

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Comparison can become a quiet source of discouragement in recovery from lust addiction. Someone else seems more settled in sobriety, and we begin measuring our progress against theirs. We may even compare the details of our past and decide that we are either doing better than others or are too damaged to catch up. In either direction, comparison pulls our attention away from the grace God is giving us now.

Sunday's gospel addresses this through the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1–16). A landowner keeps going out and inviting people to work. Some begin early in the day, while others arrive near the end. When each receives the same wage, the workers who came first complain. They received what was promised, but another person's generosity suddenly makes their own gift feel insufficient.

The landowner asks, "*Are you envious because I am generous?*" (Matthew 20:15). That question matters in recovery. We can look at another person's freedom and wonder why ours has taken longer. We may resent someone whose story seems less complicated. We can also feel ashamed when a newcomer appears to make progress faster than we have.

The first reading offers a needed correction: "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord*" (Isaiah 55:8). God is not comparing us with the person sitting across the room. He is inviting each of us into the vineyard. Recovery becomes healthier when we stop asking whether our progress measures up and begin asking whether we are responding faithfully to the grace placed before us today.

That response still requires action. We tell the truth when secrecy tempts us. We reach out before isolation deepens. We follow through on the boundaries that protect our freedom. These practices matter, but they are not a way of earning God's love or proving that we deserve recovery more than someone else. They are our response to mercy already offered.

Comparison can also work in the opposite direction. We may believe we started too late or have failed too many times. Shame tells us that other people can become whole, but our story is different. The late workers challenge that lie. The landowner continues returning to the marketplace. His invitation is not reserved for those who arrived early or built an impressive record.

This is important to consider after relapse too. A setback does not make us ineligible for grace. We still have responsibility for our choices, and repair may be necessary, but despair is not humility. Humility allows us to receive help again and return to the work without making our failure the center of our identity. We can learn from what happened without turning it into proof that freedom is impossible. Sometimes the most faithful response after a fall is simply to come back into the light sooner than we did before.

Recovery gives us a different measure. Saint Paul writes in the second reading, "*For to me life is Christ*" (Philippians 1:21). That becomes a better measure of recovery than comparison. A better question is whether our lives are becoming more honest and whether Christ is becoming more central than the need to escape or prove ourselves.

There is no shortage of mercy in God's vineyard. Another person's progress does not threaten ours. We can rejoice when someone finds freedom and allow their story to strengthen hope rather than awaken envy. God asks us to receive the work and grace given to us, and to trust that His generosity is large enough for everyone.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Where do you most often compare your recovery, sobriety, or progress with someone else's?
- When comparison turns into shame, what does it lead you to believe about your own capacity for freedom?
- What grace is God asking you to receive and respond to in your recovery right now, without measuring it against another person's journey?

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