

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY - A - SEPTEMBER 24, 2017

*I WOULD LIKE TO FOLLOW UP CATHY'S EXCELLENT REFLECTIONS
WITH SOME FURTHER COMMENTS ON HER LATTER POINT ABOUT "GOD'S
WAYS ARE NOT OUR WAYS"*

EVERY STORY HAS A VIEWPOINT.....

*IN THIS GOSPEL STORY WE ALL TEND TO TAKE THE VIEWPOINT OF THE
WORKERS WHO WORKED ALL DAY - DON'T WE?*

AND THEIR COMPENSATION SEEMS UNFAIR TO US

*CATHY DEVELOPED THE IMPLICATIONS OF THAT VIEWPOINT IN A
CONVINCING MANNER...*

*VERY FEW OF US TAKE THE VIEWPOINT OF THE WORKERS WHO CAME IN
AT THE LAST HOUR*

*OR THE VIEWPOINT OF THE VINEYARD OWNER, WHICH CATHY
DEVELOPED AT THE VERY END....*

*IF YOU HAVE HAD THE CHANCE TO VISIT ISRAEL AND SEE THE MILES
AND MILES OF VINEYARDS IN THAT COUNTRY, ESPECIALLY IN THE
SOUTH YOU CAN UNDERSTAND WHY SO MANY OF THE BIBLICAL
AUTHORS COMPARE ISRAEL TO A VINEYARD AND GOD AS THE OWNER OF
THE VINEYARD....*

AND THAT IS CERTAINLY THE CASE IN TODAY'S GOSPEL STORY....

*OUR GRACIOUS GOD IS CLEARLY THE VINEYARD OWNER JESUS IS
SPEAKING ABOUT... IT'S HIS FATHER*

CAN YOU PUT YOURSELF IN THE PLACE OF THE VINEYARD OWNER FOR A FEW MOMENTS AND NOTICE WHAT THAT FEELS LIKE....

YOU ARE NOT ONE OF THE WORKERS - WHO EITHER WORKED ALL DAY OR WHO JUST CAME IN AT THE LAST MINUTE - OR HOUR

YOU ARE THE OWNER OF THIS VINEYARD...

YOU HAVE WORKED ALL YEAR TO BRING ABOUT THIS HARVEST OF GRAPES....

YOU ARE ALL EXCITED ABOUT THIS YEAR'S CROP.....

YOU ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO CELEBRATING QUITE AN ACHIEVEMENT....

YOU HAD PROMISED THOSE HIRED EARLY IN THE MORNING THE USUAL DAILY WAGE....

AS THE DAY WORE ON YOU REALIZED THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO GET AS MANY WORKERS INVOLVED AS POSSIBLE AND HARVEST AS MUCH OF THE CROP AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

SO YOU PROMISED THEM A JUST WAGE....

YOU WERE VERY APPRECIATIVE OF THEIR CONTRIBUTION ALSO...

YOU ARE A GREAT EMPLOYER WHO WANTS TO DO THE BEST YOU CAN FOR ALL THE WORKERS....

THAT PROBABLY STILL DOESN'T DO IT FOR YOU DOES IT?

WE KEEP GOING BACK TO THE ONES WHO WORKED ALL DAY.....

EVERYBODY HAS TO WORK HARD TO EARN WHAT THEY GET - LIKE ME

IF THEY DON'T THEIR LAZY AND DESERVE THEIR FATE....

BUT IT'S PRETTY MUCH THE SAME AS THE STORY OF THE PRODIGAL SON ISN'T IT?

***THE VINEYARD OWNER IS JUST LIKE THE FATHER OF THE PRODIGAL SON
ISN'T HE? GRACIOUS AND GENROUS***

***THE WORKERS WHO WORKED ALL DAY ARE JUST LIKE THE FAITHFUL
HARDWORKING SON WHO STAYED HOME AND WAS ALL UPSET WHEN HIS
FUN LOVING BROTHER RETURNED HOME TO A HERO'S WELCOME....***

***THE PRODIGAL SON IS MUCH LIKE THE WORKERS WHO CAME AT THE
LAST HOUR AND WERE RICHLI REWARDED - EVEN THOUGH THEY ONLY
WORKED ONE HOUS***

***SOMEHOW IN THE STORY OF THE PRODIGAL SON WE TEND TO IDENTIFY
WITH THE PRODIGAL SON - DON'T WE - NOT THE FAITHFUL BROTHER....***

***WE UNDERSTAND THE PRODIGAL SON, HIS REBELLIOUS STREAK, HIS
PROMISCUITY, HIS FALLING ON "HARD TIMES"***

***WE TEND TO GIVE HIM A BREAK - HE RECOGNIZED HIS FAILINGS AND
CAME BACK READY TO PLEAD FOR HIS LIFE***

***BUT WE'RE NOT INCLINED TO IDENTIFY WITH THE WORKERS WHO ARE
FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO COME IN AT THE LAST HOUR***

***WE UNDERSTAND AND SUPPORT THE GRACIOUSNESS OF THE FATHER IN
THE PRODIGAL SON STORY BUT NOT THE GRACIOUSNESS OF THE
VINEYARD OWNER IN THIS STORY...***

***MAYBE WE THINK THE WORKERS WHO COME IN AT THE LAST MINUTE
DIDN'T WORK HARD ENOUGH - LIKE WE DO***

MAYBE WE WILL GIVE A FATHER SOME SLACK BUT NOT AN EMPLOYER

***WE TEND TO OPPOSE THE GENEROSITY, THE UNCONDITIONAL LOVE OF
THE VINEYARD OWNER - THE THEOLOGICAL WORD IS GRACE OR GIFT -***

FOR ME THE REAL POINT IS THAT JESUS TOLD BASICALLY THE SAME STORY IN TWO DIFFERENT WAYS - HE FELT SO STRONGLY ABOUT IT, EVIDENTLY...

TRYING TO TELL US SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT ABOUT HIS OWN FATHER

WE ARE IN THE REALM OF GRACE, I.E. UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

IT DOES'NT SEEM FAIR

IT'S DIFFICULT FOR US TO IMAGINE ANOTHER WAY OF RELATING AND REWARDING - THAN EARNING WHAT YOU GET

ANOTHER WAY THAT DOESN'T DEPEND ON WORKING HARD OR EVEN BEING GOOD TO GET OUR REWARD

IT DEPENDS ON THE OVERWHELMING GOODNESS AND GENEROSITY OF THE GIFT GIVER - IT DEPENDS ON UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

WHICH WE EXPERIENCE ONLY RARELY - BUT WHAT A GIFT...

AND IT CAN BE SCARY...CAN'T IT ...

IT FEELS LIKE IT IS OUTSIDE OUR CONTROL

CAN WE DEPEND ON IT? IT IS ALWAYS SURPRISING AND OVERWHELMING

IT IS A WHOLE NEW AND DIFFERENT WAY OF APPROACHING LIFE

WHICH RICHARD ROHR SUMS UP WELL:

GOD DOES NOT LOVE US BECAUSE WE ARE GOOD...

GOD LOVES US BECAUSE GOD IS GOOD

LET US PRAY FOR THAT THIS DAY...

CONFIDENCE IN THE OVERWHELMING GOODNESS AND GRACIOUSNESS OF OUR FATHER, OUR MOTHER, OF OUR VINEYARD OWNER....

