

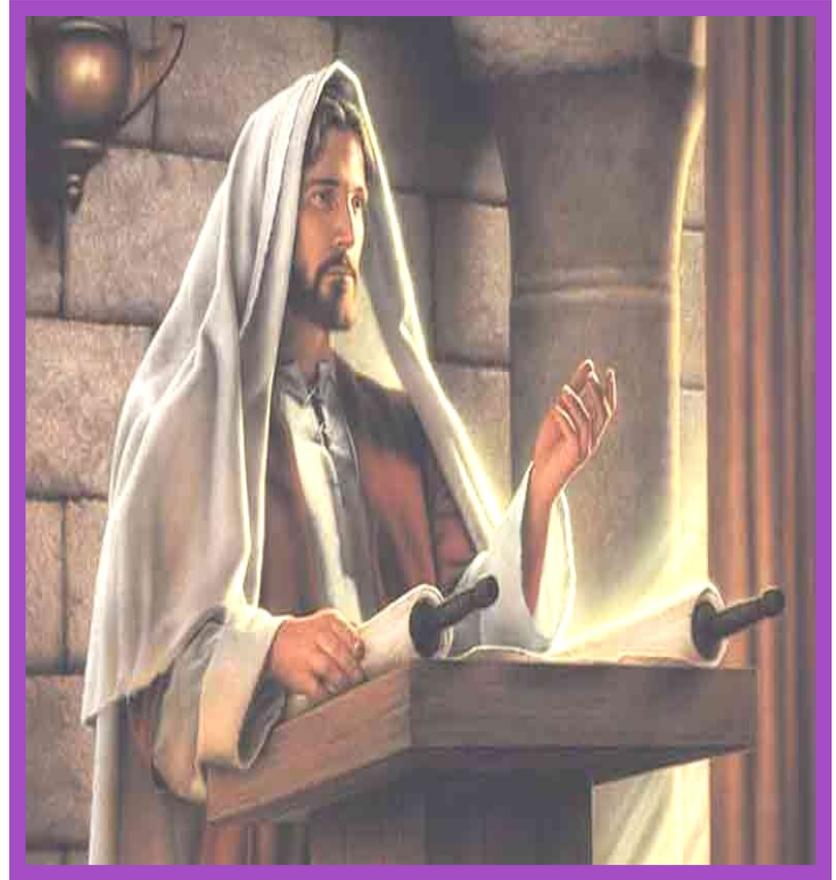
Even if one part of virtue despised closes heaven to us, without love or reverence the result is the same, even when we fulfill all the parts of virtue... Humility also is but a part of righteousness; yet he that does the other works of justice but does not strive for humility is not made clean before God... Keep a careful accounting of all your life. For if one portion of a just life neglected shall merit such punishment, how shall we escape justice and judgment, or

what penalties shall we receive should we neglect all of it?... What is it to you how much money someone has? You shall be more worthy of merit, if out of your poverty you are more generous than he... Do not judge others; neither have your eyes on those that take life carelessly, but upon Jesus; and from Him let us take our model... If you have no teacher in your midst who might direct you, more honor and glory will then be yours, that without a teacher you became worthy of reward... Harken to what was said of the Pharisee who despised others, who were upright men, and saw only the sinner (Lk. xviii. 11)... You have perverted the right order of things when you exact no account from yourself for your own sins great and small, but instead search carefully into the sins of others. Make an end of this... Each day urging the conscience onwards to become more humble and more earnest. Reach at length to the joy of eternal happiness through the grace and mercy of Our Lord Jesus Christ... Amen.



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SERMON ON
THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE TO AN HOUSEHOLDER
FROM THE FATHER'S OF THE CHURCH
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JESUS, OUR FIRST PREACHER!

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

Based on the Divine Office-Douay-Rheims Version

Volume 1 - Pages 1448 - 1449 (1962 edition)

Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew 20: 1-16

by: Saint John Chrysostom, Bishop and Doctor

...What then is the meaning of this parable?... The vineyard, He says, is the particular injunctions of God, and His Commandments. The time of laboring is our present life. The laborers are all those who, in different ways, are called to the fulfillment of these commands. The morning early, the third hour, the sixth, the ninth, the eleventh hour stand for those who at different periods of their lives have drawn near, and have done a good work.

The question arises as to why those first called who were so worthy in their lives and pleasing to God in all their trials, throughout their days, turned to evil feelings, namely to envy and jealousy? For seeing the others profiting equally with themselves they say: *These last have worked but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, who have borne the burden of the day and the heat...* From envy and jealousy they were resentful of what the others received. The Master adjudged them guilty of envy and jealousy by these words: *Didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take what is thine and go thy way: I will also give to this last even as to thee. Is thy eye evil because I am good?*

What is to be understood from these words?... In the kingdom of heaven there is no one disputing or accusing in this manner. There is neither envy nor any jealousy. For in this life the sanctified give up their lives for sinners how much more will they rejoice when they behold them dwelling amid the joys of heaven, which they believed to be equally the possession of all. The purpose of the parable is that He wishes to make more eager those converted in later life, and to convince them that they should not think that their reward will be less.

Why did He not hire them all together immediately? As to His own will, He has done so; and if all have not obeyed, it was the will of those called that made the difference. Some are called early in the

morning, some at the third hour, some at the sixth and ninth, some at the eleventh: when they would be disposed to answer the call... From everything that is said it appears that the parable is directed to those who have embraced the way of virtue in their early youth, and to those who embraced it in later age. To the former so that they might not become proud, nor scornful of those coming in later life. To the later that they may learn that it is possible in a brief while to earn the whole wage...

That He adds: *So shall the last be first, and the first last, and, that: many are called, but few chosen,* need not cause wonder. What is inferred from the parable is that as the former has happened, so shall the latter; for in the parable the first did not come last, but all, beyond hope and expectation, received the same wage... They who came late were made the equal to the first comers... yet more wonderful is that the last comers shall be placed even *before* the first, the first being placed after the last... This seems to be hinting at the Jews and at those believers who first shone forth in virtue, and then, turning aside from doing good, fell away, and also to those who, having risen up from evil-doing, soon outstripped others in virtue...

We must remain steadfast in our holy faith, and show ourselves worthy in our daily lives. Unless we lead a life that is in harmony with our faith, we shall be grievously punished. This the Blessed Paul declared from the beginning: *And did all eat the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink,* but adding that not all were saved, but many of *them were overthrown in the desert* (I Cor. x. 3-5)...

Of Doctrine He speaks rarely, but of life He speaks frequently; for in this the battle is unending, and so also the toil. Why speak of the whole life? Because even if a part is neglected, it leads on to great evils. For example, failing to give alms casts into Gehenna those who are not the whole in virtue, but a part of it; for this rich man was tormented: and they that gave not food to the hungry are themselves given over to the company of the demons. While this but a small part of our lives, it will shut out those who do not abstain from it...