

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK:

Reflection from Deacon Charlie Salway

Can you imagine if this happened at any place of employment today? There would be immediate protests, picket lines, union grievances filed, and total unrest and chaos. We never allow the last to go first in our human way of thinking. Our thinking is that you earn that right to go first because you put more effort, time and experience, you have the right to that place in line more than the person who arrived at the last minute. They need to go to the back of the line.

Oh how blind we are to the ways of God. How our thoughts are not God's thoughts. Our human traits of desire, envy, and pride cloud wanting to see God's compassion and love for all people. We are immediately jealous of anyone else getting a better deal than we have received. But we are talking about more than our petty human desires in this parable. We are talking about our eternity, room for everyone in His Kingdom.

God is like the man who owns land and is hiring workers. And he hires some early in the morning and agrees to pay them a denarius. This is an important detail to the story. A denarius was a silver coin that was a typical day's pay for a soldier, a living wage. In this parable, the land owner is hiring day laborers. Day laborers were unemployed men who would go to the marketplace hoping that someone would hire them for the day. These workers and their families were going to go hungry unless they were hired. Day laborers were typically hired for a fraction of a denarius, since they couldn't negotiate and competition was fierce.

So the foreman pays the day laborers, from the last one hired to the first. The ones who worked for 1 hour are paid a denarius, a full day's wage. And so naturally those who worked for 12 hours expect to receive more. But they do not, and they grumble against the landowner. The landowner answers them that he has the right to be generous, and they should not be envious because he is generous to others.

The point is this: God is like the owner of the vineyard, and those of us who have been saved, who have come to faith in Jesus, are like the workers. Some become believers early in life, some later in life, some even at the proverbial 11<sup>th</sup> hour, on their deathbed. But each one receives eternal life. And so, if you had to sum up the main point of his parable, you could say this: it doesn't matter when in life that you are saved, each one receives eternal life.

That seems a simple enough lesson. So why doesn't Jesus just say that? Why does he speak in parables when they can be so easily misunderstood?

We are talking about salvation, the essential message of the Bible, the gospel, the good news of Jesus. The bad news is that we are all separated from a holy and perfect God by our sin. But the good news is that God loves us so much that He did not let us die in our sins but sent His son Jesus to die a sacrificial death on the cross in our place for our sins, so that all who repent – turn from their sins and self-centeredness – and believe in Him are saved from the punishment they deserve..

Now consider the parallel. No one is born a believer. Some come to faith in Jesus as 5 year-olds, some as teens, some as adults, and some, like the thief on the cross who died next to Jesus, hours before their death. But each one – from the 5 year-old to the deathbed convert – receives eternal life, a restored relationship with God, and entry into heaven. How does this make you feel?

We should be ecstatic for all who are saved. If you came to faith early in your life, are you offended by God's grace towards those who come to faith later in life? Do you feel you deserve more reward because you served longer, like the workers in the vineyard who worked all day? And if so, what does that reveal about your understanding of salvation and of the gospel? If we find ourselves bitter or resentful, like the workers in the parable, then it shows that we believe that in some way we have earned our salvation and deserve a reward. But if we know it is all an undeserved gift, much more than we deserve, then our response should be gratitude, and not be envious of those who come to faith later. The

workers saw it as unfair that they had worked the whole day and not earned any more than the ones who worked one hour. And we may think the same way in terms of the life of faith, when we think about our commitment to God. Some may feel like you've been sacrificing and following Him and saying no to things and living on this narrow path for so long, while others have been living it up and doing whatever they please, and just because they repent at the end of their life, they receive heaven, just like us? That's just not fair. In other words, do you see the life of faith as a privilege? Or as a chore? Do you grumble against God when others who have not been half as faithful as you receive incredible blessing or healing while you are seemingly overlooked? You spend your mornings in prayer and yet you are still single. You serve in the church and yet someone else gets healed and you don't. This parable reveals that many of us believe that God owes us for our faithfulness or goodness, and that we can become just as resentful or angry as the day laborers when He does not give us what we think we deserve.

But the truth is that God owes us nothing. We can't place him under our obligation because we have done something for him. Everything we do experience is pure grace.

With the speed at which our world moves and our "all about me" culture, we often over-look the generosity of God. When you stop to think about it, everything – nature, medicine, technology, life – is a gift that God has given us out of love. Once we understand the generosity of God – what he has given us, what he has done for us – we can't help but share that joy with others and wish they can receive eternal life.

## **Parish Council Nominees 2020**

**Heidi Walls** – Heidi and her family became members of St Teresa in 2011 but were members of Immaculate Conception, Celina since 1992. Heidi and her husband Kerry have 3 children: Lindsey, Kayla, Corey and gained a son-in-law, Jacob, last year. She has helped with activities of the church like Christmas decorations, working at the hamburger stand at Rockford Community Days and helping out at the Chili Supper. She also serves as a Sacristan for St. Teresa. She is employed at Central Insurance Companies in Van Wert.

**Dan Moeller** - Dan Moeller has been a member of St. Teresa since 1988. He is married to Amy and has three children: Natalie, Elayna and Evan. Dan is a past member of the church choir and spends the spring and summer months as a coach for Little League teams for Rockford Recreation Assoc. Some of his hobbies include playing golf, camping and aerial photography. He is employed with Crown Equipment Corporation as a Manufacturing Engineer.

**Jordan Steinbrunner** – Jordan and his wife Emily are new to St Teresa. They have been members of St Teresa since Oct 2018, after their wedding in Sept 2018.

**Voting will take place the weekend of September 26/27 at St Teresa Church. Ballots will be available at the entrance of church. You are asked to cast your ballot when entering and place in offertory basket before taking a seat, to abide by procedures set with Covid. If you are unable to attend mass election weekend, contact the office, a time will be set aside for you to come and cast your ballot the week of Sept 21-25th.**