

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Comparison often begins early in dysfunctional families. We notice who gets praised and who gets blamed, and we begin learning what seems to make a person valuable. We may learn to measure ourselves against siblings or other people in the home long before we understand what we are doing. Those habits can follow us into adulthood, where worth still feels connected to performance and to how we seem to measure up.

Sunday's gospel offers a different way of seeing ourselves through the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1–16). A landowner invites people to work at different times of the day. Some arrive early and others much later. At the end, each receives the same wage. The first workers become upset, not because the landowner failed to keep his promise, but because they compare their gift with what someone else received.

The landowner asks, “*Are you envious because I am generous?*” (Matthew 20:15). For adult children, comparison can carry more than envy. It can awaken the old belief that there is only so much love, approval, or attention to go around. Someone else's success may feel like evidence of our inadequacy. Another person's needs can seem like a threat to our own place.

The first reading challenges that scarcity: “*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord*” (Isaiah 55:8). God does not distribute dignity according to the family rules we learned. His love is not a prize given to the best performer. We do not become more worthy because we perform well or make ourselves easy to love. Recovery invites us to notice when we are still living by an old scorecard. We may compare our healing with someone

else's and decide we should be further along. We may feel ashamed that a boundary still scares us or that certain family interactions still affect us. But healing is not a competition. Another person's progress does not expose our failure.

The workers who arrive late offer another kind of hope. Some of us do not recognize the effects of family dysfunction until well into adulthood. We may grieve the years spent living from roles we did not choose. The gospel does not tell us we are too late. The landowner keeps returning and inviting people into a different way of life.

Receiving that invitation still asks something of us. We practice telling the truth instead of performing. We allow another person to be disappointed without immediately abandoning ourselves. We learn that receiving help does not make us weak. These changes can feel unfamiliar because they challenge the rules that once helped us belong. At first, healthier choices may even feel selfish or wrong. Recovery helps us stay with that discomfort long enough to discover that love does not require us to disappear.

Saint Paul writes in the second reading, “*For to me life is Christ*” (Philippians 1:21). That gives us a new center. Our worth no longer has to rise and fall with comparison. Christ becomes the One who tells us who we are, and His generosity toward someone else does not diminish His love for us.

There is enough grace in God's vineyard. We do not have to compete for our place or prove that we deserve to be there. Recovery allows us to receive what God is giving us now and to celebrate the good in another person's

life without turning it into a judgment on our own. The old scorecard can be set down. We are invited to live as beloved sons and daughters, not as contestants for love.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Where did you first learn to compare your worth with the attention, approval, or success of others?

- In what area of your life do you still feel pressure to prove that you deserve love or belonging?

- What might change if you trusted that another person's gifts or progress do not diminish what God is giving you?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING Isaiah 55:6–9

RESP. PS. Psalm 145:2–3, 8–9, 17–18

SECOND READING Philippians 1:20c–24, 27a

GOSPEL Matthew 20:1–16a