

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

(Mt 20:1-16) (*Audio Year A Track 033*)

(*Poem*, Vol. 3, pp. 287-8, Vol. 4, p. 769; *Gospel* Vol. 5, pp. 219-21, Vol. 8, pp. 299-300;

Notebooks 1944, pp. 80-1)

(Jesus is with some of His apostles, talking to a large crowd of people in the market place of Alexandrosce. He tells them a parable:)

'A landowner went out at daybreak, to hire workers for his vineyard. And he made an agreement with them. for one denarius a day. He went out again at the third hour, and thinking that the workers he had hired were too few, and seeing other people idle in the square waiting to be hired, he took them and said to them: "Go to my vineyard, and I will give you what I promised the others." And they went. He went out again at the sixth hour, and again at the ninth, and seeing some more workers, he said to them: "Will you work for me? I give my workers one denarius a day". They agreed and went. Finally, he went out about the eleventh hour, and saw some more men, standing in the sunshine. And he asked them: "Why are you standing here idle? Are you not ashamed of standing here all day, without doing anything?" And one man replied: "No one hired us for the day. We would have liked to work and earn our living, but no one asked us to go and work." The landowner then said: "Well, I am asking you to go to my vineyard. Go, and you will have the same pay as the others." He said so because he was a good landowner, and felt sorry for the dejection of his neighbour.

In the evening, when the work was finished, the man called his bailiff and said: "Call the workers and pay them their wages - as agreed - beginning with the last arrivals. They are the most needy, as they have not had any food during the day. Whereas the others have been fed once, and some several times... I felt sorry for them – they have worked harder than all the others... Dismiss them, so that they may go and rest, as they deserve, and may enjoy - with their families - the fruit of their work." The bailiff did as the landowner ordered, and gave each man one denarius.

When the last ones came - those who had worked from daybreak - they were surprised at receiving one denarius each. They complained to the bailiff, who told them: "That is the order I was given. Go and complain to the landowner, not to me." And they went and said: "You have not been fair! We have worked for twelve hours, first in the dewy moisture, then in the heat of the sun, and once again in the dampness of the evening, and you have given us the same wages you gave the lazy workers who worked for one hour only!... Why?" And one of them, in particular, raised his voice, saying that he had been betrayed and exploited undeservedly.

"My friend" said the landowner, "in what have I wronged you? What did I agree with you at daybreak? One full day's work, and the wages of one denarius. Did I not?"

"Yes, that is true. But you have given the same wages to those who have worked much less..."

"Did you agree to that pay, because it seemed fair?"

"Yes. I agreed, because others pay less."

"Were you ill-treated by me?"

"In all conscience... no."

"I granted you a long rest during the day, and I gave you some food, did I not? You had three meals. And food and rest were not agreed upon. Is that right?"

"Yes. They were not agreed upon."

"Why did you accept them, then?"

"Well... You said: 'I prefer to do so, so that you will not get tired, going back home'. And we could hardly believe that it was true... Your food was good, and we saved.."

"So I did you a good turn. Well, why are you complaining? I should complain of you, because - although you realised that you were dealing with a good master - you worked lazily, whereas those who came after you, and had one meal only, and the last arrivals who had none at all, set to work with a will. And in a shorter time, they did the same work that you did in twelve hours. I would have betrayed you, if I had halved your wages to pay them. But that is not the case. So take what is yours, and go away. Are you going to come to my house and force me to do what suits you? I do what I like, and what is fair. Don't be malicious, and don't compel me to be unfair. For I am good."

And Jesus continues His lesson: "I solemnly say to all of you who are listening to Me, that the Father God makes the same agreement with all men, and promises the same reward to everybody. Those who serve the Lord diligently, will be treated by Him with justice, even if they do little work, being close to death. I solemnly tell you that the first will not always be the first, in the Kingdom of Heaven, where we shall see that the last are first, and the first are last. We shall see there, that men who do not come from Israel, are holier than many men of Israel... I have come to call everybody, in the name of God. But if many are called, few are chosen, because few want Wisdom. He is not wise: the person who lives according to the world and to flesh, but not according to God. He is neither wise for the earth, nor for Heaven. Because on the earth, he will make enemies, will receive punishment, and will feel remorse. And he will lose Heaven for ever.

I repeat: be good to your neighbour, whoever he may be. Be obedient, and leave to God the task of punishing those who are unjust..."

(In the synagogue of the Romans, in Jerusalem, Jesus is speaking to a woman who is grieving over the death of her husband, who she says had heard Jesus and believed in Him. Jesus says:)

'...The workers of My vineyard are all those who come and say: "Lord, accept me among Your workers". And they persevere in that will until My Father considers that their day has come to an end.

I solemnly tell you that there will be workers who have worked for one hour only, their last hour. And they will receive their reward more promptly than those who have worked since the first hour, but always unenthusiastically, urged to work only by the idea of not deserving hell, that is, by the fear of punishment. That is not the work that My Father rewards with immediate glory. On the contrary, such clever selfish people - who are anxious to do good, but only sufficient so as not to deserve eternal punishment - will be given a long expiation by the eternal Judge. They will have to learn - at their own expense, through a long expiation - to achieve a spirit which will be active in love, and in true love, entirely directed to the glory of God.

And I tell you also that in future, there will be many, particularly among the Gentiles, who will be the workers of one hour and even less than one hour, but who will become glorious in My Kingdom. Because in that hour of harmony with Grace, inviting them to enter the Vineyard of God, they reached heroic perfection of Charity.

So be cheerful, woman. Your husband is not dead, he lives. You have not lost him, he is only separated from you for some time. Now, like a bride who has not yet entered the house of her bridegroom, you must prepare yourself for the true immortal wedding - with him whom you are mourning. Oh! the happy wedding of two spirits who have become sanctified and are rejoined for ever: where there is no separation, no fear of estrangement, no pain, and where their spirits will rejoice in the love of God, and in their reciprocal fondness! Death is true life for the just, because nothing can threaten the vitality of the spirit, which is its permanency in Justice. Do not weep for or mourn what is transient, o Syra. Raise your spirit, and see with justice and truth. God has loved you by saving your husband from the danger that the deeds of the world might demolish his faith in Me.'

(And to a despondent Maria Valtorta, the apostle John says:)

"I will be the comfort, little sister. Yesterday morning you complained a bit to our Good Jesus. It seemed to you that He was placing you after... the victim saved at once, while you - who have been on the altar for years and were the first to pronounce the prayer given by the Master - never see your sacrifice being consummated.

You are my sister, Maria. I was the first disciple of Jesus. I was the one who was more like Him than all the others. I made his words, his affections, and his

desires my own. I had the same longing as He did: to die, in order to redeem. And I saw the others go to God before me. Even Paul, the apostle who was a latecomer, preceded me. And Stephen was the first to fall... But I remained.

I experienced the pain of separation from the Master, the longing of expectation, persecutions, martyrdom, and exile. But I did not receive the swift consummation of the sacrifice. I, who was hungry for my Jesus, had to watch the years go by until the most advanced old age, before being able to reach Him.

And what of it? Was my martyrdom of love and desire less of a martyrdom than that of the others? Or less fruitful? No, little sister. There are some who are received immediately, and others who 'must remain as long as He wants them to remain, "for their task is to be God's voice for their brothers and sisters".

Sister in Christ's love, believe that your wait is Jesus' choosing. He leaves you because you are his little John, and you must preach love to your brothers and sisters with the words the Master gives you. It is the sweetest mission.

Peace be with you always.'
