

Homily notes:

20th September - 25th Sunday in OT Year A 2020

‘It ain’t fair Miss’ seemed frequently on the lips of children in my London parish schools. They usually received the sensible reply from the teacher, ‘no it isn’t, but the sooner you realise that life isn’t fair, the better you’ll get on with it.’

This year is different because of Virus, but each year A at this time is often the TUC Annual Congress. We can imagine the furore at the Congress, but also at any modern workplace if someone who had worked a full day were paid the same as someone who had worked only for the last hour. With the modern raft of employment legislation and the unions, there would probably be a major protest, strike or riot. The boss wouldn’t be able to say, as the landowner said to his protesting workers; ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius?’

Jesus told the parable to elicit this very response – indignation, protest, and complaint! Sometimes life just isn’t fair, and neither is the gospel message – but that is the point. The gospel message is shocking and scandalous.

Why? Because in the gospel we encounter the lavish, generous and wanton giving of God’s grace. My thoughts & ways are not your ways says the Lord.’ The parable is about the kingdom of heaven; the kingdom of God. Jesus caused quite a stir through his association with so-called public sinners, including tax collectors, prostitutes and others on the margins of society. The Pharisees were indignant and horrified because they reasoned the God loves the righteous and despises the unrighteous.

However Jesus revealed that God’s love shines on the righteous and the unrighteous, the good and the bad and everyone in-between. Jesus was sent by the Father to save the sinner, the poor, the outcast, those far from God. Where sin, darkness, evil and death abound, God’s love and mercy super-abound.

God often hears many complaint’s like: “Why are others healthy, while I am sick and in pain? Why do others seem to be so happy while I am so miserable? Why did she have to die so young and not live into old age like

most people? Why am I hanging on so old and others go so suddenly? Why do other people seem to be so much more gifted than I am?"

When Jesus says that "the last shall be first and the first last, he is not so much turning the order round as abolishing it. Jesus doesn't intend to set up a new queuing system for God's gifts and generosity. He is saying in God's eyes the first and the last are brothers and sisters who stand before God as friends and equals. When he calls us, be it early or be it late, it is our response; to go and work in his vineyard, and we shall have our reward.

Be thankful for what we have, and do our work well for Him.