

Pentecost 17 – September 20, 2026 – Deacon Rich Wilson

I lived an entire business life on the management side of labor-management disputes. But today, even I have to stand with the “grumbling” laborers, who worked 12 hours in the “scorching heat,” and received the same “usual daily wage” as a handful of men who only worked an hour. What say you?

I can’t believe the “large crowds” of Jews who actually heard Jesus tell the parable reacted differently. You just heard this Gospel: why would Jesus even tell this very difficult parable?

Well, I may have an answer.

I think Jesus knew exactly how we all would react to this parable. It got Him the attention of the workers affected, the Jews listening to the parable, and you and I who have worked so hard all our lives.

So much so, in fact, that we may have forgotten the reason Jesus was telling us the story in the first place. It’s right there, in the first five words of today’s Gospel. Do you remember?...

“Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.”

Exactly how is the “kingdom of heaven” like a “landowner” hiring workers for his vineyard, and paying them all “the usual daily wage?”

Well, it’s not.

Will we be *day laborers* in the *kingdom of heaven*, or will we receive other wages for other kinds of work in heaven? I certainly hope not. That's not the heaven you and I envision – is it?

No, I think Jesus is trying to show us something else.

I think Jesus wants to show us just how different the kingdom of God is than the earthly things in what some call “Caesar’s kingdom” – the temporal world – the world of *time, wages, and burdens*.

And, I think the first thing Jesus wants to teach us, is that the kingdom of God is not just “somewhere over the rainbow.”

Almost every time we pray we say it: “thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” God’s kingdom has come, and is coming; God’s will is done “this day,” as surely as it was 2,000 plus years ago.

God’s kingdom is not “Caesar’s kingdom.”

The first bible verse I ever truly loved was Ezekiel 36:26.

”²⁶ A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you, and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”

I’m not certain when we received it, but I believe we all have a new “heart of flesh” – to use Ezekiel’s words – that is transformed and transforming; and we experience “God’s kingdom among us” with this new heart.

In fact, to the extent that we are living in God's kingdom here on earth – we can choose not to – I think our transformed and transforming *heart* is the soul of God's kingdom, the very “ground of our being.”

Of course we know from Physics that energy is required for transformation, “movement” or “reconfiguration” of existing energy.

Where does the energy for our transformed and transforming new heart, come from? Many places I think: God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; God's Grace; the Bible; the Sacraments; prayer and worship; Christian community...

But for me, the pinnacle of our personal transformation comes when we receive the Real Presence of Christ in communion – which we will do in just a few minutes.

Listen to how Fr. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's describes the Eucharist in the beginning of his Eucharistic Prayer, “The Mass of the World.”

Teilhard, a Jesuit priest, scientist, and philosopher conceived the Prayer in World War I, on the battlefield of Aisne in France where he served as a stretcher-bearer.

“Since once again, Lord — though this time not in the forests of the Aisne but in the steppes of Asia — I have neither bread, nor wine, nor altar, I will raise myself beyond these symbols, up to the pure majesty of the real itself; I, your priest, will make the whole earth my altar and on it will offer you all the labours and sufferings of the world.

Over there, on the horizon, the sun has just touched with light the outermost fringe of the eastern sky. Once again, beneath this *moving sheet of fire*, the living surface of the earth wakes and trembles, and once again begins its *fearful travail*. I will place on my paten, O God, the harvest to be won by this renewal of labour. Into my chalice I shall pour all the sap which is to be pressed out this day from the earth's fruits."

"...renewal of labor..." There is a phrase that gets at the labor or work we do "this day," and every day in God's Kingdom.

In just a moment, our priest, Fr. Joseph, will consecrate the bread and wine; it will truly become for us the body and blood of Jesus, the Real Presence; and our "hearts of flesh" will again be newly transformed. Tielhard calls this transformed heart:

"... the depths of a soul laid *widely open* to all the forces *which... will* rise up from every corner of the earth and converge upon the Spirit. Grant me the remembrance and the *mystic presence* of all those whom the light is now awakening to the new day..."

...This new day in God's kingdom.

Amen