

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sunday Mass Readings & Spiritual Leadership Guide

September 20, 2026 · Lectionary 133

Sunday Mass Readings

FIRST READING

Isaiah 55:6–9

Seek the LORD while he may be found, call him while he is near. Let the scoundrel forsake his way, and the wicked his thoughts; let him turn to the LORD for mercy; to our God, who is generous in forgiving. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 145:2–3, 8–9, 17–18

R. The Lord is near to all who call upon him.

Every day will I bless you, and I will praise your name forever and ever. Great is the LORD and highly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable.

R. The Lord is near to all who call upon him.

The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness. The LORD is good to all and compassionate toward all his works.

R. The Lord is near to all who call upon him.

The LORD is just in all his ways and holy in all his works. The LORD is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth.

R. The Lord is near to all who call upon him.

***Men Helping Men Step Up and Become Better Spiritual Leaders
by Following Christ and the Teachings of His Church***



SECOND READING

Philippians 1:20c–24, 27a

Brothers and sisters: Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me life is Christ, and death is gain. If I go on living in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. And I do not know which I shall choose. I am caught between the two. I long to depart this life and be with Christ, for that is far better. Yet that I remain in the flesh is more necessary for your benefit. Only, conduct yourselves in a way worthy of the gospel of Christ.

GOSPEL

Matthew 20:1–16a

Jesus told his disciples this parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with them for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. Going out about nine o’clock, the landowner saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and he said to them, ‘You too go into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just.’ So they went off. And he went out again around noon, and around three o’clock, and did likewise. Going out about five o’clock, the landowner found others standing around, and said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ They answered, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You too go into my vineyard.’ When it was evening the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Summon the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and ending with the first.’ When those who had started about five o’clock came, each received the usual daily wage. So when the first came, they thought that they would receive more, but each of them also got the usual wage. And on receiving it they grumbled against the landowner, saying, ‘These last ones worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who bore the day’s burden and the heat.’ He said to one of them in reply, ‘My friend, I am not cheating you. Did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what is yours and go. What if I wish to give this last one the same as you? Or am I not free to do as I wish with my own money? Are you envious because I am generous?’ Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

All readings sourced from USCCB, Lectionary 133. bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/092026.cfm

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Reflection

Isaiah calls us to seek the Lord while he is near, but also warns that God's thoughts and ways stand far above ours. Paul lives with that same surrendered logic: whether by life or death, Christ will be magnified, and his remaining in the flesh is for the benefit of others. The Gospel presses the point through the landowner whose generosity offends those who measure fairness by comparison. God's mercy does not run on our calculations. The spiritual leader these readings form is one who stops managing God's generosity, stops comparing rewards, and conducts himself in a way worthy of the Gospel by rejoicing when grace reaches even the latecomer.

Leadership Principles

PRINCIPLE 1

Seek the Lord While He Is Near

Isaiah's invitation is urgent: seek, call, turn (Is 55:6–7). Those who lead their families cannot postpone repentance, prayer, or discernment until crisis forces them. Nearness calls for response.

PRINCIPLE 2

Do Not Shrink God to Your Logic

God's thoughts and ways are higher than ours (Is 55:8–9). We must beware of assuming our sense of fairness, timing, or strategy is identical to God's. Humility leaves room for mystery. Be open to discovering God in unexpected or "illogical" ways.

PRINCIPLE 3

Let Christ Be Magnified in Your Body

Paul's aim is clear: Christ magnified whether by life or death (Phil 1:20). Leadership is not about building up yourself but rather by glorifying God. Encounters are about making Christ visible through decisions, endurance, labor, and sacrifice.

PRINCIPLE 4

Rejoice When Grace Reaches the Latecomer

The first workers grumbled because the last received equal generosity (Mt 20:11–15). Those who resent another's blessing reveal that comparison has displaced mission. Grace is not diminished when it reaches someone else.

PRINCIPLE 5

Conduct Yourself Worthy of the Gospel

Paul's instruction is simple and comprehensive (Phil 1:27). Our conduct must match the Gospel's generosity, humility, and mercy, especially when God's ways challenge personal expectations.

Discussion Questions

QUESTION 1

Isaiah says to seek the Lord while he may be found (Is 55:6). Is there a response to God you have been delaying because it feels inconvenient, humbling, or disruptive?

QUESTION 2

God says, “My thoughts are not your thoughts” (Is 55:8). Where are you most tempted to assume your judgment of fairness is the same as God’s? Has there been an encounter recently where you found that your thinking was changed as a result of the encounter?

QUESTION 3

Paul wants Christ magnified in his body (Phil 1:20). What do your interactions with family and friends look like? Who is magnified most clearly—Christ, productivity, control, fear, or your own reputation?

QUESTION 4

The first workers resented the landowner’s generosity to the latecomers (Mt 20:12). Whose blessing, opportunity, or recognition is hardest for you to celebrate?

QUESTION 5

What would it look like this week to conduct yourself in a way worthy of the Gospel in a situation where comparison or resentment is tempting?

Closing Action

A concrete, personal response drawn from the readings this week:

This week, intentionally celebrate someone else's blessing, recognition, or opportunity—especially if part of you feels overlooked. Speak the encouragement out loud or write it in a note. Use that act to reject comparison and practice joy in the generosity of God.

“Are you envious because I am generous?” — Matthew 20:15

Closing Prayer

Lord God, your thoughts are above our thoughts and your ways above our ways. Free us from shrinking your mercy to fit our measurements.

Jesus, teach us to rejoice when grace reaches the latecomer. Heal the envy that rises when others receive blessing, and make us generous as you are generous.

Holy Spirit, open our hearts to the words of the Son. Let Christ be magnified in our bodies, our conduct, our leadership, and our joy. Amen.

“The Lord is near to all who call upon him.” — Psalm 145:18