

16th Sunday in Pentecost 2020

Readings - Exodus 16:2-15, Psalm 105:1-6,37-45, Philippians 1:21-30, Matthew 20:1-16

Introduction - Generosity is a characteristic of God. God's generosity is seen everywhere in creation. Generosity is a beautiful characteristic in people that we admire and love. Generosity is much more than being generous with your money. Generosity in the people of God is a result transformed heart in the image of God.

Common Theme - How do we react to the generosity and goodness of God? Do we only think of ourselves or is it possible to think of others? Be holy as I am holy says the Lord. God would like us to reflect Him and His character. Thus if God is generous then we should be also.

Hebraic Perspective - In Judaism, the 'evil eye' the *ayin hara* (Hebrew) is the concept assigned to feelings of jealousy of others and their material possessions negative feelings when seeing others succeed or receive a blessing. Conversely the 'good eye' *ayin hatov* (Hebrew) designates an attitude of good will and kindness towards others. These are not physical eyes, rather they are spiritual in the sense of the 'eye of the mind'. Obviously the source of the concept of the 'evil eye' is found in the 10th Commandment, Do Not Covet!

Reading #1; Exodus 16:2-15 - The Israelites had been witnesses to the awesome and terrible plagues against Egypt. They had been witnesses to the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea. Yet they still dared to complain about their situation in the desert. From this we learn that miracles do not usher people into an attitude of humility before the Lord. We see the generosity of God, that despite the complaining, He still provided for His people in love, with the Bread of Heaven. The Israelites rebelled and they wandered the desert for 40 years. All during that time God remained generous. He continued to feed them manna, their clothes did not wear out and they were guided by an Angel of the Lord with the presence of God in the Tabernacle. Also, note that everyone received the same bread, both rich and poor, slave and free.

Reading #2: Psalm 105:1-6,37-45 - How is one supposed to praise and thank the Lord? By telling others what He has done. And God has done a great many things. Therefore one way we praise the Lord is by speaking of what He has done. We do so in songs, we do so in sermons, and we do so by sharing testimony and witness of the things done in our lives. With a mighty hand and an outstretched arm He has saved His people. For God so loved the world that He sent His only Son. God has truly been generous with us. Our response to the great things He has done needs to be joy and praise. Not just to God, but to those around us.

Reading #3: Philippians 1:21-30 - Whatever may happen, we should conduct ourselves in a worthy manner of the Gospel says Paul. The antithesis of generosity is not just jealousy but also pride. Whatever comes our way, for good or for ill, our response should be one of service and joy. This includes counting it a privilege to suffer. This goes very much against the culture of individualism and rights that exists in our modern world. We demand that things, systems

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and even people work for us and in our favour. We are very concerned with ourselves. The Gospel should instead make us firstly concerned for others.

Reading #4: Matthew 20:1-16 - Parables occur only in Rabbinic literature and the Gospels. They do not occur in Greek literature, the Epistles or the Gospel of John. Of the 435 Parables in existence they have found to all be in Hebrew. They are not used in the synagogue instead they are used outdoors in the marketplace and the streets. They are neutral in ethnicity, that is when a man goes out to sow, it's just a man, not a Jewish man. When the parable talks about a king, it's just a king and not a Jewish king.

Jesus shares a parable about the Kingdom. God is the landowner and the parable describes how the Kingdom operates. There is work to be done in the Vineyard (Kingdom), the work is urgent and must be done before the end of the day. The harvest could not wait for tomorrow. The landowner hires workers, they are promised a reward. The distribution of the reward is not in the manner of men. And that is the message of the Kingdom. God has broken no promise when He rewards everyone the same. What then is our response to the generosity of God?

Hebraic Context - For 40 years the Israelites were sustained with the bread of heaven on a daily basis. The portion given by God to His people was no more and no less than what was enough for a single day. This instilled in the children of Israel, and the generations to follow, the concept that true sustenance comes from God, no matter how hard we work or toil for our own livelihoods. In the end we will receive no more or no less than what we are allotted to from God. The challenge for the children of Israel, was to retain this knowledge when entering the Land of Canaan after the giving of the manna had stopped. Even when enjoying the work of our hands, we must remember that first God has been generous with us and so we must in all humbleness return a heart of generosity back to God, and to those around us.