



CELEBRATING AT HOME

25TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

God's outrageous generosity (Matthew 20:1-16)



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Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The Lord is here, present among us.

**We are gathered with the whole Church
in this moment of prayer.**

Preparing to hear the Word

We have been called by God
to be the Church,
**the Body of Christ and the Kingdom of God
in this world.**

Lord Jesus,
you reveal to us a gracious God.

Lord Jesus,
you reveal to us a God of endless compassion.

Lord Jesus,
you reveal to us a God of wisdom and love.

Scripture Reading (*Matthew 20:1-16*)

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

Reflection - *God's outrageous generosity*

For many, the parable which Jesus tells in the Gospel today seems profoundly unjust. Why should those who have done little work get the same pay as those who worked all day?

Maybe the answer lies in the first reading for today: *My ways are not your ways; my thoughts not your thoughts.* So often in the scriptures, God seems to have a totally different way of approaching things to most of us.

The parable presents God as a landowner going out at five different times during the day to hire workers for his vineyard.

With the 6am workers he makes an agreement for one denarius for the day's work - the usual daily wage for a labourer. The workers who come later are promised a 'fair wage'. But when payment time comes, they get a full day's pay even though some have worked only one hour!

Usually, the youngest and fittest would be hired first and older and weaker workers left till last. But God doesn't seem too worried about what condition the workers are in or what time of day it is.

The last comers must have been delighted to have received their unexpected full day's pay. For them, it was really a gift rather than a wage for time worked. The 'early birds' fell victim to 'rising expectations', thinking that they would get more.

In giving both early birds and late comers the same 'wage' the landowner has made them equals - all are equal beneficiaries of God's gracious invitation to the

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Kingdom. And there is a place for everyone in that Kingdom, including those often left behind in the world – the poor, sick, old, disabled, etc.

Life in the Kingdom is not a reward for long hours of work. It is a gift – it cannot be earned, but is had by responding to God's choice of us, no matter what condition we are in, whether we are an early bird or a late comer.

God's kind of thinking and acting is often very different to human thinking and acting.

The parable can also be interpreted as a practical expression of how to love our neighbour – with generosity and compassion, without considering if they deserve our kindness or not – for the disciple of Jesus must think and act like God.

This parable fits right into the biblical idea of justice which is heavily biased in favour of the 'have nots' – the widows, orphans, poor, blind, lame, sinners, etc. No one is left out of the gaze of God's care.

God's outrageous and extravagant graciousness and generosity is so different to the often petty and exacting way in which we treat each other. God's sense of fairness and justice is so much broader and richer than ours. That is what life in the Kingdom of God is supposed to be.

Like last Sunday, it is our awareness of God's extraordinary kindness, patience and mercy which help us to act in the same way – to see with God's eyes, to feel with God's heart and to act with God's intention.

Prayers of Intercession

May we always witness
to the truth of your forgiveness.

May we always be
a community of reconciliation and grace.

Help us when we feel that forgiveness is too hard.
Give us the courage and strength we need.

Lord's Prayer

Formed by the teaching and example of Jesus, we pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

Closing Prayer

Gracious God,
you call us to practice the art of forgiveness.
May we take from your gentle touch
the strength we need.
Make us a caring people,
a community of action and of love.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Blessing

May the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us now and always. Amen.



Journey into the Light

This resource is presented by the Carmelites of Australia & Timor-Leste at a time when many cannot gather together as we usually do to celebrate the Eucharist. We are conscious that Christ is present not only in the Blessed Sacrament but also in the Scriptures and in our hearts. Even when we are on our own we remain part of the Body of Christ.

In the room you decide to use for this prayer you could have a lighted candle, a crucifix and the Bible. These symbols help keep us mindful of the sacredness of our time of prayer and can help us feel connected with our local worshipping communities.

This text is arranged with parts for a leader and for all to pray, but the leader's parts can be shared among those present.

As you use this prayer know that the Carmelites will be remembering in our prayer all the members of our family at this time.



The Carmelites
Australia & Timor-Leste

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