

to hire workers for his vineyard. He made an agreement with the workers for one denarius a day, and sent them to his vineyard. Going out at about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place and said to them, "You go to my vineyard too and I will give you a fair wage." So they went. At about the sixth hour and again at about the ninth hour, he went out and did the same. Then at about the eleventh hour he went out and found more men standing round, and he said to them, "Why have you been standing here idle all day?" "Because no one has hired us" they answered. He said to them, "You go into my vineyard too." In the evening, the owner of the vineyard said to his bailiff, "Call the workers and pay them their wages, starting with the last arrivals and ending with the first." So those who were hired at about the eleventh hour came forward and received one denarius each. When the first came, they expected to get more, but they too received one denarius each. They took it, but grumbled at the landowner. "The men who came last" they said "have done only one hour, and you have treated them the same as us, though we have done a heavy day's work in all the heat." He answered one of them and said, "My friend, I am not being unjust to you; did we not agree on one denarius? Take your earnings and go. I choose to pay the last-comer as much as I pay you. Have I no right to do what I like with my own? Why be envious because I am generous?" Thus the last will be first, and the first, last.'

■ **The Gospel of the Lord.**

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# Breaking Open the Word



# THE SAVING WORD

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME / A

24 SEPTEMBER 2023

**GOD'S WAYS ARE NOT OURS**

One of the misconceptions that Christians often have about the Old Testament is that God is portrayed as harsh and unforgiving. We are all too used to contrasting the Old Testament view of God and the loving Father of Jesus that emerges in his teaching and ministry. It is important to remember that it was the Hebrew Scriptures that shaped Jesus' own understanding of God as a loving father.

The first reading from Isaiah clearly challenges misconceptions we might have that the God of Israel is not merciful. Isaiah encourages the wicked to change their ways precisely because God's ways are not ours. While we might tend to punish, God's mercy reveals a sovereignty that is often beyond our grasp and understanding. Jesus' parable of the owner of the vineyard who deals with all the workers in an even-handed and generous manner is, or can be, just as challenging for us to comprehend. Sinners who repent, and those who have always been devout, will all receive the same reward. Indeed, God's ways are far from those of our world.

Paul finds himself in a quandary. He knows that God is a loving God, and his ultimate desire is to be with God. On the other hand, he knows how his fledgling community in Philippi needs his presence and support. Caught between the good of caring for the Philippian community and that of wanting to finish his journey to be with the Lord, he wrestles and struggles with what is best. In the end, the problem is resolved because he knows his reward lies before him. In the meantime, there is still much work to be done.

**Christopher Monaghan CP**

**FIRST READING**

Isa 55:6-9

**A reading from the prophet Isaiah**

*My thoughts are not your thoughts.*

Seek the Lord while he is still to be found, call to him while he is still near.

Let the wicked man abandon his way, the evil man his thoughts.

Let him turn back to the Lord who will take pity on him,

to our God who is rich in forgiving; for my thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways not your ways – it is the Lord who speaks.

Yes, the heavens are as high above earth as my ways are above your ways, my thoughts above your thoughts.

■ **The word of the Lord.**

**RESP PSALM**

Ps 144:2-3, 8-9, 17-18. R. v. 18

**R. The Lord is near to all who call him.**

1. I will bless you day after day / and praise your name for ever. / The Lord is great, highly to be praised, / his greatness cannot be measured. **R.**

2. The Lord is kind and full of compassion, / slow to anger, abounding in love. / How good is the Lord to all, / compassionate to all his creatures. **R.**

3. The Lord is just in all his ways / and loving in all his deeds. / He is close to all who call him, / who call on him from their hearts. **R.**

**SECOND READING**

Phil 1:20-24, 27

**A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians**

*For me to live is Christ.*

Christ will be glorified in my body, whether by my life or by my death. Life to me, of course, is Christ, but then death would bring me something more; but then again, if living in this body means doing work which is having good results – I do not know what I should choose.



I am caught in this dilemma: I want to be gone and be with Christ, which would be very much the better, but for me to stay alive in this body is a more urgent need for your sake.

Avoid anything in your everyday lives that would be unworthy of the gospel of Christ.

■ **The word of the Lord.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

cf. Acts 16:14

**Alleluia, alleluia! / Open our hearts, O Lord, / to listen to the words of your Son. / Alleluia!**

**GOSPEL**

Mt 20:1-16

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.**

*Why are you jealous because I am generous?*

Jesus said to his disciples: "The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner going out at daybreak