgive the sins of all those that are penitent:
create and make in us new and contrite hearts,
that we, worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness,
may receive from you, the God of all mercy,
perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.**

And

Please stay for the communion even if not taking the bread and wine. You can come to the rail for a blessing (a brief prayer) – simply carry this sheet.

Communion

A moment to reflect on the times when we have not been loyal to God and His ways and have not cared for others.

In God's holy presence we call to mind our need for forgiveness.

Silence

**Father, our sin has brought you sorrow,
has harmed those who share our life,
has been hurtful to ourselves.
We dare not say we have only lightly sinned;
yet Christ has taken to himself the burden of it all.**

In Jesus' name may we be freed from the penalty and power of sin. **Amen.**

God of love and wonder, we sing your praises:
with the great company of people, past and present, here and everywhere.
We adore you, saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

You are indeed holy, eternal God and Father;
in love greater than we can imagine you gave your only Son,
that everyone who has faith in him may not die but have eternal life.
Not as we would, but as we are able,
we praise and thank you for the reality of his birth,
the glory of his humanity, the generosity of his life:
for his sacrifice on the cross, the wonder of his resurrection,
and the assurance that he lives for ever to save us;
for the gift of the Holy Spirit, for our calling to be his people,
for the hope all can find in him.

We say together:

**Remembering his life and sacrifice
we now come to his table as he has invited us to do.
Send to us now, we pray, the Holy Spirit
so that we may indeed be your people,
and that as we share the bread and wine
we may share in the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Amen**

These are the gifts of God
for the people of God.

Ending

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

A post-communion prayer, said together

**Merciful God,
you have called us to your table
and fed us with the bread of life.
Draw us and all people to serve your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.**

The blessing

The God of all grace,
who called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus,
establish, strengthen and settle you in the faith;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen**

***The next SPACE service will be on Wednesday February 28th
and then on each Wednesday in Lent***

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard

Andrea del Sarto (1484-1530) painted a number of frescoes in the church of Santissima Annunziata, Florence). Although the original of the fresco was destroyed in 1879 various copies exist, such as the one illustrated at the front of the service sheet. Although his work is now overshadowed by such illustrious contemporaries as da Vinci and Michaelangelo, in his day del Sarto was known as an artist “without errors”. His paintings were characterised by informality and by realistically conveyed emotion. We can see that here in the portrayal of the aggrieved labourer arguing over his wages.

From a contemporary western perspective this parable seems to endorse injustice. Our immediate reaction is probably to agree with the workers hired early in the day. Jesus expected his first audience to react similarly- there was often a twist in his parables. He started with words (*For the kingdom of heaven is like...*) which make clear that this is an allegory about the kingdom, and that should be our focus as we look for the deeper meaning. So we should avoid getting sidetracked by any literal interpretation of this parable.

As the owner chooses to pay his hired hands in reverse order, those who worked all day actually see what the latecomers receive. (Incidentally we should remember that day-labourers would only be paid a pittance, but for their family that pittance was the difference between survival and destitution). The early starters are forced to face up to the “unfairness” of the owner’s remuneration policy. Their response is jealousy and complaint, forgetting what they had agreed with the owner. Jesus’ intention was to put his listeners in the shoes of the aggrieved workers. They must face the reality that kingdom values run counter to accepted thinking.

Our service is given in obedience to the master’s call. There is no proportionality between service and reward. God’s grace (the owner’s generosity) is offered equally to all who accept it. Having accepted that offer there is no bonus for being the first to come forward; no attempt to portion out grace according to human concepts of entitlement.

There are two further points to note.

- This parable ends with the words, “*So the last will be first, and the first will be last*” (v16). Look back to the previous chapter and you will see that ends with a protest by Peter, who had asked, “*We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?*” (15:27). Jesus’ response ended with the words “*But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first*”(15:30). Peter, who had followed Jesus from the start, expected some special treatment. Jesus told this parable to correct that misunderstanding. There is no special treatment and long-service awards in God’s kingdom.
- As the people of Israel saw themselves as God’s vineyard (Isaiah 5:7) vineyard parables have special significance to a Jewish audience. This one was a reminder that they should no longer expect special favours: others would be called by the master, including Gentiles. These latecomers would have an equal status in God’s kingdom.

The challenge of this parable to Peter, to the people of Israel, and to us as his followers, is to examine our reaction as we identify with the vineyard workers. Do we have a special sense of entitlement? Do we ever expect special treatment? Are we ever resentful of newcomers, whether new to faith or new to a particular congregation?