



## 25<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME CYCLE A

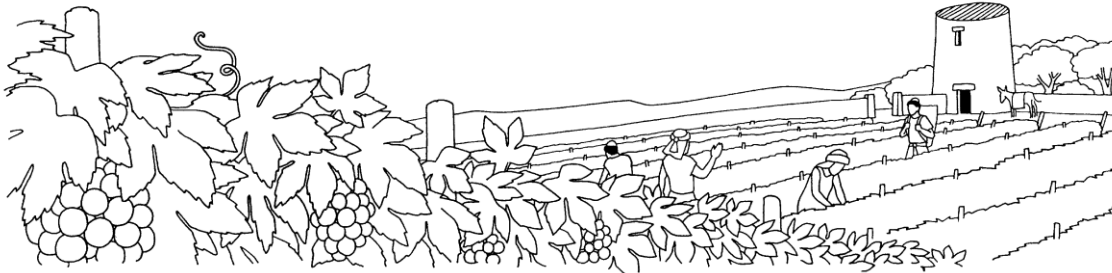
### THEME: GOD'S GENEROUS MERCY

#### Background on the Gospel Reading

Aspect	Purpose of this session
Profession of faith (what we believe)	God's generous mercy
<b>SCRIPTURE</b>	
<b>First Reading</b> <i>Isaiah 55:6-9</i>	God's ways are far beyond the ways of human beings
<b>Responsorial Psalm:</b> <i>Psalm 145:2-3,8-9,17-18</i>	God is near to those who call upon him.
<b>Second Reading</b> <i>Philippians 1:20c-24,27a</i>	Paul tells the Philippians to live for Christ.
<b>Gospel Reading</b> <i>Matthew 20:1-16</i>	<b>In the parable of the workers in the vineyard</b> , Jesus teaches about God's generous mercy.
<b>Scripture</b> But he answered one of them, 'Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?' Matthew 20:13-15	
<b>Christian living and morality (how we live)</b>	<b>God owes us nothing but offers his love abundantly. And the goodness and greatness of God.</b>
<b>Prayer/worship (how we pray)</b>	Psalm 145 or the Lord's Prayer.

**Welcome and opening prayer:** As usual.

**In today's Gospel, Jesus moves from Galilee to teach in Judea** where he is sought out by great crowds and tested by the Pharisees on issues such as marriage and divorce. **Jesus also encounters a rich young man who is unable to accept Jesus' demand that he leave his possessions to follow him.** Jesus' response to the rich young man sounds very much like the conclusion we will find in today's **Gospel: the first will be last and the last will be first.**



On the surface, **the parable of the workers in the vineyard** appears to be an offense to common sense. Those who work a longer day ought to be paid more than those who work just an hour or two.

When viewed in this way, the landowner seems unfair. **That is because we are reading into the parable our own preconceived notions of how fairness and equality should be quantified.**

A close read shows us that the landowner paid on the terms that were negotiated. The landowner, it seems, has acted completely justly. The parable goes beyond that, however, and we come to see that the landowner is not simply just, **he is exceptionally just.** He is radically just. He has given those who laboured in the field for a full day their due pay.

But he has also given a full-day's wage to those who worked only a single hour. No one is cheated, but a few receive abundantly from the landowner **just as we receive from God more than what is merely justifiable or due.**

God, like the landowner, is radically just and abundantly generous. The workers who complain are made to look foolish as they lament the fact that landowner has made all workers equal. **Indeed, what more could one ask for than to be treated as an equal at work or anywhere else?**



**The parable reminds us that although God owes us nothing, he offers abundantly and equally.** We are occasionally tempted to think that **our own actions deserve more reward, more of God's abundant mercy, than the actions of others.** But God's generosity cannot be quantified or partitioned into different amounts for different people. **When we think that way, we are trying to relate to God on our terms rather than to accept God's radically different ways.**

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**Making the Connection (Grades 1, 2, and 3)**

Young children absorb early on our tendency to make comparisons and to value some jobs above others. Jesus teaches us that our worth is founded in God's great love for us, not in what or how much we do.

**Materials Needed**

- Three different kinds of pencil sharpeners



**Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings**

1. Show the group each of the pencil sharpeners that you have brought.  
Ask: ***Which pencil sharpener is the best?***  
Allow time for the children to answer and accept all reasonable answers.  
If they can't think of any answers, you might offer that the smallest might be best because it fits easily inside a pocket or pencil case, or that the colorful one is best because it looks nice, or that the largest one is best because it may be the most durable.
2. Say: ***Actually there is only one thing that really matters with a pencil sharpener: how well does it sharpen a pencil? If the pencil sharpener can sharpen the pencil for me, it really doesn't matter how big or small it is or how colorful it is. Sometimes we forget this about lots of things. Sometimes we judge based on appearances.***
3. Say: ***Jesus taught us about this when he told his disciples a parable about workers in the vineyard. A vineyard is where grapes are grown, and lots of workers are needed to work in a vineyard. Let's listen carefully to the parable that Jesus told.***
4. Read aloud today's Gospel, Matthew 20:1-16.
5. Ask: ***Why were the workers who were hired first grumbling at the end of the story?*** (They were paid the same amount as those who were hired at the end of the day; they thought that they deserved more because they worked longer.) ***What does Jesus say at the end of this parable?*** (The last will be first, and the first will be last.)
6. Say: ***Jesus has a job for each of us to do. It might be a small job or a very large job. Some of us may grow up to be very famous for doing good things. Some of us will grow up to do good things for our family and neighbors. Either way, God will love us for doing the work that God wants us to do.***
7. **Conclude in prayer together, thanking God for all that he has given us and for his help to do God's work with love..**  
**Father, we thank you for loving us so much that you sent your Son to give us everlasting life. Help us to do your work with love.**  
**In Jesus name we pray. Amen.**

Pray together the Lord's Prayer.

## 25<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME CYCLE A

### THEME: GOD'S GENEROUS MERCY

### Making the Connection (Grades 4, 5, and 6)

The message from our **society sometimes leads us to overvalue success** and achievement. Today's parable reminds us that while we owe everything to God, God owes us nothing.

#### Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings:

Ask the group to consider the questions:

- ***Is it better to be first or last?***
- ***In what instances is it better to be first?***
- ***Are there instances when it might be better to be last?***

Invite the group to offer some examples.

**Sometimes our assumptions and judgments are far from the values of God.**

**Sometimes our society overemphasizes the importance of being first or being number one.**

As your examples showed, there are instances where the ordering of things might be better in the reverse.

**Today's Gospel invites us to reconsider our values** and make our judgments on more than appearances.

Invite one or more volunteers to read aloud today's Gospel, Matthew 20:1-16.

**Do you think that the landowner acted fairly toward the workers who were hired first? Why or why not?**

Encourage discussion of this question among the group;

**If the consensus is that the landlord was unfair, remind the group that the first workers agreed to work the entire day for the usual daily wage.**

**The mistake that the workers make is to believe that they were entitled to something more than had been negotiated. It is the workers who are being unfair; they are seeking to change the terms of the agreement.**

As the landowner in the parable observes, they are jealous because he is generous. They cannot be thankful for the payment they received and the opportunity to work at all.

- ***The question for today*** is this: ***"Is God fair?"*** Of course he is! But do you know what else?
- The Bible tells us that he is more than fair; the Bible tells us that ***"God is love."***
- ***Does God love us because we love him?"*** No, the Bible says, ***"This is real love-not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins."***
- Wow! That's not fair- that's love. If we got what was fair, none of us would get to heaven. I'm glad that God doesn't give me what is fair, but gives me his love and grace, in spite of what I deserve!

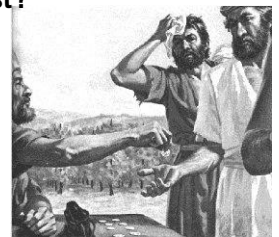
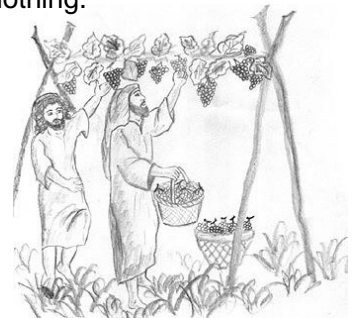
**Sometimes it is like this between God and us.**

- ***We forget that God's love for us is given to us freely and generously.***
- ***We have not earned it.***
- ***God owes us nothing but offers his love abundantly.***

**Conclude in prayer together, thanking God for all that he has given us** and for his help to do God's work with love..

***Father, we thank you for loving us so much that you sent your Son to give us everlasting life. Help us to do your work with love. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.***

***Pray together today's psalm, Psalm 145, or the Lord's Prayer.***



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**Making the Connection (7, 8 & 9)**

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Young people at this age are sensitive to issues of fairness. No doubt the parable of the workers in the vineyard will strike them as a story about unfairness. Our understanding is transformed, however, when we recognize that the story ***is not about what we deserve, but about God's love and generosity.***

**Materials Needed:**

Several newspaper or magazine articles describing injustice in the world  
Arrange the young people in pairs and distribute to each pair an article.  
Have each pair summarize their article for the group.  
Identify the person experiencing injustice in each of the articles.



***It's no fun to be treated unjustly. It feels as though everyone else is benefiting from life more than you, as if you are stuck in last place.***

**In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus tells a parable that makes us rethink our notion of justice. Have volunteers read aloud the Gospel, Matthew 20:1-16.**

Jesus' conception of ***justice emphasizes generosity***, not giving to each person what he or she deserves. He closes this Gospel by saying: ***"Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last."***

Re-evaluate your articles in light of Jesus' conception of abundant generosity, compassion, and love. Review each article and identify who is first and who is last.

Discuss each story according to Jesus' ideas of justice and generosity.

***Jesus is teaching us that we can do nothing to earn his generous love; it is given to any who are willing to accept it. Those who are "first"—those who think that they have done something to deserve God's love—will be last. Those who are last—those who know that they cannot earn God's love—will be first.***

**Conclude in prayer together, thanking God for all that he has given us and for his help to do God's work with love..**

***Father, we thank you for loving us so much that you sent your Son to give us everlasting life. Help us to do your work with love. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.***

Or Conclude by praying together the psalm for this Sunday

**Psalm 145, which praises the goodness and greatness of God.**

## 25<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME CYCLE A

### THEME: GOD'S GENEROUS MERCY

#### Family Connection

#### Gospel Reading

*Matthew 18:15-20* Jesus teaches his disciples how to settle disputes in the Church.

Conflict and disagreements are a natural part of family life. Yet, within our family, we have an important opportunity to learn how to resolve disagreements fairly by treating people with love and respect.

As you gather as a family this week, discuss the procedures for resolving disputes in your family.

What kinds of things produce disagreements in your family?

Do children frequently request the assistance of the adults when a disagreement arises?

How do the adults respond?

In today's Gospel, Jesus teaches his disciples the way in which they are to handle conflict within the Christian community of the Church.

Read together this Gospel, Matthew 18:15-20.

Invite family members to summarize the steps that Jesus proposes for resolving conflict.

How might today's Gospel inform your family's handling of disagreements?

If you have time, your family might choose to role play how Jesus' teaching about conflict resolution might be applied to a disagreement that sometimes occurs in your household.

**In today's Gospel**, Jesus also promises that he will help those who pray to him with their needs.

***Pray together that each member of your family will learn to handle conflict in a Christian manner.***

Pray together the Peace Prayer of Saint Francis.

#### **Peace Prayer of Saint Francis**

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:

where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console,  
to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.  
Amen.