

## **Wonderful, Merciful, Savior**

The summer of 2020 and now the fall too, have been wonderful for viewing stars and planets at night. This has renewed my interest in reading about the stars in our sky. I have also been going online to see pictures we have of Earth from space, and some pictures of our planet from Mars and Saturn are spectacular.

One of the pictures from Saturn was taken by the spacecraft Cassini, which we sent to study the ringed planet. One picture Cassini took beautifully captured Saturn's rings, and also in the picture was a small, beautiful, blue dot, which was us, the planet Earth. How thrilling to see our world from God's perspective.

It struck me how small we are from that distance, as well as how peaceful we look. One would never guess that on that beautiful blue dot, a world was being gripped by a coronavirus pandemic, people, races and nations were hurting each other, and wildfires, hurricanes and earthquakes, were causing havoc.

Still, it is this planet, Earth, that Almighty God, creator of the entire universe, personally visited. God sent his only Son, our wonderful, merciful, Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, to live and walk among us, and very fortunately, to save us. It is this Jesus Christ, who tells us a particularly important story, a parable, today.

You see, a landowner went early one morning to the marketplace to hire people to work his vineyard. He hired people at 6 am, and later at 9 am, to work, promising them the usual daily wage. It just so happened that he also hired more people at noon, as well as at 3 pm, because there was a lot work to do.

At 5 pm, he passed through the marketplace one more time, and saw more people he could hire to work, so they too were sent to into the vineyard. As evening came and the sun was setting, the

landowner asked his manager to pay the workers, and to start with the people who were hired at 5 pm.

When these people who were in the vineyard only a few hours, received the usual daily wage, the other workers began to think that they would be paid more. Still, everyone who worked in the vineyard that day received the same, the usual daily wage, and those who worked longest, grumbled loudest.

How unfair, right? They worked all day, 12 hours perhaps, and received the same wage as those who worked just a few hours. But the landowner speaks to their complaints. He says, "Why are you mad? I gave you what I promised. Are you mad because I am generous to others, and give them the same thing?"

So, why does Jesus tell us this story today? Does Jesus wish that we all would make the same money in life? Should the football player who makes millions, be paid the same as the server who is working at Perkins this evening? Should one who works 70 hours this week be paid the same as one who works 10 hours?

Some understand the story this way. They will argue all people, regardless of talents and number of hours worked, should simply be given everything they need for life. They will argue that some people are paid too much and should receive less, and that other people are not paid enough and should be given more.

While there are parts about this idea which are intriguing and we should discuss, because no person should go without things like food and shelter, this is not the point of Jesus' story. Jesus is telling us this story today for a different reason. Jesus wants us to know that God looks at our planet differently than we do.

While we divide ourselves into categories, nations and races, hard workers and lazy workers, millionaires and middle class, haves and

have nots, Catholics and Protestants, and so on, God does not see us this way. God sees us differently, from a different, a divine perspective. After all, we are his beautiful, blue dot.

The Gospel story reminds us that even as we live through hardness and harshness of life on this planet, the Lord Jesus came to bring salvation to us. Sure, some people work harder and longer than others. They may even have unique talents, so we pay them more. But God has come to bring salvation to every person.

On our part, we pit millionaires against middle class. We divide black people and white people. We fight wars between nations. We persecute each other because we have different religions. Then comes Jesus ready to give every person on Earth, the same grace, same forgiveness, and same love from God.

This oftentimes causes us to grumble. We prefer to think we are special. That the way we see life, what we believe, how we behave, and the way we live our lives, is better. That we deserve more because of the things we do, or say, or how hard we work. That in the end, we are saved because we live as God wants.

And, the truth is, we are special. You are special. But so is every person, every creation of God, on this beautiful, blue dot that we call Earth. God sent Jesus here not to divide us. God sent Jesus here to save all people, to give grace, forgiveness, peace, hope and love to all people. Of course, that means us too.

It is God's fervent desire that life here on Earth look as beautiful and peaceful, as the planet looks like on a picture sent by Cassini from Saturn. I know this is not always the way it turns out, because we are sinful creatures. Still, I am certain this is God's desire for us. I think it should be our hope and desire too.

In the parable today, we catch a glimpse of Almighty God, who loves more people than just the people of Israel, and who loves more people than just Christian people. God loves and sent Jesus to live for, die for, be buried for, and be raised for, all people, for everyone who lives on this beautiful, blue dot.

I can't predict how everything turns out in the end, but as I read the parable closely, Jesus says that God invites everyone to work in the vineyard, that God gives grace, forgiveness and love to everyone working in the vineyard, and dare I say, that God saves everyone working in the vineyard, which is of course, Earth.

I think we should be careful not to grumble about this and be grateful we receive exactly what Jesus generously promised us, grace, forgiveness and love, and of course, everlasting life. So, let us never object to any others that God may choose to give such gifts, even if they don't fit our ideas of who God loves.

Jesus is indeed the Savior of the whole world. He is the Savior of all who live on this beautiful, blue dot called Earth. He is your and my wonderful, merciful, Savior. It's just that Jesus is also the wonderful merciful Savior of millions and billions of other people too. So, instead of grumble, I think we should sing!

How about, "Wonderful, Merciful, Savior".

Amen.