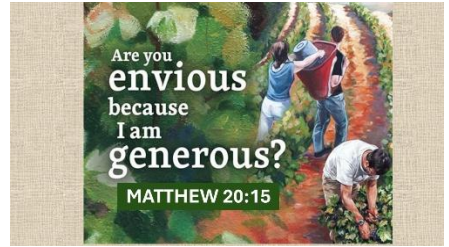


The Readings on This Day

****Click on the links for the Bible Verse(s)*

Sunday, September 18–24

Lectionary 25



The standard Sundays continue reading Matthew, now in the fifth section of the gospel. Today begins a four-week semicontinuous reading of Paul's letter to the Philippians.

[Jonah 3:10—4:11](#)

The conclusion of the short story of Jonah is chosen as a parallel to the allegory of the laborers in the vineyard. Like us, Jonah begrudges forgiveness for his enemies, and perhaps like us, he cares more about his own comfort than about the lives of 120,000 other people. Perhaps the reader can make clear the poignant irony that this brilliantly-written story intends.

[The Psalm for the Day](#)

Responding to the story of God's care for the people and animals of Nineveh, we sing [Psalm 146:1-8](#). With this psalm of thanksgiving, we place our trust not, for example, in the rulers of our own Nineveh (v. 3), but in the Lord, who surprises us with unending mercy. We too are fed by God. The psalm includes the original biblical worldview that God blesses us in this life, rather than in an afterlife.

[Philippians 1:21-30](#)

Today's excerpt from Philippians introduces the themes of the letter: joy in the faith and a call for unity. One connection with today's gospel is that only because of God's unending forgiveness for both sides of every quarrel can we accept one another and live in unity.

Matthew 20:1-16

Once again, Matthew balances his earlier emphasis on righteous living with the assurance of God's forgiveness. The allegory contradicts the commonplace religious idea that in the afterlife, heaven or hell will be assigned as deserved. In this allegory, God disrupts our notions of reward and punishment by surprising mercy. We receive this mercy already at the table.