

as the Church loves the world the way God so loved the world, our jobs will be secure. *PRAYER: Master of the vineyard, turn my eyes outward to see my role in the great kingdom harvest. Amen.*

Saturday – Fairness

Read “The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard” in Matthew 20:1-16, focusing on the key verses, Matthew 20:13-14. *“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.’”* Few people work for love of the job. Most work to get paid, and paid fairly. It’s no wonder, then that our first reaction to Jesus’ story of the workers in the vineyard is to question the fairness of the master. Even though some had worked all day and others just an hour, he pays everyone the same, one denarius, an average day’s wage. What’s fair about that? We are quick to second-guess God and hold God accountable to our standard, “Everyone gets what they deserve.” When God appears to break this rule, we complain. Like ancient Job, we grumble only to be humbled by God, who approaches us with this question, “Little woman, little man, are you God or am I?” The answer, of course, is that God is God, and we are not, and we had better get used to the idea. We may want to reconsider judging God’s fairness by our standards. How is God fair in giving sinners heaven instead of hell? And where is God’s fairness in putting the punishment for our sins on His only Son? *PRAYER: Lord, thank You that You are more than just fair. Amen.*


Sunday – Grace

Read “The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard” in Matthew 20:1-16, focusing on the key verse, Matthew 20:15, *“Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?”* A church member once gave his pastor the gift of a bottle of wine. The pastor was grateful, of course, but thought little of the gift as he brought it home and added it to his wine collection. Then at a dinner in his home, he brought out the bottle and was ready to open it when a friend, a wine connoisseur, stopped him. “Where did you get that bottle?” the friend asked. The pastor explained that it was a gift from a member. “That bottle of wine,” the friend said, “is easily worth \$800!” The pastor gulped, grabbed for another bottle, and said, “Maybe we’ll save this for another day!” It isn’t always easy to recognize grace. Grace may appear to be little or not enough or even unjust. Yet in Jesus’ story, grace had given all the workers a job, and grace gave some what was agreed upon and others far more. Some get a little grace, some get a lot, but all receive grace just the same. God’s grace is just like that. *PRAYER: Lord, give me the grace I need to see Your grace at work. Amen.*

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This week’s Bring It Home devotions are from “The Parables of Lent” Daily Devotions on the Stories of Jesus for Lent”, written by Pastor Dean Nadasdy and used by permission of Creative Communications for the Parish.



Bring It Home

*Devotions for
the week of
March 19, 2017*

WHAT NOW?

1. Keep praying about, thinking about, and acting on these two key questions:
 - Who is my neighbor?
 - How can I be a neighbor, showing and sharing Jesus’ love?
2. Continue with the “Love Assignment” of 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. This is week 5 of 16, so use the week to practice love as it’s expressed in “not being proud,” the fifth characteristic of love. What can you do with this? As in week’s past, have fun with it, be creative, and let Love Work through you as you “work” it with the people in your life.

If you would like to receive daily Bring It Home devotions by email, please contact the church office: churchoffice@immanuelloveland.org

Monday – Extravagance

Read “The Parable of the Good Samaritan” in Luke 10:25-37, focusing on the key verses Luke 10:34-35, “*He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’*” In Mark Twain’s “The Story of a Good Little Boy”, Jacob Blivens is a good little boy whose story does not end well. Still, Jacob’s dream is to be a Sunday school boy, held up as an example of impressive goodness. He imagines himself pictured in a Sunday school book wonderfully refusing to lie to his mother as she weeps for joy over his integrity. At one point he pictures himself in a Sunday school book giving a penny to a poor mother of six and telling her to spend it as she likes but not to be extravagant because extravagance is a sin. Moderation may be a virtue, but not where love is concerned. The Good Samaritan is extravagant in his mercy. His mercy is like a father’s extravagant gestures in welcoming home his runaway son (Luke 15:22-24). He is like the woman at Bethany who lavishes Jesus’ head with costly oil just before His Passion and death (Mark 14:3). Human mercy is at it’s best when, like God’s grace, it is extravagant. PRAYER: *Lord of love, save me from measured mercy. Amen.*

Tuesday - Imitation

Read “The Parable of the Good Samaritan” in Luke 10:25-37, focusing on the key verses, Luke 10:36-37. “*Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?*” He said “*The one who showed him mercy.*” And Jesus said to him, “*You go, and do likewise.*” Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw is credited with saying that imitation is not just the sincerest form of flattery but also the sincerest form of learning. It begins early. A one-year-old begins to do what she sees her parent do. I once knelt down on one knee at the church door to greet a three-year-old after worship at his level. Guess what the child did? He knelt right down on one knee as well. Imitation as a form of learning is intentional and relational. We choose to do what someone we admire does. Because bad examples abound, we must be careful in choosing a model and a behavior worth imitating. So Jesus endears the lawyer to the Good Samaritan with his generous acts of mercy and tells him, “*You go, and do likewise.*” In other words, imitate him with mercy that has no boundaries. Now the Storyteller with His own boundless acts of love has become both our model and our motivation. Now the imitation of Christ has become the baseline for the mercy-filled Christian life. PRAYER: *Lord Jesus, make me more like you.. Amen.*

Wednesday – Vocation

Read “The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard” in Matthew 20:1-16 focusing on the key verse Matthew 20:1, “*For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.*” Martin Luther saw ordinary work as sacred. He suggested that God has called every person, whether they know it or not, to serve God and others in their particular station in life. In Luther’s day most saw only priests and monks as having a calling. Luther saw God “hidden” in the ordinary

work of ordinary people, accomplishing divine purposes. The apostle Paul put it this way, “*So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God*” (1 Corinthians 7:24). All the workers in Jesus’ story had one good thing in common: they were called and sent to the vineyard by the master. The kingdom of God is like that—God giving everyone work to do for God and for others. Everyone is a priest. This does not mean that we are “stuck” in our stations in life. It does mean that wherever we work right now, even if we don’t like our situation, God has called us to present our “bodies as a living sacrifice” just there (Rom 12:1) PRAYER: *Lord, make my workplace a sacred place of divine calling and purpose. Amen.*

Thursday – Tenure

Read “The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard” in Matthew 20:1-16, focusing on the key verses, Matthew 20:11-12, “*And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, saying, ‘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.’*” She had worked as a Sunday school teacher for forty years. Receiving her award plaque, she commented, “I was recruited forty years ago as a substitute teacher?” Every church has its generations of workers. Healthy churches include in their service ranks long-term veterans and those brand-new to the faith. Whatever their tenure, all are valued at an equal level. The workers in Jesus’ story are hired for vineyard work at different times through out the day. By the end of the day, some have worked far longer than others. Understandably, some are upset when they hear that everyone is to be paid the same wage. Yet none, it seems, is entitled to more than the others. Sin and grace are great levelers in the Church. Charter member and newcomer stand on even ground. Length of service seems of little account. What matters is that we are in the vineyard, that is, we are in the kingdom. Our way there was paid for by Jesus Christ, who took the wages of our sin—death on a cross. PRAYER: *Lord, unite us as we serve in Your name, veterans and newcomers alike. Amen*

Friday – Demand

Read “The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard” in Matthew 20:1-16, focusing on the key verses, Matthew 20:3-5, “*And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.’ So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same.*” Recently a report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics projected the jobs that will be in high demand between now and 2020. The report says we will need more workers in health care, social services, human resources, software development and mechanical engineering. In Jesus’ story, the high-demand job is vineyard worker. There were many grapes and not enough workers! The demand for workers increased as the day progressed. It echoes Jesus’ earlier words to His disciples, “*The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few*” (Mt 9:37). Some say that the Church in many parts of the world is hardly in great demand. There’s not much need for workers since the harvest is less than plentiful, they would say. Turned in on itself, it may look that way. The future of the Church, however, is measured by looking outward to the world for which Christ died. The vineyard is that great. As long