

“Did I cheat you ...or are you envious ...because I am generous?”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time or, better yet, imagine if you would, that there are four houses on your street. You own the one on the corner, valued at \$400,000. The house next to you is valued at \$300,000. The third house is valued at \$200,000 and the last house is valued at \$100,000.

Now imagine one of your children saying to you:

“Daddy, would you sell our house if someone offered you \$500,000 for it?”

You’d reply: **“I’d sell it on the spot and leap for joy.”**

An hour later, your phone rings and, lo & behold, someone offers you \$500,000 for your house. You leap for joy and sign papers to seal the deal that very night!

The next day, you learn that the other homeowners on your street sold their houses to the same buyer. Then comes the thunderbolt. They each got \$500,000!

You are so angry that you call the buyer and tell him off. He responds:

“Did I cheat you? Or are you envious...because I am generous?”

Obviously, this story is my attempt to place the words of Jesus, which I just read to you from the Gospel of St. Matthew, into a modern setting.

To appreciate Jesus’ parable in its original setting, we need to focus on the difference between the **‘late workers’** and the **‘early workers.’**

The late workers represented the sinners in Jesus’ time, who listened to his preaching and repented. The early workers represented the Pharisees, who were angry that the sinners repented, entered God’s Kingdom late, and were getting the same reward as they.

It is interesting to note that, had the early workers **not** learned what the employer paid the latecomers, they would’ve gone home joyful & thankful. As it was, they went home angry & jealous.

This raises a few questions. **Why did the early workers resent the good fortune of the latecomers? Why did you, in my opening story, resent the good fortune of the other homeowners on your street who got \$500,000 for their homes, also? Why do so many people become happy or sad, depending on whether they think they are better off or worse off than their neighbor?—you ask.**

Well, I am glad you asked that question!

Jesus hints at the answer when he has the vineyard owner say to the early workers:

“Did I cheat you? Or are you jealous because I am generous?”

The truth is ...we often resent the good fortune of others because we are jealous or envious of them. This often happens within families. **BUT**, and there’s that proverbial **BUT** in life, what makes us jealous or envious?

One reason is that we think they are better off than we are. We think they have more money than we have. We think that they are better looking than we are. We think they are more talented than we are.

Unfortunately, when we do this, we make the big mistake of judging them by the world’s standards and not God’s. If we judged them by God’s standards, we might discover that we are just as well off as they are.

Who knows? In God’s plan, our talents may be even more valuable than the talents of someone the world considers to be wise or powerful.

Let me explain:

Once upon a time, a very expensive, state of the art, flying jet-laboratory was approaching Edwards Air Force Base in California. When the pilot tried to lower the nose gear for landing, it didn't respond. The co-pilot ran a quick check and traced the problem to a faulty relay switch. Recognizing the problem, he searched around for something to by-pass the relay.

He found a paperclip and bent it so it by-passed the faulty switch to activate the nose gear. It worked like a charm. It saved the expensive jet and its crewmembers from a crash landing!

At that moment, for that special job, the lowly paperclip was more important than all the fancy, state of the art, equipment on the plane put together.

You see, it's often that way with God's plan. Speaking in God's name, the prophet Isaiah says in today's First Reading:

**"My thoughts ...are not your thoughts. And my ways are different from yours.
As high as the heavens are above the earth, so are my ways and thoughts above yours."**

Today's Gospel invites us to **stop comparing** ourselves to other people, for that is a very slippery slope, indeed! It invites us to accept ourselves as we are. This is not only especially true for adolescents, but for the rest of us —who should know better and recognize the **'trap of comparing!'**

The Gospel invites us to follow the wisdom of St. Paul when he writes:

**"Each one should judge his own conduct.
If it is good, then he should be proud of what he himself has done,
without having to compare it with what someone else has done." Gal.6:4**

Please try and realize, ultimately, what really counts in life is NOT what other people think of us or, even, how hard we work in God's vineyard. The important thing is what GOD thinks of us and the love that motivates our vineyard-work!

I now close with this prayer from Cardinal Newman.

**God has committed some work to me,
which he has not committed to another.**
**I have my mission—I may never know it in this life,
BUT, I shall be told it in the next....**
Therefore, I will trust him.
He does nothing in vain.
**He may prolong my life,
he may shorten it.**
He knows what he is about....
**O my God, I will put myself without reserve...
into thy hands.**

May our Almighty, all-knowing Abba-God bless you,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.