

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 20) – September 20, 2026

“...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.”

- Isaiah 55:7 -

Did it ever occur to you how much our sense of fairness is at odds with God’s mercy? The prophet Isaiah calls upon the wicked to repent. No matter what the person’s past, there is hope that comes from God who is compassionate and willing to not only pardon, but abundantly pardon. This is certainly good news. In many respects, such repentant individuals are not unlike the people who were invited to work in the vineyard in the last hours of the day.

Today’s Gospel is a parable from Jesus about workers called by a master to work in his vineyard (Matthew 20:1-14). At the break of day, the first workers agree with the master about the wage for their work. As the day goes on, the master employs more workers. Even as the end of the day approaches, more people are hired (vs. 7). Finally, the day is over, and it is time to receive payment.

The people hired at the end of the day receive the same payment as those hired at the very beginning. Those hired at the beginning of the day cry “unfair”. “...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.” (vs. 12).

Yes, the same people who come to Jesus late in life will receive the same grace as those of us received when we were baptized as infants. They may never have sat through two years of confirmation, attended council meetings, tithed, served the church suppers, chaperoned youth group trips, helped with Vacation Bible school, or some of the many things we expect from church volunteers.

God’s grace is simply that, grace! “Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or would you begrudge my generosity?” (Vs. 15). As God’s children we are not called to insist on the world’s level of faithfulness. After all, God has also dealt with us in a generously grace filled way.

Heavenly Father, make our hearts sincere in praying for the return of the wicked and grant us the courage to extend the forgiveness you have shown us. In Jesus’ name. Amen.