

**The one denarius pay at the end of the day's work is Salvation. 25th Sunday
Year A September 20th, 2020 (Is 55:6-9, Phil 1:20-24, 27, Matt 20:1-16)**

I remember in the first year of my assignment as priest I was called upon to visit David, a young man who was sick at the hospital. David was dying as confirmed by the doctor and he wished to become catholic before he died. I baptised him at the hospital and even had his baptismal certificate given to his mother at the hospital. Two to three months passed, and David didn't die. I was told I had visitors at the rectory and when I went it was David and his mother who came to see me. I said, "David, is that you?" He said, "Yes Father." I asked, "So now that you didn't die, how do you feel? What David told me is what St. Paul tells us in the 2nd reading, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

There are two lessons I would like us to reflect on today from David's story and in reference to today's readings. The first is that God's ways are not our ways. You and I are not in a position to determine who deserves and who doesn't deserve God's gifts of life and graces. Secondly, David's story reminds us that we must seek the Lord while we still have energy and time. So, in our 1st reading Isaiah asks us to "Seek the Lord while he is to be found; call to him while he is near, and let the wicked man abandon his ways...! As believers, we are called upon to seek the Lord while we have time so that we can remain in his love. The psalmist today says, "The Lord is near to all who call him." If we seek the Lord by calling upon him, he will come to us with his help, guidance and blessing.

In Today's gospel, Jesus tells the parable a landowner who went out to hire labourers for his vineyard at different times of the day - 9am, 12pm, 3pm and 5pm.

This shows that God keeps calling us to his work. He does not give up on us, but he keeps calling even to the point of death and sometimes we don't seem to hear. To all of us God has extended the same unmerited calling. But at the end of the day he pays all the workers one denarius each, which was the usual wage for a full day's work. This is where the problem with this parable lies, because it seems not to be sensitive to our modern understanding of fair play and justice as workers are paid based on number of hours of work.

If we want to understand the action of the landowner, the 1st reading answers by saying God's thoughts are not your thought, and his ways are not our ways. The way God works in and through people's lives are not our ways. God wants to give to everyone who comes to him and the last workers were as needy as the first. The last workers who were hired at 5pm were not just idling around. They had their tools ready waiting in the marketplace to be hired, so at least they were diligently seeking employment. Jesus shows in this parable that God does not give based on what we deserve or merit, but God gives his gifts based on the greatness of his compassion and generosity. There is nothing we do to earn God's gifts. It is all by God's grace.

God's reward does not depend on when he called anyone but on his generous love. Some of us received the call into Christianity right at the beginning of our lives. Our parents had been Christians before us, and they baptised us in infancy. Others became Christians in the high school or in the University, others got converted from other religious affiliations and some at old age or even nearing their graves. To all of this category of people, the pay is the same which is one denarius. The

same reward of salvation and heaven bliss is to be given to Christians of all ages with no preferential treatment. No matter when we were called into Christ, we are all dear to God. May we seek God's ways in order to be part of those called into his vineyard. **Amen. By. Fr Emmanuel Subaar**