Recently, an Oblate of St. Paul’s Monastery gave a talk on the daily reading at the Basilica of St. Mary. Below are her talking points on the Landowner Parable.

My name is Edith-Nicole Cameron. I have lived in Minneapolis and worshipped at the Basilica for twenty-one years. Like Father Griffith, I’m a lawyer with a background working in restorative justice, and a penchant for wordiness. Unlike our pastor and the other voices we typically hear in this pulpit, I am married, and a mom to three children. Your time and attention are gifts beyond measure. Thank you for sharing them with me today.

Don’t believe everything you think.

When I got married in 2004, the officiating priest challenged me and my spouse and all our guests by saying: “Don’t believe everything you think.” I try not to read too much into why that was his message on our big day… and for nineteen years, I’ve kept it in mind. He was paraphrasing Isaiah, it seems. God’s thoughts are not our thoughts, and human ways are not God’s ways. Today, Isaiah prepares us for a big paradigm shift, which is really, always, what Jesus offers us.

**RECAP Landowner parable: equal share of wages**

* As the landowner hires, we don’t hear much about his interactions with each group.
* One exception: The landowner says, “why do you stand here idle?” And they respond, “Because no one has hired us.”
* Matthew clarifies that these late-hires aren’t calling their own shots. They’re subject to the economic forces at play, and the preferences and whims of those hiring. These workers are on the margins of the system; denied access to a full day’s work.
* I notice that the landowner doesn’t ask the full-day workers to exercise charity towards these workers on the margins. Instead, he puts them on the same footing, totally disrupting their notions of fairness and worth. Our worth as humans is inherent, and comes ENTIRELY and ABSOLUTELY from God’s generosity.
* I wondered as I studied today’s readings how many of our worldly values – merit, productivity, utility, “being a contributing member of society”…, comfort (as Fr. Griffith has challenged recently) – have any place in the kingdom of God.
* By the good fortune of when and where I was born and who my parents were, I had access to opportunity. I’ve always found a full day’s work, and mostly felt I’ve earned the fruits of my labor.
* But today’s gospel makes me wonder: where in my life am I getting a fair share according to the world’s values, but an *unjust* share in the kingdom of God?

Conclusion

Theologian and preacher Bruce Epperly writes that “God’s love for the world is expressed in solidarity with the least…”. As Catholics, we are called to seek and spread that love. I’ll close today by sharing with you three questions that I’ve been asking myself to help me seek and spread God’s love.

1. When I prioritize what’s best for my career, or my personal fulfillment, what’s best for my children even, am I furthering God’s kingdom?
2. Where might the decisions I make for myself, my family, or my community inadvertently widen the gap between rich and poor? Between access and exclusion?
3. Where can I be God’s love, going beyond charity, and towards solidarity?

The opportunities for us to live in a way worthy of the Gospel are everywhere. But they might require a paradigm shift. And we might need to stop believing everything we think.