

25th Sunday per Annum - A
Isaiah 55:6-9;
Philippians 1:20c-24, 27a;
Matthew 20:1-16a
Little Flower - 9/21/14

My Brothers and Sisters,

In today's first reading from Isaiah, the prophet proclaims, "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts.*"

Today's Gospel certainly exemplifies the difference between God's ways of thinking and acting and ours. Most of us, if we are honest, would side with the workers who worked all day in the heat and were paid the same amount as the workers who only worked one hour. If we were in their position, we would also feel unjustly treated.

The landowner's response was interesting. First, he reminded them that there was no injustice. They had agreed to the usual wage, and they were paid the usual wage. However, he also reminded them of his right to spend his money as he chose. In other words, he reminded them that he had the right to be generous if he chose to be generous.

These readings not only tell us something about God. They also tell us something about ourselves. The first reading reminds us generally that God's ways of thinking and acting are different from ours. In fact, his ways of thinking and acting are so much higher than our. This is something of which we need to remind ourselves over and over.

Scripture says that God created us in his image and likeness. Instead, we sometimes try to create God in our image and likeness, projecting our ways of thinking and acting onto God. We even see this tendency in the Old Testament. However, the Jesus of the Gospels thought and acted in radically different ways from ours.

Therefore, as individuals and a Church, we need to be humble and to recognize that God may not see and judge things as we do. This is at least part of the reason why Jesus commanded us not to judge others. As we all know, we can be very judgmental! Jesus astutely said, "*Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own?*" [Lk. 6:41].

Also, we need to be humble and to recognize that God may not act as we do. Catholics, Christians, and non-believers all struggle with the problem of evil and the problem of innocent suffering. For example, we wonder how God allows ISIS to do what it does. We wonder how God allows little children to be abused or die from cancer. Today's readings remind us not only not to judge others but also not to judge or blame God.

The Gospel addresses the idea of God's justice. When most of us think of justice, we think of strict justice. However, the alternate opening prayer for one of the Sundays in Ordinary Time in the former Sacramentary read, "Lord our God, in you justice and mercy meet." In God, we cannot separate justice and mercy.

My brothers and sisters, Pope Francis since the beginning of his Pontificate has stressed God's mercy. He exemplified it last weekend. As you may know, he witnessed the marriages of twenty couples. According to news reports, at least one man had had an annulment; at least one woman had had a child out of marriage. Some of the couples had lived together before marriage. Our challenge is to make God's thoughts our thoughts and God's ways our ways.