

in our first reading today, the prophet Isaiah reminds his people that if they are really consider the circumstances of their lives they will recognize Gods hand In them.

Beginning with the previous chapter Isaiah's prophecies, spoken at the end of the Babylonian exile, as the people were returning from enslavement to a devastated homeland, are all about hope and faith in the Lord.

His promise is of both material and spiritual relief.

These people for years had ignored their covenant with God and this had brought their world crashing down among them. Their cities were destroyed, their temple razed, their wealth pillaged and their hopes dashed.

Now they are to experience God's great love and mercy, they are forgiven, they can return home, their land restored, and their relationship with God reestablished.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> readings we need to understand that Philippi was a very privileged city of Macedonia and the site of the first Christian church in Europe.

Although far from Rome it held the status of a Roman city, its people did not have to pay taxes to Rome, its people dressed as Romans and spoke the language of Rome. Paul, however, is telling them that once they become followers of Jesus, their allegiance is not to Rome but to Heaven. No longer are their ways to be Roman ways but the way of the gospel.

Today's passage is an intimate one indicative of God's perspective, Paul is outlining a philosophy of Christian life defining the way of life and death in Christ, to die would be good for him because it would bring him into greater unity with Christ. On the other hand should he live it would also be good because it would allow him to continue his work. Being a Christian means accepting God's word without any justification. That is how we conduct ourselves worthy of the gospel of Christ.

On the face of it, today's gospel message seems simple enough. God himself decides how he will administer his graces.

But there are some other messages under the surface, warnings if you like.

In this parable Jesus has a message for his disciples, Just because they have a close relationship with him, this does not mean that they have any right to claim, or expect, any special place or honor.

Being amongst the first members of his church carries no special privileged for them.

All people no matter when they come or where they come from are equally precious to God

Matthews's community included Judeo-Christians who considered the Gentile Christians as second class Christians and looked down on them. He reminds them that Jesus warning is that the gentiles who put their faith in God will enjoy the same reward as they do.

Perhaps some of us sympathize with those who worked longer but received the same remuneration as those who came in at the last minute, after all in many cases our salaries are linked to the number of hours that we work.

A skilled worker gets more than an unskilled worker.

But God doesn't see matters in the same way as we do.

God thinks of justice in terms of people's dignity and their right to a decent life, hence his perspective is that of the owner, who gave the laborers more than their efforts required.

If God were to treat us justly in terms of our efforts towards leading a good Christian life, in many cases we should expect no reward.

We have all been less than faithful to God in many ways and should have earned God's punishment.

However because God is generous, rather than just, we receive a full days pay even though we have not earned it. God does not deal with us fairly, and that's a good thing for us.

Another message for us in this parable is that envy results from our lack of generosity of heart, envy should have no place in our lives.

We need to appreciate the boundless generosity of God in our daily lives and express our gratitude to Him.

All our talents and blessings are freely given to us by God we should use them appropriately by rendering loving service to others, by sharing our blessings with the needy.

Our prayer life should be alive and active, listening and talking to God at all times.