

**Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**September 24, 2017, Year A**  
**Father Mike Holloran**

In 1982, when I was ordained, the Archbishop promised to pay me whatever was fair... for the rest of my life. In return, I promised obedience to him and his successors for the rest of my life. A good deal? If you are wanting to give yourself for the rest of your life anyway, yes.

Before 1982 I was doing like most people do--applying for jobs, negotiating pay, watching management like a hawk. My first job out of high school was at Bob Evans Store #10, in Kettering. Imagine, ten Bob Evans restaurants in the world in 1973. The manager wanted to encourage young people like myself to pursue a college education, so he paid me ten cents more on the hour than the high school kids. Yes, \$1.75 per hour was a princely sum, until he promised everybody a raise and I didn't get mine. I finally asked about it. He weaseled, I mean explained:

“Oh, well, since we started you a little higher this is catching the others up to you.”

I replied, “Yes, well, that sounds fair, except that's not what you said you would do.”

I got the raise and a little more respect.

That's the way things work in the kingdom of this world, probably for the best. Communism claimed to be more fair to the worker, but I remember what Andzre, our Polish maintenance man at St. Adalbert, said about life under communism, which he experienced in his younger years:

“Yes, very fair. They pretend to pay us, and we pretend to work.”

Free market capitalism does have a few downsides, but it seems to work better than that. It only makes practical sense that the demands of the market, what people are actually willing to pay for goods and services, should determine prices and pay. We are all familiar with this system and have learned to work it, and so we sympathize with the workers in today's parable vineyard. “The guy who started at 5:00 gets paid for a whole day? What's with that?”

Jesus liked to shock people, turn their expectations upside down, to help them understand that God's ways are not our ways. Generosity, mercy, love run the heavenly economy. And that's for the best too, don't you think? Where would any of us be if we got from God exactly what we deserve, no more and no less? If you think that would be just fine... well, maybe an honest examination of conscience is in order.

I'm glad I don't get from God exactly what I deserve. Instead God gives me what I need - patience, a second chance, a little jolt when I'm on the wrong path, a little reassurance when I'm on the right one, His infinite all-powerful friendship if I but accept it.

God' ways are not our ways, which is exactly why we can approach Him.

“Let the scoundrel forsake his way, and the wicked his thoughts”. A scoundrel expects to be treated like a scoundrel. Wicked thoughts are a reverse golden rule: “do unto others before they do unto you”. They expect rough treatment, even from God, so they stay away. But, no, God's ways are not our ways. It is safe to turn to the Lord for mercy and be vulnerable before Him because He is not like us. He is not out to get us. He holds no grudges, seeks no revenge.

This does not mean that evil has no consequences. If we forsake God, who is the source of life and happiness, then we are opting for death and misery. But God does almost everything to prevent that outcome, to win us over. Almost everything. He will not override our free will. If He did that He would not be winning us over, He's be coercing us. Life on earth would be tidier, I guess, but then it would not be the incubator for the Kingdom of love.

God is generous in forgiving. That's why it is safe to turn to Him.

God is love, contagious joy, and that's why we should want to turn to Him

So, “seek the Lord while He may be found”, and He has made Himself findable--Abraham, Moses, the Prophets, His Son Jesus Christ and the ways that Christ continues to be with us--Scripture, prayer, Sacraments, this community of faith.

So, “call on Him while He is near”, and He is always near. He is here! He is anywhere you can go. You can't get away from Him if you tried, so why try? Life and happiness are good things, and God has an infinite supply that He wants to pour into your lap, if you would have it.