**Fair Compensation from God**

Based on [Matthew 20:1-16](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt20.1-16)

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Septuagesima

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Today’s gospel is the parable of the workers in the vineyard. And it is about the employer / employee relationships and the meaning of fair compensation in the kingdom of god.

In the world, compensation usually means money. What is money? Money is supposed to be able to represent the worth of anything in the world. If a person gets permanently injured in a motor-vehicle accident, they are entitled to damages…which means that the ability that was taken away from them is given a monetary value. The rich are thought to be above the law, because if they break the law they can pay people off to be quiet or have the money to survive lengthy litigation. Prostitution or pornography is putting a cash value on someone’s chastity–bottling up their virtue–for them to sell and you to buy. Some people think that those who give more offerings ought to have more say in how the church is run, what the pastor should do, and whether their uncatechized relatives should be given special access to the communion table.

Love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. And in the parable of the worker’s of the vineyard, in the midst of so many working parts, the love of money is at the root of the problem...because the first workers think money is the root of all value. They think that they deserve more of it. They even calculate the hours they worked and the harshness of the conditions they endured and the math is clear…their work is worth more than the others. And it doesn’t really matter whether they get only a denarius or even more…what matters is that the wages accurately reflect the value of the work.

Parent see this all the time…at least parents with multiple children. If you’re dishing up ice cream for a group of siblings, of course they all want more than they are given. But the real grumbling and complaining happens if one child sees that the other got more. I’ve even had it where one would rather not have any ice cream at all, than accept less than what the other received. The child believes that what they receive is what they are worth…and what a great sin for a parent to regard one child as worth more than another. Think of Joseph’s many coloured coat and what his brothers thought about it…and what they did about it.

This is not greed…greed is simply wanting more. This is envy, jealousy, covetousness. This is being concerned that someone who makes the rules, the law, money, whatever way the world has of calculating worth…is not treating you as well as someone else.

At another time, Jesus dealt with such covetousness. 13Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” 14But he said to him, “Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?” 15And he said to them, “**Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”**

And one’s employment in the kingdom of God does not consist in one’s wages. Do you do more work than your neighbor in the church? Do you do more work than your coworker in the office or out on the job? Do you spend more time on your assignment for class only to get the same grade? Do you do more for the family than your spouse? Does your brother or sister get more ice cream than you? All of this would be a horrible injustice if your life consisted in the compensation the world gives you for it.

But your life is not to be measured by money or compensation, it is to be measured by the image of the one in whom you were created. Jesus says, 29Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?i And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. 31Fear not, therefore; you are worth more than many sparrows.

But the world, in order for it to subdue all things to itself, needs to be able to monetize and redistribute all value, be it labor or goods, be it virtue or vice, be it passports and exemptions…everything has a price and everyone gets to vouch for their own worth. And what is most revealing about what covid has done to our world is how it has revealed how money and complaining remain the sources of power in this world. Truckers aren’t heard until they disrupt supply lines; businesses can only operate through passport exemptions; you can choose not to comply but it will affect your bottom line in the world. Do those who question the government deserve less than those who go along with it?

But what we deserve is not a litmus test for the christian. Because on the last day, will any of us be so bold as to approach our master and say that we deserve more than we have gotten in this life, or that someone else deserved less? God forbid! Because two things remain true: (1) we have already received more than we deserve, and (2) God will not pay our neighbour less because we complain about him.

So keep this perspective…our reward is in heaven. Our reward is not our wage, but that we were graciously hired by God to work in his kingdom. And each will receive according to what he has done, but that is for god to calculate damages and restitution and all that. The world and it’s judges, and money, and politicians they do not represent true justice, nor do they decide what has true worth.

At another point,the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle Jesus in his words. 16 And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances.[b] 17 Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” 18 But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? 19 Show me the coin for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius.[c] 20 And Jesus said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” 21 They said, “Caesar's.” Then he said to them, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.” 22 When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.

My only worry about the trucker convoy is that they are rendering onto God what is Caesars, and giving Caesar the acknowledgement due to God. Is not protest a complaint, and is not complaint a form of prayer? And who is the higher power being appealed to? My advice is that of Jesus to take care and be on guard from all kinds of covetousness. The battle for this world is not to be won by freedom loving conservatives–amongst whom I number myself–but by the archangel Michael throwing down satan by the blood of the lamb.

We are christian soldiers, and should be hesitant to entangle in civilian pursuits. It may be that some of us are called to protest injustices in this world according to our consciences. But we must be careful not to struggle against the world as though how it rewards you is what you are worth. Jesus' surrendered to the worldly authorities mading this very point, they could crucify him, but they have no power over him. Your true worth is that you were made in the image of God, so render your life unto him. Work in his vineyard–that is it’s own reward–and trust him to reward as he chooses. For you have already received a forgiveness and life that was earned for you on the cross of calvary.