

17th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**ST. PETERS ANGLICAN CHURCH BUNDOORA****Sunday 20th September 2026****Fr. Stephen Monsieigneur****Readings:**¹ Exodus 16:2-15 / Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45 / Philippians 1:21-30 / Matthew 20:1-16**Series Title:** Called to Discipleship, Who Me? How?**Today's Theme:** *"The Scandal of Grace"***Exodus 16:2-15**

² The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. ³ The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and ate our fill of bread, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. ⁵ On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days." ⁶ So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, ⁷ and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your complaining against the Lord. For what are we, that you complain against us?"

⁸ And Moses said, "When the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the Lord has heard the complaining that you utter against him — what are we? Your complaining is not against us but against the Lord."

⁹ Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites: 'Draw near to the Lord, for he has heard your complaining.' " ¹⁰ And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. ¹¹ The Lord spoke to Moses, ¹² "I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.' "

¹³ In the evening quails came up and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. ¹⁴ When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. ¹⁵ When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat. ¹⁶ This is what the Lord has commanded: Gather as much of it as each of you needs, an omer per person according to the number of persons, all providing for those in their own tents."

Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45*God's Faithfulness to Israel*

¹ O give thanks to the Lord; call on his name;
make known his deeds among the peoples.

² Sing to him, sing praises to him;

¹ All scriptural quotations are lifted from New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition. (NRSVUE)
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tell of all his wonderful works.
³ Glory in his holy name;
 let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.
⁴ Seek the Lord and his strength;
 seek his presence continually.
⁵ Remember the wonderful works he has done,
 his miracles and the judgments he has uttered,
⁶ O offspring of his servant Abraham,
 children of Jacob, his chosen ones.
³⁷ Then he brought Israel out with silver and gold,
 and there was no one among their tribes who stumbled.
³⁸ Egypt was glad when they departed,
 for dread of them had fallen upon it.
³⁹ He spread a cloud for a covering
 and fire to give light by night.
⁴⁰ They asked, and he brought quails
 and gave them food from heaven in abundance.
⁴¹ He opened the rock, and water gushed out;
 it flowed through the desert like a river.
⁴² For he remembered his holy promise
 and Abraham, his servant.
⁴³ So he brought his people out with joy,
 his chosen ones with singing.
⁴⁴ He gave them the lands of the nations,
 and they took possession of the wealth of the peoples,
⁴⁵ that they might keep his statutes
 and observe his laws.
 Praise the Lord!

Philippians 1:21-30

²¹ For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. ²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me, yet I cannot say which I will choose. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better, ²⁴ but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. ²⁵ Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, ²⁶ so that, by my presence again with you, your boast might abound in Christ Jesus because of me.
²⁷ Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel ²⁸ and in no way frightened by those opposing you. For them, this is evidence of their destruction but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. ²⁹ For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ but of suffering for him as well, ³⁰ since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Matthew 20:1-16

The Labourers in the Vineyard

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard.² After agreeing with the labourers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard.³ When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace,⁴ and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went.⁵ When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same.⁶ And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around, and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?'⁷ They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.'⁸ When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.'⁹ When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received a denarius.¹⁰ Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius.¹¹ And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner,¹² saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.'¹³ But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius?'¹⁴ Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you.¹⁵ Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?'¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

SERMON

If Jesus were telling this parable in Australia today, he might speak about housing prices, wages, or opportunities. He might speak about a young family who have worked hard for years yet still cannot afford a home, while someone else seems to prosper because they started with advantages they never earned. He might speak about refugees arriving with nothing, or young people burdened by costs previous generations never faced. Wherever we look, there are questions about fairness.

And then Jesus tells a story that seems painfully unfair.

Some workers labour under the hot sun from dawn until dusk. Others work barely an hour. Yet at the end of the day, each receives the same wage. We can almost hear the murmuring: "That's not right. That's not fair."

The workers who arrived first are not angry about their own pay. They received exactly what was promised. Their anger begins when they compare themselves to others.

That is often where our resentment begins too.

The landowner's response is startling: "*Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?*"².

² Matthew 20:15

The question at the heart of this parable is not fairness. It is generosity.

This is why the parable sits so comfortably alongside Paul's words in Ephesians: *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not the result of works, so that no one may boast"*³.

Grace is scandalous because it cannot be earned.

It would be nice if salvation functioned like a wage. God keeping score, rewarding effort, and distributing blessings according to merit. Yet the Gospel insists otherwise. Eternal life is not payment for services rendered. It is a gift purchased through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

That truth should make us uncomfortable.

Because when we hear the parable, how many of us instinctively identify with the workers who arrived first? We imagine ourselves as the diligent labourers who have carried the burden of the day.

But the Gospel tells another story.

In truth, every one of us is an eleventh-hour worker.

No matter how long we have attended church, how faithfully we have prayed, how generously we have given, none of us has earned salvation. None of us can stand before God and demand payment. We all stand empty-handed, dependent on grace.

That is the lesson Israel learned in the wilderness. When the people complained in Exodus, God provided manna from heaven. It was not a reward for good behaviour. It was not compensation for hard work. It was a gift. Each person received enough for the day. God's concern was not that some accumulated more than others. God's concern was that nobody went hungry.

The same generous heart appears in Jesus' parable. The landowner knows that a worker paid only for one hour will return home unable to feed a family. So he acts not according to strict merit but according to generous love.

Imagine if that vision shaped our lives as Christians.

When we encounter refugees seeking safety, do we ask first what they deserve, or whether they have enough to live with dignity?

When we see young people struggling to enter a housing market that feels increasingly out of reach, do we dismiss them for not working hard enough, or do we recognise the barriers they face?

³ Ephesians 2:8-9

When others receive opportunities that seem greater than our own, do we respond with resentment or gratitude?

The Gospel calls us beyond comparison and competition. It calls us into the freedom of grace.

Paul writes in Philippians that we are to live "*in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ*"⁴. That does not mean earning God's favour. It means reflecting God's character. It means becoming people whose lives mirror the generosity we ourselves have received.

The world teaches us to ask, "What have they earned?"

Grace teaches us to ask, "What do they need?"

The world says, "Protect what is yours."

Grace says, "Share what has been given."

The world thrives on comparison.

The kingdom thrives on generosity.

Once we realise that we are all recipients of a full day's wage that we never truly earned, our hearts begin to change. Resentment gives way to gratitude. Entitlement gives way to humility. Judgment gives way to mercy.

For in the end, the greatest scandal of all is this: God has given us far more than we deserve. And having received such grace, we are now called to share it with the world.

Let us pray,

Generous God, when comparison breeds resentment and fear hardens our hearts, remind us that all we have is a gift. Teach us to receive your grace with gratitude and share it freely with others, welcoming, encouraging, and serving others as Christ served us. Amen.

⁴ Philippians 1:27