

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Let God's generosity be a lesson for us.

September 20, 2020

We find it hard not to notice others—what they have, what they earn, and how they live. What is worse, however, is that we constantly compare ourselves to others. Most of the time we figure that we are on the short end of the stick. But when it comes to the kingdom of God, there is no room for quick comparisons. Instead, we stand in awe of God's rich mercy and generous grace. This is far more than we deserve. If we insist upon comparing our situation to others and complaining, God's response is clear. Take what you have been given and leave. But if we let go of the comparisons, we find ourselves blessed beyond measure with His forgiveness, life, and salvation.

"Hark, the Voice of Jesus Calling" [LSB 826]

1 Hark, the voice of Jesus crying,
"Who will go and work today?
Fields are white and harvests waiting--
Who will bear the sheaves away?"
Loud and long the Master calleth;
Rich reward He offers thee.
Who will answer, gladly saying,
"Here am I, send me, send me"?"

2 If you cannot speak like angels,
If you cannot preach like Paul,
You can tell the love of Jesus,
You can say He died for all.
If you cannot rouse the wicked
With the judgment's dread alarms,
You can lead the little children
To the Savior's waiting arms.

3 If you cannot be a watchman,
Standing high on Zion's wall,
Pointing out the path to heaven,
Offering life and peace to all,
With your prayers and with your bounties
You can do what God commands;
You can be like faithful Aaron,
Holding up the prophet's hands.

4 Let none hear you idly saying,
"There is nothing I can do,"
While the multitudes are dying
And the Master calls for you.
Take the task He gives you gladly,

Let His work your pleasure be;
Answer quickly when He calleth,
"Here am I, send me, send me!"

PRAYER

O blessed Lord, since we cannot count on anything we have done, give us grace to count on Christ and His redeeming work upon the cross. As we delight in His grace, so give us humility to receive Your generosity without offense and trust in Your mercy alone for our salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT READING *Isaiah 55:6–9*

“Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; ⁷ let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. ⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

HOLY GOSPEL *Matthew 20:1–16*

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ² After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius^[a] a day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³ And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴ and to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.’ ⁵ So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. ⁶ And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ ⁷ They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’ ⁸ And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.’ ⁹ And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. ¹⁰ Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. ¹¹ And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, 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 worker as I give to you. ¹⁵ Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?’ ¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first last.”

There is a great deal to be lost in making comparisons. One of the greatest is the capacity to see ourselves in an honest frame of mind. Making comparisons ultimately means placing oneself above others. In the story Jesus told in Matthew 20 those that worked all day expected to be paid more than those who had worked a short time. Those that had worked all day compared what they had done with those who worked less as being more valuable. God views things differently. Isaiah 55 clearly states God’s view on this. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.” You see making comparisons creates separations of all kinds from racism to economic segregation and everything in between. If God

made comparisons the way we do, we would all be in a great deal of trouble. However, God is truly generous. He treats everyone the same. God offers us the opportunity not to have to live being compared to others. Forgiveness takes us out of the comparison merry-go-round. God places equal value on all. Jesus' death and resurrection paid the price for everyone's sin. Forgiveness is offered equally to all through faith in Jesus and what He has done. This is God's generosity. If we want to live such generosity, we need to give it in the way it was given without making comparisons.

LORD'S PRAYER *Matthew 6:9–13*

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. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

BENEDICTION

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace. Amen.