

Day Laborers

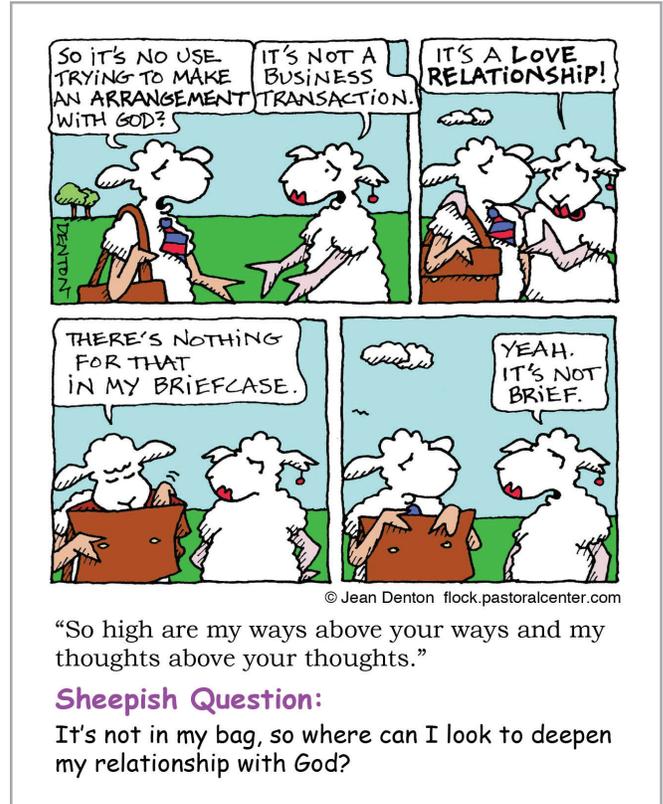
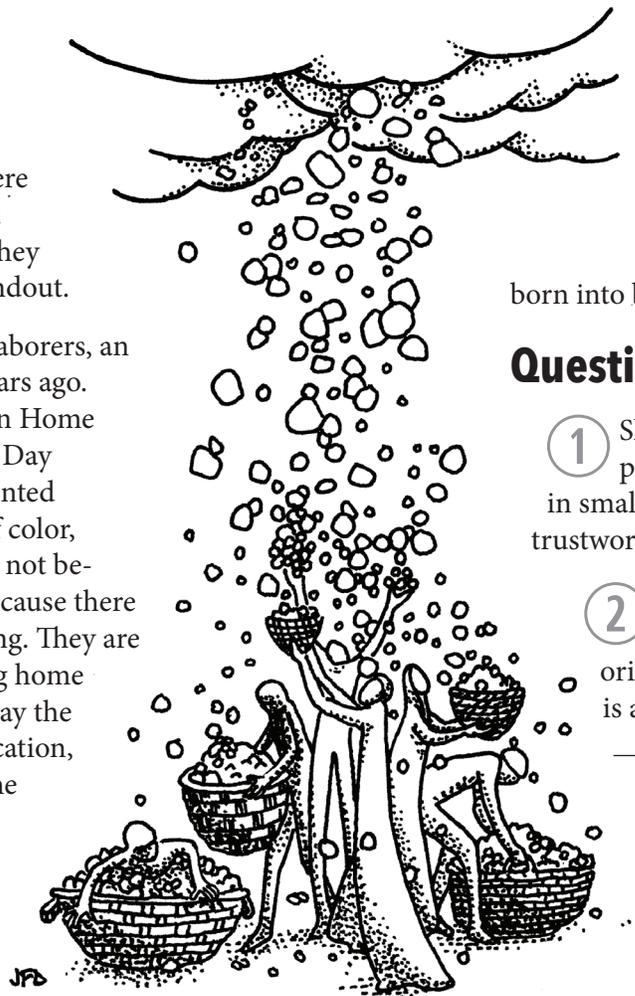
This Week's Readings at Mass

- ▶ Isaiah 55:6-9 - Seeking the Lord
- ▶ Philippians 1:20-24, 27 - Spreading the gospel
- ▶ Matthew 20:1-16 - The laborers in the vineyard

As always, our place in life affects how we hear Jesus' message. For people who are fully employed and well-paid in this life, this parable may be troubling. For those under- or unemployed, this Gospel reading may be wonderful news about who God is and how God works.

For those of us who have enough in life, we may interpret this parable as about hard work and fairness. According to our values, those who work hard and long deserve more; they've earned it. We may find fault with those who weren't hired earlier in the day, judging them as lazy or in some other way as moral failures. Notice, though, that nothing in Jesus' words suggest the workers hired later were "slackers" or lazy. They were "idle" because no one had hired them, not because they were hoping for a free handout.

This is a story about day laborers, an economic reality 2,000 years ago. This scene still plays out in Home Depot parking lots today. Day laborers, often undocumented immigrants and people of color, may stand around all day, not because they are lazy, but because there aren't enough people hiring. They are desperate to work to bring home food to their families or pay the rent. Without higher education, social connections, and the pure luck of being born in the right place at the right time, they have little choice but to stand around all



day hoping to land a job. The landowner, whom Jesus equates with God, responds with pure generosity, seeing the needs of the day laborers who deserve to feed their families and have a safe place to sleep, just as surely as those born into better circumstances.

Questions of the Week

- 1 Share an example of someone proving him/herself trustworthy in small matters and graduating to being trustworthy in greater ones.
- 2 How have you seen money/wealth corrupt someone who originally had good intentions? What is an example?

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