
Bulletin Fillers

Proper 20 (Ordinary 25) · 2026-09-20 · Ordinary Time (Green)

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THIS WEEK IN THE CHURCH YEAR

This Sunday we keep Proper 20 (Ordinary 25), in the season of Ordinary Time. The liturgical color is green, and it is the color you may see on the paraments, stole, and banners today. The Revised Common Lectionary appoints these readings for the day: Matthew 20:1-16; Isaiah 55:6-9; Psalm 145:1-8; and Philippians 1:20c-24, 27a. We are in Year A of the three-year lectionary cycle.

SPIRITUAL INSIGHT

God's Math Is Not Ours

Isaiah says God's thoughts are not our thoughts, and the vineyard story shows it in wages. Workers hired at dawn and at the eleventh hour receive the same denarius. By ordinary arithmetic, that feels wrong: more hours, same pay. But the owner hasn't cheated the first workers; he gave exactly what he promised. The late workers receive not extra earnings but the owner's free generosity. So the parable isn't about unfair wages; it's about a God whose ways are higher than our timesheets. Grace is a gift, not a paycheck.

HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXT

The Evil Eye of Envy

When the grumbling workers hear 'Is your eye evil because I am good?' modern readers may think of a curse. But in the ancient Mediterranean world, an 'evil eye' was a common idiom for envy or stinginess. A person with an evil eye resented another's good fortune or begrudged a generous act. The first workers are not angry because they were cheated; they are angry because others received the same kindness. The landowner's question names the real issue: envy.

A WORD IN THE ORIGINAL

Pardon: A Verb Reserved for God

In Isaiah 55:7, the promise 'he will freely pardon' rests on a Hebrew verb, *salach*, that the Old Testament never uses with a human subject. Other words describe human forgiveness—*nasa*, 'to lift away'—but *salach* belongs to God. The grammar of Isaiah 55:7 intensifies it: the Hebrew says literally 'he will multiply to pardon,' or 'make much of forgiving.' It is not a formal release but God's overflowing, repeated act of wiping the slate clean. When the prophet promises that God will freely pardon, the word itself says forgiveness is a divine specialty, not a human capacity stretched further.

These notes were drafted with AI and screened by a second fact-checking pass, but we are not infallible — please verify any historical, archaeological, or original-language detail against a trusted commentary before you print.