

March 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 1-4pm Baking Club
2 10am Worship – Pastor Yuri (Luke 3:21-38 – <i>Love’s Hope</i>) 11am Faith Formation 12pm BBYOL	3	4 7am Men’s Prayer Meeting	5 6:30pm English Conversation 6:30pm Bible Study Topic: Phil 4:9 – <i>Put into practice what you have learned / heard / seen</i> 7:15pm Prayer Meeting	6	7 7pm Youth	8
9 10am Worship – Pastor Yuri (Luke 4:1-4 – <i>Love Tested: Craving</i>) 11am Faith Formation 12pm BBYOL <i>Don’t forget to:  SPRING FORWARD!</i>	10	11 7am Men’s Prayer Meeting	12 6:30pm English Conversation 6:30pm Bible Study Topic: <i>TBA</i> 7:15pm Prayer Meeting 7:15pm Youth	13	14	15
16 10am Worship – Dr. Neil (Luke 4:5-8 – <i>Love Tested: Authority</i>) Communion 11am Faith Formation 12pm BBYOL	17 Happy St. Patrick’s Day! 	18 7am Men’s Prayer Meeting	19 6:30pm English Conversation 6:30pm Bible Study Topic: <i>TBA</i> 7:15pm Prayer Meeting	20	21 7pm Youth	22
23 10am Worship – Pastor Yuri (Luke 4:9-13 – <i>Love Tested: Spectacle</i>) 11am Faith Formation 12pm BBYOL	24	25 7am Men’s Prayer Meeting 7pm Council Meeting	26 6:30pm English Conversation 6:30pm Bible Study Topic: <i>TBA</i> 7:15pm Prayer Meeting 7:15pm Youth	27	28	29 9am Men’s Breakfast (NB: winter start time is later!)
30 10am Worship – Pastor Yuri (3 Part Miniseries: <i>Deuteronomy: Word of Promise</i>) 11am Faith Formation 12pm BBYOL	31	1	2 6:30pm English Conversation 6:30pm Bible Study Topic: Phil 4:8 – <i>Whatever Is Admirable</i> 7:15pm Prayer Meeting	3	4	5 1-4pm Baking Club



Bethesda Church Newsletter

Congregational letter

March 2025

“About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’ ‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered. He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’ ”

– Matthew 20:6-7

If there is one thing that has consistently bothered me this year, it is the number of people among us who really want to work, who are putting themselves out there, pounding the pavement, taking whatever they can find, and yet can't find a good job. That is: they can't find long term employment that pays decently, let alone work which suits their skills and interests.

Judging from Jesus’ *Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard*, quoted above, this is not a new problem. Of course, that's not exactly what the parable is about. Still, the situation – people looking for work – was familiar to his hearers. For the story to hit home, it had to be. (*Why not go read it right now and refresh your memory?*)

Obviously, the workers wanted to be paid fairly. And, as Jesus tells it, the men who worked all day would have been happiest if the owner had simply paid them more. That said, if the latecomers had been paid less, it probably wouldn't have bothered them! And such an outcome would seem just and fair to us too. But would it have satisfied the “owner”? Would it have demonstrated God's love and care? Would it at all resemble the way he provides so abundantly all the time?

Of course, we can understand why the first workers feel slighted. In fact, Jesus expects us to take their side! Because this is indeed how most of us think:

we're comfortable with the “every man for himself” ethic (that said, if someone else receives a benefit, we feel entitled to the same!); also, once we're working we struggle to sympathize with the poor schlubs who just can't seem to get it together; and once the job is almost done, we can't understand why the owner would want to keep hiring on more workers at all (let alone pay them the same as us!) This boss in the parable doesn't make any sense!

Let's think about this some more by looking at Jesus' parable in modern terms. *Imagine...*

...an entrepreneur has a launch in the works, a big project that will require a lot of people. It's the kind of job that could not possibly be completed in a single day, but is still pretty time sensitive. Not exactly sure how many people he'll need, he goes out and hires a number of casual labourers. They negotiate a flat rate and he hires them on the spot. Pretty soon, it becomes clear to the businessman that he's going to need more people. So he goes out and hires again. And then a few hours later he does it again, and once more in a few hours time. He's in a hurry to get them working, and they can't wait to get earning, so no one bothers about negotiating anymore; everyone trusts that they will be satisfied at the end of the day.

Finally, the day is almost done, and the enterprising owner is pleased to see he's going to come in under budget. But then he spots a few more workers loitering around. They're looking downcast, since they know that whatever happens they'll be going hungry tonight. Again. He reviews his budget once more.



**BETHESDA
CHURCH**

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His stomach starts to growl. He sighs. "Why not just start packing up my things? The day's almost done, after all... I guess I could go out and tell them to come back tomorrow. There'll still be plenty of work to do ... but they'd better get up early so they don't miss out!" (He looks at their doleful faces.) "I guess I could hold off a few minutes and pay them for the hour. It wouldn't cost me much, and at least then they might have enough to tide them over until tomorrow." (He eyes his spreadsheet.) "Hmm ... I supp-o-ose I could use this surplus to hire them, plus bump up everyone else's hourly rate a little bit, or ... No! Why not? Why not surprise them with a bit of great news for once? Why not give them a leg up for now AND hope for the future? It'll raise a few eyebrows, but it'll sure be worth it to them!"

Looking at it in these terms things might start to become clearer. But obviously, the owner is using an entirely different logic than we normally do. To really understand him, we have to look back at the question that prompted Jesus to tell his parable in

the first place. Peter says, "Lord, we have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?" It's a reasonable question, and Jesus doesn't brush it off: he speaks of the special role which the apostles will have and of the hundredfold blessing that awaits everyone who leaves everything behind for him ... plus eternal life! But, says cryptically, "many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first." He launches into his story. And when he's done, he again underlines that moral: "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

The point is not to try and figure out whether you are "last" or "first" and triangulate from there where you sit in God's eyes. The point – first of all – is simply to serve him, and to trust him, being happy with whatever he gives you. There will be undoubtedly be bonuses! But the flat rate – eternal life – is nothing to sneeze at, and entirely undeserved to boot! We are *all* latecomers. At a deeper level, the

parable should also reveal to us how we tend to put ourselves first. It should convict us of our tendency to harbour ridiculous ideas about what we are owed by God. (Do any of us have either the authority or the understanding to demand anything of him?) It ought, finally, to alert us that are people who we tend to perceive as latecomers, people who (we think) are not our "equals" (to use the workers' own word for it). We fail to see that in God's vineyard, and in his eyes, though there is always much that needs taking care of, other labourers are themselves part of the work to be done. And ... so are we!

The wages God doles out are not rewards for hours we've logged. He is giving us – always, at every hour – abundance, transformed minds and hearts, joy in his presence, not to mention everything we need to continue the work, including the will to do it. He is lavishing upon us life! To the full. Forever.

As we contemplate a possible future in which there may be hardships for everyone, where a job may be harder to come by, where more of us may feel the despair of "standing in the marketplace doing nothing", let's consider that we are all, each one of us, regardless of our employment status, being called to work in God's vineyard. This means, among other things, understanding that *you are always employed by him* no matter who signs your checks. Regardless of whether you're regularly paid (or how much) *God expects you always to be about his business*. Especially for those of us who are blessed financially, it means intentional solidarity with *God's workforce*: always trying to help others find good jobs, suitable situations, "vineyards" for them to labour in. That will mean loving those who need better employment, knowing what they are good at and interested in, and keeping your eyes open on their behalf, asking seriously, "What could _____ do at my company? And ... what could that lead to in God's vineyard?"

Pat Yip

The PRAYER LIST and ANNOUNCEMENTS will be available soon as separate printed pages, updated as needed. Starting March 9, you will find them on the back table in the Sanctuary. For privacy & security reasons, the prayer list will no longer be available online. We apologize for any inconvenience!

† Only two readings this day
 †† Only one reading this day

March 2025

Bible Reading Plan

- Deut 12
- Luke 22:1-23
- *Isa 52:13-53:12
- Ecc 12
- Deut 13
- Ps 10
- Luke 22:24-46
- Isa 54
- Luke 22:47-65
- Ps 55
- Deut 14
- Isa 55
- Isa 56:1-8
- Deut 15
- Luke 22:66-23:25
- Ps 17
- Deut 16:1-17
- Isa 56:9-57:21
- Luke 23:26-43
- Ps 12
- Isa 58
- Deut 16:18-17:20
- Luke 23:44-56
- Ps 130

- Ps 68
- Deut 18:1-13
- Isa 59
- Luke 24:1-12
- Deut 18:14-22
- Luke 24:13-35
- Ps 25
- Isa 60
- Deut 19
- Ps 109
- Luke 24:36-53*
- Isa 61
- Acts 1
- Deut 20
- Ps 80
- Isa 62
- Deut 21:1-9
- Isa 63:1-6
- Ps 89
- Acts 2:1-41
- Isa 63:7-64:12
- Ps 144
- Deut 21:10-22:12
- Acts 2:42-47

- Acts 3
- Ps 6
- Deut 22:13-30
- Isa 65
- Isa 66:1-6
- Deut 23
- *Acts 4:1-31
- Ps 9
- Ps 71
- Isa 66:7-24
- Deut 24
- Acts 4:32-5:11
- Jude 1-16
- Deut 25-26
- Acts 5:12-16
- Ps 48
- Acts 5:17-42
- Ps 26
- Deut 27:1-28:14
- *Jude 17-25
- Acts 6
- Deut 28:15-68
- Ps 145
- Deut 29-30
- Acts 7:1-8:1 †
- Deut 31:1-32:47 ††

Memory Verses:

#1: Isa 53:4-5
Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

#2: Luke 24:45-47
Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be

preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

#3: Acts 4:12
"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

#4: Jude 24-25
To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord before all ages, now and forevermore. Amen

A Psalm Requesting Faith

Give me courage Lord
 to take risks
 not the usual ones
 respected
 necessary
 relatively safe
 but those I could avoid
 the go for broke ones.
 I need courage
 not just because
 I may fall on my face
 or worse
 but others seeing me
 a sorry spectacle
 if it should happen
 will say
 he didn't know what he was doing
 or he's foolhardy
 or he's old enough to know
 you lead from the side
 instead of letting yourself be caught
 in a wild stampede.
 Give me courage Lord
 to take unnecessary risks
 live at tension
 instead of opting out.
 Give me the guts to put up
 instead of shutting up.

– JOSEPH BAYLY

I Bind unto Myself

I bind unto myself today
 The power of God to hold and lead,
 His eye to watch, his might to stay,
 His ear to hearken to my need.
 The wisdom of my God to teach,
 His hand to guide,
 His shield to ward;
 The word of God to give me speech,
 His heavenly host to be my guard.

– SAINT PATRICK