

25th Sunday of the Year A September 18th, 2011 - Fr. Gerald Haemmerle

This past Tuesday morning about 15 men met for the Catholic Men's Fellowship. After sharing coffee and donuts and some stories, we read the readings for this Sunday, and then began to share our thoughts on the gospel. Several men spoke up and said that it did not seem fair that those who only worked an hour should receive the same wage as those who worked all day, and that they too would have been disappointed and angry at the employer. I am sure they were speaking for most of the men there and most of us here today.

How important fairness is for us human beings, we begin learning that at about the age of three and never forget it. Why did Jimmy get a bigger piece of pie than I did, it isn't fair. Why did Suzie get an A in art and I got a B? It's not fair. Why did mom leave that beautiful vase to Mary? I deserved it.

I want to share a story about a woman who I had met in a previous assignment. She had three young children and her husband divorced her and left them. She had a high school diploma but little training and few marketable skills. She kept going to the unemployment office looking for a job, she applied for many of them, but never got hired. Finally after a year someone hired her. Her salary was not great, but there were some benefits, She felt so good, she was off welfare, she had some dignity. At a scripture sharing, she said that when she hears this gospel, she always thinks of those workers hired early in the morning, and she said that they were the lucky ones. All day long they knew that they would be able to take care of their family, there would be food on the table. Those hired later had to worry about their family and how they would feed them that day. Perhaps some of you are unemployed, over 9% of our population are, we all know some who are in that 9%. Who among them would not love to have to work the entire day.

Some wonder where those hired later were early in the morning. We don't know, perhaps taking care of a sick child, perhaps they were there but not seen because they were too old or less talented. Its not for us to know or judge.

There are so many economic problems facing our country today, unemployment, poverty, the debt, and many others. Do the gospel parables give us a specific blueprint to deal with our problems today, 2011? There answer is no, of course not. But the gospels do give us the values that Jesus cherished and taught. Somehow these values need to influence the way we deal with these problems. Otherwise the gospel and our faith has no real influence on our everyday lives. Interestingly the story just before our parable today was the one about the rich young man who obeyed all the commandments and wanted to know what else he needed to do, and Jesus told him to go sell all that he had and give to the poor, and come, follow him. In a reading from Paul this week, he said, "love of money is the root of all evil". The values of Jesus, it seems to me, are respect for others and human dignity and love of others, especially those who have less. It doesn't seem that the bottom line, as important as it is, was the most important thing for Jesus.

Our gospel today is really about God. It tells us that God is generous beyond imagining. All that we have is a gift, we have not earned anything. In our first reading from Isaiah we read "for my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord." If we are to be a disciple of Christ, we must begin to try to make our ways like His. Our second reading today says that, for Paul said, "conduct yourselves in a way worthy of the gospel of Christ."