

**25<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**September 24, 2023**  
**Year of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ark of the New Covenant**

*The reason I speak to them in parables is that 'seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.'* (Matthew 13: 13)

First, let me say something about parables. In so many words, Christ tells his disciples that he's speaking and teaching in parables because many in the crowds reject him as well as all that he has to say and teach. To paraphrase the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 32: 3), they have essentially closed their eyes to avoid seeing the truth, chose to listen but not try to understand, and not let their hearts believe in salvation, else they would be healed. Isaiah said it much more eloquently.

Jesus used redundancy and exaggeration (these were common in the language of the time), however, he seemed to favor parables in his teaching. Remarkably, he had a way of telling stories that all people can relate to their everyday lives. These parables have stood the test of time; they are as relatable today as they were 2000 years ago. Bishop Barron suggested that perhaps Jesus used these confounding stories to "bother us, throw us off base, confuse us a bit." He also said, "...because in many cases, stories reveal truth that arguments can't quite capture."

Truth be told, didn't Jesus want us to puzzle over some of the things he said? Didn't he want us to think about and consider the meanings behind the stories? Didn't he want us to remember and talk about those stories, to find the truth and share it with others? I would like to share an example with you about today's gospel. A deacon had a conversation with someone several weeks ago about the meaning and point of today's gospel reading. She stated that she would feel unfairly treated if she had worked hard all day out in the heat and then others who worked far less, some only an hour, were paid the same amount. I can't help but feel most people would have the same feelings these days.

I suggested her feelings about the parable were influenced by the point of view she was taking regarding the events in the parable. For instance, would her feelings about the hired hands who worked only part of the day change if she saw them in a different light? What if she knew they had stood in the market all day, truly hoping and praying to be chosen for work, because their families would go hungry if they couldn't earn money for food? What if they were so nervous about this that they were almost sick with guilt and self-hate for their failure? Would it make any difference if some of the un-hired workers were her children? Perhaps Christ wanted us to consider these kinds of variables. Perhaps Christ was trying to teach us something about love for our fellow

man. The presentation of these scenarios seemed to change my friend's attitude about the story.

Certainly, I don't think Christ's parable was about any economic or political theory. This parable was all about God's love for everyone regardless of situation or background. As we know, some folks are righteous all their lives and some only reach that state late in life. And many fall somewhere in the middle of that time line. However, God treats all those who come to Him as equals. If we allow Him, His love will help complete us, move us toward perfection.

Christ, in his deep love for us, suggested in so many words, regarding his parables, that "If you have ears, you should listen." And, as Mother Teresa always advised, "Let nothing come between you and Jesus." In other words, let nothing come between you and God's love, my friends.