

All in a Day's Work

The parable of the workers in the vineyard and their wages is one of the more perplexing lessons that Jesus preached. (Mathew 20: 1-16) The workers who began their jobs early in the morning were paid the same as those who showed up at the eleventh hour. Our first reaction is to complain, as the workers did, about how unfair it was to receive the same payment for a whole day's work compared to those who worked only a short time. However, the employer explained that he paid everyone what was agreed upon. The fact that everyone received the same amount was a result of his generosity.

The problem we have with this parable is the apparent disregard for sound accounting practices. And it is a fact that employers today have strict guidelines about wages for labor by determining the employee's position and rate. But Jesus was not talking about our



earthly economy. He was talking about the heavenly world of redemption. Think of us all as eleventh-hour workers who manage through grace to be rewarded eternal life. How many times have we all faltered in our goal to live a righteous life? How many times have we been forgiven through God's mercy? So, like the employer in the vineyard, Jesus proclaims, "Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last." (Mathew 20:16)

Does that mean that all we have to do is beg forgiveness at the hour of our death to get into heaven? No one denies the infinite mercy that God may bestow upon a deathbed conversion. However, all Christians believe Jesus to be our Lord God who became man and showed us the way. He taught us that our beliefs must be expressed in our deeds. If we believe that we must love our neighbor as ourselves, then we must express that in word and action. We are compelled to build

solid relationships with our family, our community and society at large. If only Jesus had warned us how difficult a task loving our neighbor could be.

We should begin with respect for all human life. But in practical terms how do you respect a racist, a xenophobe, a misogynist or even a sexual predator? In all probability few would ever admit to such behavior, but in reality we experience their deeds every day. As a follower of Jesus, we cannot condemn these people but we can certainly make an effort to change their behavior. Not by shouting, not by name calling or not by other derogatory slurs can we expect a positive response. Sensible dialog whenever possible is a good starter. Even a little self-deprecating humor may help. The give and take of an informative

conversation is not only beneficial to those who differ with you, but it is also productive for you. Simply put, you, too, may learn something.

Our relationship with our Lord is our foundation for life. If we put Jesus before all else, we will enjoy a good life now, although not without struggles, and an eternal life in heaven. If we believe anything less, there will always be an emptiness that we cannot fill. Be kind, be generous, help one another. Over and over these commands are stressed in the Bible both in the Old and New testaments. It applies to all—to all nations, to all cultures, to all communities, to all families. Whether we started work in the vineyard at 6:00 a.m. or at 5:00 p.m., Jesus will be merciful and generous. He will look at our faith and how we practiced it. It's all in a day's work.

Written by Ray Huss, member of our Stewardship Committee