

Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

MT 20:1-16A

Lunar New Year is a is one of the most celebrated national holidays in Korea. It usually falls in the end of January or the beginning of February. More than just a holiday to mark the beginning of a new year, Lunar New Year is truly a special occasion for us, Korean people. In the morning of Lunar New Year, people pay respect to ancestors and pray for them. At the same time, it is also an opportunity to catch up with family members. On this holiday, all the family members gather together, enjoy a special meal and play some traditional games.

I still remember playing Korean traditional board game with my brother and with my cousins when I was little. When we finished the game, my grandmother used to give us 3000 Korean Won which is about 3 dollars. She literally gave the same amount of money to every one of us regardless the result of the game. One year, one of my cousins won the game then told my grandmother that it is unfair to get the same prize since he won the game. Then my grandmother said “How you did at the game doesn’t matter to me.

I love each of you and want to see all of you be happy. It is fair to me to give the same prize to each of you whom I love.”

Today, we heard the parable of the laborers called to work at various times during the day. The parable is hard to understand when we think about our human society. It seems to us that the laborers who worked all day had a reasonable argument. Why should the guys who only worked for just an hour or two get paid the same amount as those who worked for eight or ten hours? It is not fair! Many of us would probably get upset when we see the same thing happening in our society. However, God’s perspective is quite different from ours.

As the prophet Isaiah said in the First Reading today,

“As high as the heavens are above the earth,

so high are God’s ways above our ways

and God’s thoughts above our thoughts.”

God doesn't operate on the merit system as we think he should. God deals with us according to His free grace and love. Because of His unlimited mercy and love, this is the good news for all of us. Each of us can have a hope of eternal happiness in God's mercy. God is always ready to accept His beloved sons and daughters in his arms. Regardless our past lives, as long as we turn our direction back to God, He will embrace us as He did do all the Saints throughout the ages. In another word, we have the same invitation from God to enjoy the happiness as the apostles, St. Francis, St. Teresa of Calcutta and all the other Saints had received from God. In human perspective, it seems to be unfair that we have the same invitation with the great Saints who completely sacrificed their lives. However, to God who loves each of us so much, it is fair to invite each of us and to embrace all of us into the great joy and eternal happiness in His heavenly Kingdom.

And we see the perfect example of God's free grace in the scripture. St. Dismas who is known as the Good Thief on the Cross has never appeared in our places in the scriptures. He was not a follower of Jesus. And as we know, he was a thief. He probably committed a serious crime which brought him to the cross. On the cross, at the last moment of his life, St.

Dismas repented and confessed to Jesus, then merited to hear from him
“Today you will be with me in Paradise.”

This is the way how God grace works. God’s grace doesn’t seem fair to the self-righteous, but for those who recognize how undeserving they are, it is a truly wonderful gift of God.

My brothers and sisters, it is never too late with God. He loves each of you as much as He loved His apostles and all the Saints. As I mentioned before, each us got the same invitation as they had received from God. God calls each of us to turn away from the wrong direction toward sins and come back to His great love and mercy. He is eager to forgive our sins and leads us to the eternal happiness. He desires to reconcile us through the Sacrament of Confessions, and he even comes to us through the Holy Communion. God is calling us to respond to His invitation by loving God and our neighbors.

Now, the question for each of us would be this;

“Will you accept God’s invitation?”