

Father Dave's Weekly Homily

09/18/11 23 A

-- My mother had six children. I know that she loved all of us. But that does not mean she treated each of us in exactly the same manner. She didn't always give "equal time" to all of us. At times, the need of one child was greater than another, and she would attend to that child.

-- Most good mothers with several children act in a similar fashion. It's not cheating a child to give some more attention to another, as long as that first child's needs are met and she knows she's loved.

-- This example may give us some insight into the parable Jesus tells today about the kingdom of heaven. For, if we look at it from the point of view of economic justice or rights, let alone labor relations, it simply doesn't make sense. In fact, it's grossly unfair.

-- But if we look at it as a reflection on the great, undeserved love of God we all receive, it begins to make a little more sense. For what, in fact, is the "daily wage" that the master gives us?

-- It's not anything that we've earned. No one can earn the right to everlasting happiness in God's presence—not even the greatest saints or people like Mother Teresa. As a matter of fact, they realized more than most of us how undeserving they were of God's unconditional love.

-- The "daily wage" of everlasting life with God is a total gift. And it's not something that can be measured by any human standard.

-- In the time when the gospels were written, the so-called latecomers were the Gentiles, those non-Jews who had just come to belief in Jesus Christ. Many had lived lifestyles in their pagan towns that good Jews (and many of us as well) would characterize as immoral.

-- St. Paul had to remind some of them of the new life they were called to live. But they were accepted by God, just as much as those who had lived upright lives from their earliest days.

-- They were accepted because God's love is so overwhelming. God's ways are not our ways, as the prophets remind us. God doesn't keep a scorecard to determine who is let in and who stays out.

-- God offers his life to all. We only have to accept that life. Of course, that means living according to God's ways, but that is our **response** to God's love, not a precondition for it.

-- Often, though, we find that hard to accept. We want to fashion God in our own image. Sometimes, we may even prefer a god who is more like the lady of blind justice we see in the entrances to American courtrooms.

-- Of course, we normally presume we are on the right side of justice. But, in God's standards, *all* of us fall short. So, in the end, a god in the likeness of the lady of blind justice would be bad news for everyone.

-- Yes, God's ways are not our ways. God calls us to act justly toward each other, but God deals with us by a standard that goes beyond human justice. God deals with us in mercy and love.

-- And that's the good news for all of us. For a God of strict justice would send us all into the darkness of the eternal absence of God's presence. As it is, though, God deals with us in mercy with generous love.

-- We did nothing to earn our mother's love, yet she loved us anyway. God's love for us goes beyond even that. And we should be thankful... even if that love is extended to people we might think are not deserving of it.