**“Honored in My Body”**

Introit: Psalm 116:12-13, 15-16, antiphon, verse 17

Isaiah 55:6-9

Philippians 1:12-14, 19-30

Matthew 20:1-16

Pentecost 17

“’These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?’”

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

**Bridge**

“Give us this day our daily bread” … and God does “certainly give daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to **receive our daily bread with thanksgiving**.”

But God is talking, here, about much more than “daily bread”, and yet “daily bread” **IS** the more (the much more) of (for us taking it) mercy and grace and salvation / a relationship pardoned and Good with the Heavenly Father because of the sacrifice of perfect blood to pay for it. The “daily bread” (a full day’s work) is actually done by necessity … but by the **work of Jesus that full day (sun up to sun down)**, **Him** **busy at it** from the “early morning” to the end of the “day’s burdens” … on a cross. **He finished the labors and does not “begrudge” the Father’s “generosity” in compensating us the way He is compensated by the Father**. The **favor upon which the Father** **OWES THE SON (agreed-upon from before the beginning of created time in the work that He’d need to do), God grants freely … to even late-comers who’d accept the “hiring” into the “vineyards” of God’s kingdom, not “standing idle” after that work-contract is accepted, joining the crew**.

And the **PAY** is **eternal** glory and paradise and a reign even here upon this earth (usefulness and a known blessedness) is an **unfair gift**. **Generosity (mercy) is not fair**. It’s an undeserved graciousness and favor by God to those hired at any time during a day of this life. The hard day’s work was **Jesus’** … and **He does not “begrudge” the Father’s “generosity”**. ….. He came to **BE IT**.

**Text**

One might think that **Paul** could make a case for **“begrudging” the grace of God**. He gave up a profitable secular life (a business for comfort’s gain and prestige of position within the community) to slavishly spread a Gospel that would save pagans from Hell. He writes Philippians from prison. In chains (and unapologetic for why he was tried) he boldly continued proclaiming Christ crucified for sinners then raised to jailers and an entire “imperial guard”. He was thrilled to imagine the Word spreading as the text implies that it did, going everywhere throughout that military command then beyond to soldiers’ families and the marketplaces in the whole city where he was imprisoned (“to all the rest”). Imprisonment and the potential of a martyr’s death at the end of the day was “minimal investment” he thought to the glory that he’d both gain ahead of him by God’s great gift and what so many more might by his efforts. Paul would continue to truly die to himself and earthly freedoms and pleasures for what he’d considered the privilege of “living **for Christ**” / “**honoring God in his own body and flesh**”, both in this “life as well as through a death” to it for the sake of the witness to the Gospel to save others.

Remember, though, that **Paul was a latecomer to God’s “vineyard” workforce**. Of the day’s hours, even he might have been a 3 PM hire, snatched on a Damascus road, blinded **of his own cravings** then **re-sighted for a purpose Godly**. **He’d missed** the 3-year ministry of Jesus, the teachings and signs. **He’d missed** the Bethlehem birth and did not watch the passion event of Jesus death nor see the tomb empty and visit with Jesus before His ascension into Heaven. **For him (Paul) it would require other witnesses and a brief visible and audible return of the Lord to strike him to his knees … and hire him for service (real usefulness as opposed to “idleness” and even persecution / enmity with God’s will / “why do you persecute Me, Saul”).**

Paul was **amazed by grace … the “generosity” of God**. We’re **saved by it**, he’d write.

**Application**

What’s your story? It might feel as if you’ve been laborers for Christ since early consciousness. It may seem like you’ve saved people for God (kids and friends and churched for whom your labors have been steady and beneficial). Maybe you’ve given up sleeping in Sunday mornings for what could seem like “forever” to worship God by your presence and voice and energies, and there’s things you “deserve” from Him (God) for those efforts.

**Where were you** when the deliberateness of 4,000 years of history brought to this world the perfect opportunity for the incarnation of God’s Son into a girl named Mary, descended of David and through a whole purposeful process of person through person since Eve through Noah’s family through Patriarch’s through a nation protected in this one line to the Lord? **Where were you** when Jesus needed you to stand by Him in a court battle for His life? **Where were you** when men arrested Him? **Where were you** when early Christians were fed to lions or lit as party torches for the sake of a Gospel witness? **Where were you** when Christianity was embattled through the Crusades? **Where were you**, even, when this country was formed on supposed Christian principles and ancestors of yours (many) crossed an ocean with all that they had to seek a place where Christianity could be upheld with some sense of purity? **Where were you** for the work that went before you … to **HAND YOU THIS GIFT?**

Honestly, only God (and Him in Christ Jesus) has **worked the full day**. “**By grace** you have been saved through, **only**, faith”. “This is **not your own doing**; it is **a gift of God, not a result of your work, so that no one may boast” in himself**.

There is a wonderful hymn that I only discovered after preparing the Order of Service this weekend. I want, though, for you to see it’s words and gain from it. Turn (in your hymnals) to Hymn 567. Read these words with me, and give thanks for the 11th hour salvation of us each, given a “full days wage” without any significant efforts to gain it (just Jesus’ efforts and success, victorious upon a cross, raised then from the grave). Let’s read together (aloud) all the verses:

“Not what these hands have done can save this guilty soul;

Not what this toiling flesh has borne can make my spirit whole.

Not what I feel or do can give me peace with God;

Not all my prayers and signs and tears can bear my awful load.

**THY** work alone, O Christ, can ease this weight of sin;

**THY** blood alone, O Lamb of God, can give me peace within.

**THY** love to me, O God, not mine, O Lord, to Thee,

Can rid me of this dark unrest and set my spirit free.

**THY** grace alone, O God, to me can pardon speak;

**THY** pow’r alone, O Son of God, can this sore bondage break.

**I** bless the Christ of God, I rest on love divine,

And with unfalt’ring lip and heart **I** **call this Savior MINE**”.

In +Jesus’ name. Amen.