**“Not Too Late”**

Psalm 27:1-9

Isaiah 55:6-9

Philippians 1:12-14, 19-30

Matthew 20:1-16

Pentecost 16

From Isaiah 55: “Seek the Lord **while He may be found**; call upon Him **while He is near**; let the wicked forsake **his** way, and the unrighteous man **his** thoughts; let him **return to the Lord, that He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon**.”

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

Pastor Craig is also preaching this weekend. Substituting for Pastor Phillips at Hope, Smyrna, he’s proclaiming and teaching also this text at their service today. And this analogy he gave me … and it illustrates the text nicely: “Hired for his **first job**”, he said, “he **rejoiced simply at the fact that he was working … he got a job, so ‘in the workforce’**. Since that, **that particular joy has been largely lost** concerned, since, about **also** **how much he’s paid for the work**.”

The point here is that **it’s God who’s chosen to hire us into His workforce (which is, by itself, joyful news). He’s chosen to put us to a useful work / to give us a job that’s under Him**. And the **payment** isthe inheritance of the kingdom of heaven and blessings of “daily bread” that’s from Him both here and into eternity, “fruitful labors” as opposed to (what He calls being not employed by the Father) “standing around idly in the marketplace” (unemployed or just exerting effort temporally. So **enjoy** the “**manner of life**” as one **hired by God**, un-grumbling no matter what the circumstance.

**Text**

Jesus again tells a “kingdom of heaven” parable. This one about **labor-effort** **quantities** and **the generosity of a full-days payment to everyone hired**. He suggests about **fairness (our idea)**, yet stresses that **we ought not want fairnes**s. **He, also, doesn’t deal with us that way (fairly), but graciously instead since none of us has ever really worked for Him a perfect full day sufficient for the day’s wage**. See, all sinners are “**third**”or (maybe, more accurately) “sixth” or “ninth”-hour or (even more likely) “**eleventh hour**” **workers** **by virtue of a worthy amount of productivity**. And **JESUS IS THE ONLY FIRST THING IN THE MORNING LABORER / PERFECT FULL DAY WORKER**. God, the Father, **compensates, though, all who He’s hired at any point as if each of were himself Christ**. Christ **(though becoming the ancient sin of grumbling) never ever did “grumble” about the graciousness of the Father ascribing His efforts to our benefit**. ….

Themost **ancient** (and, maybe, **worst**) sin is **grumbling**. Certainly, the first sin **out-loud** was **this one by Satan**: grumbling over his comparison with God. He encouraged Eve to begrudge her situation compared to God, and she Adam. “Eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil and you will be like God”, Satan told her. And **grumbling** and **groaning** (the Hebrew words “massah” and “meribah”) was the reason that the Israelites had to wander and die off in the wilderness for 40 years. With **complaining about** better wages and working conditions, or more health or a bigger house and nicer cars or less challenges, we join in the **grumbling over circumstances**. That (**probably more than any other factor**) contributes to whatever “**unhappiness**” we might give in to and have … and, then, die from.

We could have been just **told by Jesus** to **stop grumbling and groaning**, but He **went on to illustrate**. Isaiah said it clear enough: “**seek the Lord**” (and His work, **happily**) “while He may be found; **call upon Him**” (again, work for Him **happily**) “while He is near”. And then, the **hard work**: “forsake wickedness, even the thoughts of unrighteousness, and return to the Lord that He may have compassion on us. Return to God, for **there** He will abundantly pardon our sins” … **enjoy this end result**.

There was **only One** who (as I said) **sufficiently worked, earning the agreed-upon wage**. **Only One deserved** His pay, which was the glory of the Father (which is what He’s wanted for His people to share in, intended for faithful tenders of His fields, stewards and managers and speakers of His Word automatically as He wills to harvest children and neighborhoods and co-workers and school-mates. And there is **only One** who **warrants** what the Father wants to give in an inheritance that’s wonderful with His, also, daily care. Jesus is the **full-day worker** … and **Somebody** **(actually divine to be worth the world)** **had to be**.

The Good News is that “The **last will be first** and the **first last**” which (if that doesn’t **sound right**) then consider how the **“thoughts” and “ways” and wisdom of God give us (by the means of work that He had to execute) what’s rightfully owed His divine Son**. **See how that feels, and see if you want your own ways instead!** Though **God’s** “**first**” in His Son Jesus (we’ll hear more next weekend) “was in the form of God, **He** did not **count equality with God a thing to be grasped**, but **made Himself nothing**” (as in “**last**”), “taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” Isaiah quotes God: “My thoughts **in that** are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts”. God’s “**thoughts**” and His “**ways**”, again, are that the **full-day’s sufficient labor of His own perfect Son as the ancient sin crucifying it (with Himself) upon a cross kills its eternal effect upon kingdom followers because of it**.

**Application**

Perhaps the **Apostle Paul** is a **good living example** of, though, **our sometime still struggle over fairness and our seemingly good ideas**. Jailed for his efforts, there he struggled with **his own thoughts and ways** about, either, living-and-continue-to-work or dying-finally-to-fully-inherit-the-kingdom’s-glory … that was **his situation**. He suggested to God that his continuing in this life might be the better idea because there was, clearly, more work he could do on earth. OK, though, with either course, he finished with “Thy will be done”, and meant it, joyfully and thankfully … at peace.

And **we** can try to **help God make decisions**, but our ways are not always God’s. Sometimes it’s hard to imagine what God’s leading us through, just know that it’s toa **favorable destination, not like this world in challenges and day-to-day grinds and circumstances**.

For that journey, we **have this parable**: God “**making us equal**” **to Jesus**, who (rather than **us having to, because we couldn’t and don’t**) bore the burden of our weight to have us get (as the Father’s “last workers”) all He gives to His own Son in a **sustenance that carried Him also through the trials of suffering**, a **resurrection upon death that shows what ours will be like**, and **glory with a heavenly place at the end (even throne and mansion)**. The “last” of us **He makes** “**first**” because of the “First” in Jesus (**made** “**last**”-for-us in service); **gave what He never grumbled to give**. And that ninth- or eleventh-hour-yet-**FULL-PAY** is still available to anybody who has, yet, breath in their lungs. In this life (“**while He may be found and is, yet, near” as His Word of Gospel**), we **can** (and **anyone** **can**) “forsake our ways and our thoughts and return to the Lord. **HE PROMISES THAT HE WILL, IN THAT, HAVE COMPASSION and ABUNDANTLY PARDON**”.

**THERE’S** **Good News to spread**, in +Jesus name. Amen.