

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost



The Lihu'e Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hawai'i

Ka Hale Pule 'O Na Lahui Apau . . .

Church Of All Peoples . . .

. . . Hele Pu Makou me Iesu Kristo

. . . Walking Together With Christ

September 20, 2020

The Lihu'e Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hawai'i

4602 Ho'omana Road, Lihue, HI 96766

Rev. Joseph Paxton, Pastor – Jason Shimono, Gospel Lector – Cheryl Claypoole, Lector

Rhonda Pabo, Organists – Mark Murie, Cantor – Tony Kment, Video/Audio

Church: (808) 245-2145 Fax: (808) 246-8626

E-Mail: lihuelutheran@gmail.com Website: lihuelutheranchurch.com

Welcome to the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost!

Introduction

Matthew narrates one of Jesus' controversial parables in which Jesus says that the reign of God is like that of a landowner who pays his workers the same wage no matter what time of day they began to work. When God changes God's mind about punishing Nineveh for their evil ways, Jonah is angry. Yet God is gracious and merciful, abounding in steadfast love. In baptism we receive the grace of God that is freely given to all. As Martin Luther wrote, in the presence of God's mercy we are all beggars.

Overview

Discomfort: Signs of Grace?

Poor Jonah. The guy never could get comfortable. He was uncomfortable with his God-given call to preach to Nineveh; he was uncomfortable in the arms of the sailors as they hoisted him over the boat's edge and tossed him into the sea; he was uncomfortable as the ocean's raging waves flung him about like flotsam; he was—undoubtedly—uncomfortable in the fish's belly; and he was uncomfortable and downright angry with God's mercy on the people of Nineveh. Jonah had a hard time getting comfortable with himself, and, even more so, Jonah was uneasy embracing the wideness of God's grace.

The same can be said about the laborers in Jesus' parable here in Matthew 20. The laborers who came in the early morning hours grumbled against the landowner because they were paid the same as others who started later and worked fewer hours. These laborers are ill-at-ease with the landowner's choice "to give to this last the same as I give to you." Like Jonah, they are uncomfortable with the unchecked mercy offered by the landowner/God. God doesn't play by our rules, and that can be very discomfoting for us all.

Our discomfort with grace manifests itself in all sorts of ways. It can be discomfoting for us to engage the poor and the outcast of our society. It can be discomfoting for us to welcome immigrants into our communities. It can be discomfoting to address the pervasive racism that still surrounds us. And it can be very discomfoting for us to open our lives to the transforming power of the cross of Christ, whereby "the last will be first, and the first will be last" (Matt. 20:16).

Could it be that the more uncomfortable we become with the reckless love of God, the closer we are to understanding the meaning of grace?

Announcements

1. College and young adults meet on campus for dinner and a movie
2. Youth group meets on campus in a hybrid format
3. Food distribution (LCC + LLC) – Saturday, October 3 @ 9am
4. #GrowthInGrace Gardening Team – sponsorships and volunteer team recruitment
5. Disaster preparedness task force, email jpaxton@ses.plts.edu
6. Mac Nut Fundraising in the works, more to come!
7. On the horizon – whale watching with Stuart and Sioux (February)

Weekly Events

1. Hybrid – Virtual + Local Youth Group
 - a. **Sunday, September 20**, 5:30-7:00pm, @ Lihue Lutheran Fellowship Hall
2. College and Young Adults Ministry
 - a. **Tuesday, September 22**, 5:30-8:00pm – movie, dinner, and MULAN!!!
3. Women's Book Study – New Book
 - a. **Wednesday, September 23**, @ 7:30-8:30pm via zoom <https://zoom.us/j/92476163514>
4. Bible Study – “The Twelve”
 - a. **Thursday, September 24**, @ 7:30-8:30pm via zoom <https://zoom.us/j/91319975631>
5. Centering Prayer with Liedeke Bulder
 - a. **Saturday, September 26**, @ 9-10am via zoom <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/9079773456>
6. Maintenance (church property upkeep) day
 - a. **Saturday, October 3** @ 8-11am

Prayer Concerns

Please remember these people in your prayers during the week: Judy Hoffman, Norman Dibble, Marie Johnson, Minora Higa, Kazue Zaima, Virginia Hines-Aflague, John Mattek, Giraldo II (Bobby Giraldo's son), Kristie Schmid (Tony's sister), Lolli Hagen, Abraham Torres, Sr., Kristy Kahananui, Sonny Koerte, Joan Duarte Ebesu, Mallory Rodriguez, Steve Schantz, Leonarda Cadiz, Peter Alisna, Lea Cadiz, Tirzah Pope, John McIntyre, Pastor Matthew Weber, Joyce Anglemeyer, Stephen Shioi, Peggy Hood, Jason Shimono, Richard Rasay, Nancy Nelson (formerly Mandell), Karen & Patrick Pavao, Edward Rasay, Richard Duarte (Friend of Kurt Javinar), Karen Richards (friend of Nancy Mandell), Marcos Larson (Liedeke's son), Dora Jane Rowell, Franklin Parraga, Penny Parraga, Leticia Ancog (Kurt Javinar's sister), Yvonne Shinseki, Al Dressler (Larry's Father), Shirley Hallman (Denese Alcott's Mother), Mercy Ballesteros, Mike LaBerge, Anna Marie & Phil Croghan, Judy Carlson, Caroline Johnson, Sheila Belarmino, Ray Roderick, The Church Council, and leaders in the ELCA. If you have additional prayer requests, please let the church office know. “*Ask it in my name . . .*” Mahalo for your love.

Remembering our Military

As we gather for worship, please remember those serving us in the military, and the families of our Hawai'i National Guard. These names have been given by loved ones and family members: Navy – TJ, Javinar, Kristian Matsumoto, Coast Guard - Brian Rodriguez, Navy - Kiana Alisna, Coast Guard - Ke'ale Renta Army - Jason Lumacad, Levi Fajardo: Air Force - Steven Javinar, Ikaika Fajardo, Army - Brandon Perkinson, Drew Cox, Tony Garton: National Guard - Benji MacKenzie, Eddie Resinto, Fred Casticimo, Philip Kamakea, Anthony Y. Torres, Master Sgt. If you know of someone you would like added to our prayer list, please advise the church office.

Essential Questions of Happiness

The parable of the workers in the vineyard is an interesting story, and it can be difficult to make sense of. You might find yourself asking, “What is the meaning of this text and how does it apply to my life?” Have a look at the end of the bulletin to learn more.

Welcome, Check-In, and Announcements

Type into the Facebook chatbox and respond to one, or more, of the following four check-in prompts

*Order for Confession and Forgiveness

P We are gathered in the name of the Father, Makua, and of the + Son, Keiki Kane, and of the Holy Spirit, Uhane Hemolele.

C Amen

P Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection

P Faithful God,

C have mercy on us. We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We turn from your loving embrace and go our own ways. We pass judgment on one another before examining ourselves. We place our own needs before those of our neighbors. We keep your gifts of salvation to ourselves. Make us humble, cast away our transgressions, and turn us again to life in you through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

P God hears the cries of all who call out in need, and through his death and resurrection Christ has made us his own. Hear the truth that God proclaims: Your sins are forgiven in the name of † Jesus Christ. Led by the Holy Spirit, live in the freedom and newness to do God's work in the world.

Gathering Song

ELW 673

God, Whose Almighty Word

1 God, whose al - might - y word cha - os and dark - ness heard
2 Christ, who once came to bring, on your re - deem - ing wing,
3 Spir - it of truth and love, life - giv - ing, ho - ly dove,
4 Ho - ly and bless - ed three, glo - ri - ous Trin - i - ty,

and took their flight: hear us, we hum - bly pray, and where the
heal - ing and sight; health to the trou - bled mind, sight where il -
speed forth your flight; move on the wa - ter's face bear - ing the
Wis - dom, Love, Might: bound - less as o - cean's tide, roll - ing in

gos - pel day sheds not its glo - rious ray, let there be light.
 lu - sions blind; oh, now to hu - man-kind let there be light.
 lamp of grace, and in earth's dark - est place let there be light.
 full - est pride, through the earth, far and wide, let there be light.

Text: John Marriott, 1780–1825, alt.
 Music: ITALIAN HYMN, Felice de Giardini, 1716–1796

Temple Talk – Moms Who Pray

Denese Alcott

*Apostolic Greeting

P The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

C **And also with you.**

*Prayer of the Day

P Let us pray. Almighty and eternal God, you show perpetual lovingkindness to us your servants. Because we cannot rely on our own abilities, grant us your merciful judgment, and train us to embody the generosity of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C **Amen**

*First Reading

Jonah 3:10-4:11

After Jonah's short sermon in 3:4, the Ninevites all repented and God decided to spare the city. Jonah objected to this and became even more angry when God ordered a worm to destroy a plant that was providing shade. The book ends with a question that challenges any who are not ready to forgive: You, Jonah, are all worked up about a bush, but shouldn't I be concerned about a hundred and twenty thousand Ninevites?

¹⁰When God saw what [the people of Ninevah] did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

^{4:1}But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. ²He prayed to the Lord and said, "O Lord! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. ³And now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." ⁴And the Lord said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" ⁵Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

⁶The Lord God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. ⁷But when dawn

came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. ⁸When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

⁹But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?" And he said, "Yes, angry enough to die." ¹⁰Then the Lord said, "You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night.

¹¹And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?"

A The Word of the Lord C **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm (to be read responsively)

Psalm 145:1-8

The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. (*Ps. 145:8*)

¹I will exalt you, my God and king,
and bless your name forever and ever.

²**Every day will I bless you
and praise your name forever and ever.**

³Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised!
There is no end to your greatness.

⁴**One generation shall praise your works to another
and shall declare your power.**

⁵I will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty
and all your marvelous works.

⁶**They shall tell of the might of your wondrous acts,
and I will recount your greatness.**

⁷They shall publish the remembrance of your great goodness;
they shall sing joyfully of your righteousness.

⁸**The LORD is gracious and full of compassion,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

Second Reading

Philippians 1:21

Paul writes to the Philippians from prison. Though he is uncertain about the outcome of his imprisonment, he is committed to the ministry of the gospel and calls on the Philippians to live lives that reflect and enhance the gospel mission.

²¹For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. ²²If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. ²³I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; ²⁴but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. ²⁵Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, ²⁶so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

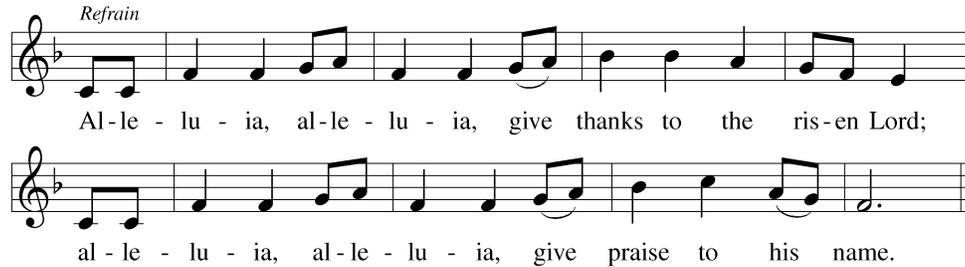
²⁷Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is

God's doing. ²⁹For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well—³⁰since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

A The Word of the Lord C Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Refrain



Al-le - lu - ia, al-le - lu - ia, give thanks to the ris-en Lord;
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, give praise to his name.

*The Holy Gospel

Matthew 20:1-16

Jesus tells a parable about God's generosity, challenging the common assumption that God rewards people according to what they have earned or deserve.

P The Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew, the twentieth chapter.



Glo - ry to you, O Lord.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹“The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ²After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. ³When he went out about nine o’clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; ⁴and he said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went. ⁵When he went out again about noon and about three o’clock, he did the same. ⁶And about five o’clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, ‘Why are you standing here idle all day?’ ⁷They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard.’ ⁸When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.’ ⁹When those hired about five o’clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. ¹⁰Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. ¹¹And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, ¹²saying, ‘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.’ ¹³But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? ¹⁴Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. ¹⁵Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ ¹⁶So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

P The Gospel of the Lord.



Praise to you, O Christ.

Children's Sermon

Sermon

Song of the Day

ELW 856

How Great Thou Art



1 O Lord my God, when I in awe-some won-der con-sid-er
2 When through the woods and for-est glades I wan-der, I hear the
3 But when I think that God, his Son not spar-ing, sent him to
4 When Christ shall come, with shout of ac-cla-ma-tion, and take me



all the works thy hand hath made, I see the stars, I hear the might-y
birds sing sweet-ly in the trees; when I look down from loft-y moun-tain
die, I scarce can take it in, that on the cross my bur-den glad-ly
home, what joy shall fill my heart! Then I shall bow in hum-ble ad-o-



thun-der, thy pow'r through-out the u-ni-verse dis-played;
gran-deur and hear the brook and feel the gen-tle breeze;
bear-ing he bled and died to take a-way my sin;
ra-tion and there pro-claim, "My God, how great thou art!"



Then sings my soul, my Sav-ior God, to thee, how great thou



art! How great thou art! Then sings my soul, my Sav-ior God, to
 thee, how great thou art! How great thou art!

Text: Carl G. Boberg, 1859–1940; tr. and adapt. Stuart K. Hine, 1899–1989
 Music: O STORE GUD, Swedish folk tune; adapt. Stuart K. Hine
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**Apostles' Creed*

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

**Prayers of the Church*

P Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A Generous God, you make the last first, and the first last. Where this gospel challenges the church, equip it for its works of service. Strengthen those who suffer for Christ. Lord, in your mercy,

C **hear our prayer.**

A Sun and wind, bushes and worms, cattle and great cities—nothing in creation is outside your concern, mighty God. In your mercy, tend to it all. Give us a spirit of generosity toward all you have made. Lord, in your mercy,

C **hear our prayer.**

A Where we find envy and create enemies, you provide enough for all. Bring peace to places of conflict and violence. Inspire leaders with creativity and wisdom. Bless the work of negotiators, peacekeepers, and development workers. Lord, in your mercy,

C **hear our prayer.**

- A Reveal yourself to all in need as you are gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, ready to relent from punishing. Accompany judges and lawyers, victims of crime and those serving sentences. Give fruitful labor and a livelihood to those seeking work. Lord, in your mercy,
- C hear our prayer.**
- A Even beyond our expectations, you choose to give generously. Grant life, health, and courage to all who are in need. Lord, in your mercy,
- C hear our prayer.**
- A Be with our Ohana off island. As places around our nation re-open and re-close, be with them. Place hedges of protection around them as they go about their daily activities. Hold them in your love until they are able to come be with us again. God of our salvation,
- C hear our prayer.**
- P All these things and whatever else you see that we need, we entrust to your mercy; through Christ our Lord.
- C Amen**

Queen's Prayer

The musical score for "Queen's Prayer" is presented in two systems. The first system is labeled "Piano" and the second "Pno". Both systems are in 4/4 time. The lyrics are written below the notes in two lines: Hawaiian and English. The Hawaiian lyrics are: "O kou a-lo-ha no A i-a i ka La-ni, A No-lai-la e ka-Haku Ma-la-lo kou e-he-u, Ko o kou oi-a i-o, He he-mo-le-le hoi ma-kou ma-lu-hi-a, A mau loa a-ku no. A-me-ne." The English lyrics are: "1. O Lord thy Loving Mercy, Is high as the Heavens. It tells us of thy truth. And 'tis filled with holiness 3. For thy grace I beseech thee. Bring us 'neath thy protection. And peace will be thy portion Now and forever more. Amen"

English Translation

1. O Lord thy Loving Mercy,
Is high as the Heavens.
It tells us of thy truth.
And 'tis filled with holiness

3. For thy grace I beseech thee.
Bring us 'neath thy protection.
And peace will be thy portion
Now and forever more. Amen

Sharing of the Peace

- P The peace of the Lord be with you always.
- C And also with you.**
- P Let us share peace in the Facebook live chatbox with one another.

**Offering Prayer*

- P Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. You have set before us these gifts of your

good creation. Prepare us for your heavenly banquet, nourish us with this rich food and drink, and send us forth to set tables in the midst of a suffering world, through the bread of life, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C Amen.

Offertory

I'm reminded this week that we can't ever *out-give God*. No matter what we give, if and when we give, God will always give back and God will always give first. This is why we worship. This is why we offer tithes, gifts, and offerings *because God first gave to us*. It is out of the overflow of our hearts, from the joy in our lives that we want to and are inspired to give back a small portion of what God first has given to us. This week, if you decide to give: (1) do it *from* a joyful heart and (2) recognize that life is more than material wealth. As the founder and owner of TOMS shoes says, "you have to give to live." Give today and uncover the joy of life that God has for you.

If, in this discernment, God puts it on your heart to give, donations can be made online, mailed in, or given on our website [here](#) or you can copy and paste the weblink below @

[https://www.eservicepayments.com/cgi-](https://www.eservicepayments.com/cgi-bin/Vanco_ver3.vps?appver3=tYgT1GfNxRUldiimjHMvORYXmm3bazY6GfrmTtVDZydsksODEa-Up5lt373GHnco2evTpoomld6BrVzd2nGop8xSFKZ9u6c4AzLo4CjNx7k=&ver=3)

[bin/Vanco_ver3.vps?appver3=tYgT1GfNxRUldiimjHMvORYXmm3bazY6GfrmTtVDZydsksODEa-Up5lt373GHnco2evTpoomld6BrVzd2nGop8xSFKZ9u6c4AzLo4CjNx7k=&ver=3](https://www.eservicepayments.com/cgi-bin/Vanco_ver3.vps?appver3=tYgT1GfNxRUldiimjHMvORYXmm3bazY6GfrmTtVDZydsksODEa-Up5lt373GHnco2evTpoomld6BrVzd2nGop8xSFKZ9u6c4AzLo4CjNx7k=&ver=3)

Offertory Song

Lord of Aloha



God of the is - lands, Lord of the seas, Ma - ker of beau - ty and source of the breeze,
5 King of Cre - a - tion, an - cient and new, Lord of A - lo - ha we wor - ship you.
9 Auth - or of mer - cy, Giv - er of grace, Bles - sed Re - deem - er who died in our place, Fath - er of one O
14 ha - na are you, Lift - ing our voic - es we sing "Al - le - lu" Lord of A - lo - ha we wor - ship you.
19 God of the is - lands, Lord of the seas, Ma - ker of beau - ty and source of the breeze,
23 King of Cre - a - tion, an - cient and new, Lord of A - lo - ha we wor - ship you.
27 Lord of A - lo - ha we wor - ship you.

Sacramental Remembrance of Communion

**Lord's Prayer* (spoken in unison)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

**Blessing*

P Mothering God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you and lead you into the way of truth and life.

C Amen

Sending Song

ELW 542

O Living Bread from Heaven

The musical score is written for a four-part setting (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) in the key of D major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of two systems of music. The first system contains the first four verses of the hymn, and the second system contains the concluding lines. The lyrics are printed below the vocal staves.

1 O liv - ing Bread from heav - en, how well you feed your guest!
2 My Sav - ior, you have led me with - in your ho - liest place,
3 You gave me all I want - ed; this food can death de - stroy.
4 Oh, grant me then, well - strength - ened with heav'n - ly food, while here

The gifts that you have giv - en have filled my heart with rest.
and here your - self have fed me with trea - sures of your grace;
And you have free - ly grant - ed the cup of end - less joy.
my course on earth is length - ened, to serve you, free from fear;



O won-drous food of bless - ing! O cup that heals our woes!
 for you have free - ly giv - en what earth could nev - er buy,
 My Lord, I do not mer - it the fa - vor you have shown,
 and bring me home to praise you where none can peace de - stroy,

My heart, this gift pos - sess - ing, in thank - ful song o'er - flows!
 the bread of life from heav - en, that now I shall not die.
 and all my soul and spir - it bow down be - fore your throne.
 where I will ev - er raise you glad songs in end - less joy.

Text: Johann Rist, 1607–1667; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–1878, alt.
 Music: AURELIA, Samuel S. Wesley, 1810–1876

Dismissal

A Go in peace! Remember the poor!

C Thanks be to God

Upcoming Commemorations

Nelson Wesley Trout, bishop, died 1996 (TFF)

Sunday, September 20, 2020

A native of Ohio, Trout served parishes in several parts of the United States before being elected bishop of the South Pacific District of the American Lutheran Church, the first African American Lutheran to serve in such a capacity.

Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist

Monday, September 21, 2020

Matthew (or Levi) was a tax collector in Capernaum for the Roman government. Tax collectors were frequently despised for dishonesty and for assisting the occupiers. Jesus nevertheless showed love for them, and chose Matthew to be a disciple.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS OF HAPPINESS

Let me ask you, do you think the vineyard workers would have *actually* been happy, or content, if they were paid more? I think one area of the parable speaks to the limits of human wisdom and knowledge (foolishness) when it comes to money and happiness. There is a delusion – firmly held belief that holds no basis in reality – that more money will equate to more happiness (contentment).

The parable generates this idea that *if the vineyard workers had been paid more, they would have been* happy. The Greek uses an interesting term to describe the complaining workers. When it describes how they felt and what they did, it uses this word, ἐγόγγυζον, which is defined as **smoldering discontentment**. They were angry. They were upset. And they filled up and overflowed with their discontentment.

This should raise questions about contentment and what actually leads to contentment. The story might stand to reason that if they workers had been paid more they would have been content; and we might think and/or feel this way about our lives. “If I just *made more* **then** I would be happy.”

Let’s take a look at research on happiness to figure out what actually contributes to happiness. Empirically, psychological research finds a weak but positive correlation between money/income and happiness. However, it should be noted that this is a weak correlation. This means there is a weak relationship. The research shows that there are many more significant predictors of happiness like a sense of purpose, relationships, social support, leisure, housing – and basic living standards, and downward social comparison.

It’s interesting that the happiest people are not the people who compare themselves to people who make more, receive more, or have more. It is the people who compare themselves *to those who have less* that are more happy.

We could focus on God’s justice but I think a more pertinent and significant theme of the Gospel lesson looks us in the face and asks us these questions:

1. Do you find joy in your work? Specifically, do you find meaning, purpose, and value in serving God?
2. How are you doing with downward social comparison (realizing *how much* versus *how little* you have)?