

## Sermon Reflection

September 20, 2020

Matthew 20:1-16 - The Laborers in the Vineyard passage

In this sermon dialogue – our seminary intern, Sam Zeigler made her responses to Pastor Kerra’s questions about the text. Consider your own responses as a means of Ignatian Contemplation as you reflect on this text.

**Kerra** - I will start with a description of Ignatian Contemplation. St. Ignatius brought imagination to prayerful scripture study, believing that if you could imagine yourself in the story (particularly gospel stories) then you would learn from the feelings, sights, and sounds of the text what God was speaking to you. It makes me think of the ordination question: Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and **God’s Word to you?** We can be encouraged to approach God’s Word - not only for study, but for a Word to us in our lives today.

And also another ordination question: Will you seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?

So as a student of scripture and someone who likes to engage creatively through art and story - could you tell us a bit about how God uses your imagination in the ways you seek to serve the church? (From the ordination question/good reflection for today - Will you seek to serve the church with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?)

REFLECTION ON IMAGINATION and SCRIPTURE AS GOD’S WORD TO YOU

**Kerra** - Getting into today's story about the laborers in the Vineyard - Let's start by hanging out with the day workers who were there at the end of the day and still didn't have work. Who's there? What is it like to "not get picked" for work? What do you see and hear there?

LET YOUR IMAGINATION GO - Who are the last ones hired?

**Kerra** - Now what about those go-getters who have been working all day. Tell me a bit about them. Who are they? What have they been talking about all day?

DESCRIPTION OF THE ONES WHO WORKED ALL DAY

**Kerra** - Now here's the transition in the story - the landowner decides to pay them both the same. Who do you identify with? Are you disappointed in the unfairness or relieved that you finally get a full day's pay? (Remember that Jesus' stories are so complex that you might pick one today - and the opposite tomorrow)

TODAY, I'm with the last hired/all day workers because -----

**Kerra** - So in this story where one side ends up feeling the weight of things being unfair, and the other side might end up feeling worthy or whole, and they both received the EXACT SAME PAY, I'm wondering what that "day wage" represents in the story. Presuming God is the landowner, perhaps we are each given "enough" but some will see that as too little, and others might receive and feel nothing but gratitude. Any reflections on what the equal wage could represent - either in the story - or as you feel that story in today's context?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN (IN GOD'S EYES) TO GET THE SAME PAY

**Kerra** - For us to conclude this story, we have to take a look at the summary of the lesson Jesus adds at the end. "So the last will be first, and the first will be last." This isn't the only time Jesus

will say these words. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all attribute this saying to Jesus, and Matthew likes it so much, he has to use it twice, in back to back stories. So if I stick with Warren Carter's theological premise as a scholar writing on Matthew's gospel - Jesus is consistently on the side of the marginalized. Trying to figure out if we are first, or last, or the last who will be first is a challenge. Want to share a few words on how you hear that spiritual maxim?

**REFLECT ON** - "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

**Kerra** - Use your spiritual imagination. Ground yourself in the stories of Jesus - of reconciliation and hope. It's what we need right now.