

Homilies during stewardship season are shorter than usual, so we have time to enjoy the witness talks. But this story Jesus tells today surely bears some comment.

First of all, I guess when it comes to working a full day for God, beginning from dawn and not slouching off till evening ---the one worker who bore the whole heat of the day working for God was Jesus. Next after Jesus, I guess, come the Jews. They worked for God, off and on, for generations, getting the stuffing beat out of them but not giving up the one true God. The most recent arrivals --- that would be us Christians, I guess. We should feel so grateful!

Speaking of last workers hired, on this day of the stewardship of talent, wouldn't it be nice to speak to the last worker. (*up comes worker, with hoe*)

Hi. My name's Issachar, and I was the last person hired in the vineyard that day. This was no accident. I was hiding in the shadows to escape the master's notice.

There's a reason. I was born blue, with the placenta around my neck. I survived, but the oxygen starvation made me slower mentally than the others. Add to that, I have severe asthma. So I could never think as fast, or work as fast or as long. I felt worthless, and tried to escape notice. But the Master found me.

"Work in my vineyard," he smiled, "with what talent and energy you have. I'll give you what's just."

So I did. I used what talents God gave me, and stopped comparing myself to everyone else.

At the end of the day, the Master gave me the same wage as every one. Even I thought that seemed unfair. When I questioned him, he just smiled and said: "Look, no one, not even the ones that worked since dawn, can earn eternal life. I decided I'm just going to give it to everyone. And as for you, Issachar ... What God asks of you, is that you give part of you. It's what God seeks. If what you give is you, and it comes with love ... it's plenty good ... *you* are plenty good. Don't hurt God by saying no, when God asks for some of your time and talent, to work in the vineyard."