

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

cf. Jn 15:15

Alleluia, alleluia! / I call you friends, says the Lord, / because I have made known to you / everything I have learnt from my Father. / Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mt 21:33-43

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

He leased his vineyard to other farmers.

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people, 'Listen to another parable. There was a man, a landowner, who planted a vineyard; he fenced it round, dug a winepress in it and built a tower; then he leased it to tenants and went abroad. When vintage time drew near he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his servants, thrashed one, killed another and stoned a third. Next he sent some more servants, this time a larger number, and they dealt with them in the same way. Finally he sent his son to them. "They will respect my son" he said. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, "This is the heir. Come on, let us kill him and take over his inheritance." So they seized him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?' They answered, 'He will bring those wretches to a wretched end and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will deliver the produce to him when the season arrives.' Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the scriptures:

It was the stone rejected by the builders that became the keystone.

This was the Lord's doing and it is wonderful to see?

'I tell you, then, that the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.'

■ **The Gospel of the Lord.**

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Breaking Open the Word



THE SAVING WORD

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME / A

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BEARING FRUIT THAT WILL LAST

In the ancient Near East, the struggles involved in agricultural life were numerous and well-known, lack of water, poor soil, and rocky ground. In such a setting, Isaiah's image of the people of Israel as a lovingly tended vine was an extremely powerful one. How could God's own people, so dearly loved, produce only sour grapes?

This image formed the backdrop for Jesus' own parable of the wicked tenants and Matthew's reflection on it. The religious authorities gathered and were marshalling their forces against Jesus. Now the moment had come for him to call them to account for their tenancy. During Jesus' ministry, this parable was unsettling and provocative, but for the early Christians, this parable provided them with a filter through which to see and understand Jesus' violent death at the hands of his own people. It also gave them a means by which they could understand that the vineyard had passed into the hands of others.

At first sight, it seems a far cry from the disappointment and violence that underlie the parables of Isaiah and Jesus to the tranquil encouragement of Paul to the Christians of Philippi. A deeper look reveals that today's parables rightly challenge us to bear fruit. Paul, on the other hand, is concerned as a pastor to give some practical guidance as to how to go about it. The fruit of peace will be ours if we turn to the Lord in prayer and seek what is truly of value.

Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING

Isa 5:1-7

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

The vineyard of the Lord God of hosts is the House of Israel.

Let me sing to my friend
the song of his love for his vineyard.
My friend had a vineyard
on a fertile hillside.

He dug the soil, cleared it of stones,
and planted choice vines in it.
In the middle he built a tower,
he dug a press there too.

He expected it to yield grapes,
but sour grapes were all that it gave.

And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem
and men of Judah,

I ask you to judge
between my vineyard and me.

What could I have done for my vineyard
that I have not done?

I expected it to yield grapes.

Why did it yield sour grapes instead?

Very well, I will tell you
what I am going to do to my vineyard:

I will take away its hedge for it to be grazed on,
and knock down its wall for it to be trampled on.

I will lay it waste, unpruned, undug;
overgrown by the briar and the thorn.

I will command the clouds
to rain no rain on it.

Yes, the vineyard of the Lord of hosts
is the House of Israel,

and the men of Judah
that chosen plant.

He expected justice, but found bloodshed,
integrity, but only a cry of distress.

■ **The word of the Lord.**

RESP PSALM

Ps 79:9, 12-16, 19-20. R. Isa 5:7

R. The vineyard of the Lord is the House of Israel.

1. You brought a vine out of Egypt; / to plant it you drove out the nations. / It stretched out its branches to the sea, / to the Great River it stretched out its shoots. **R.**



2. Then why have you broken down its walls? / It is plucked by all who pass by. / It is ravaged by the boar of the forest, / devoured by the beasts of the field. **R.**

3. God of hosts, turn again, we implore, / look down from heaven and see. / Visit this vine and protect it, / the vine your right hand has planted. **R.**

4. And we shall never forsake you again: / give us life that we may call upon your name. / God of hosts, bring us back; / let your face shine on us and we shall be saved. **R.**

SECOND READING

Phil 4:6-9

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians

Do these things and the God of peace will be with you.

There is no need to worry; but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving, and that peace of God, which is so much greater than we can understand, will guard your hearts and your thoughts, in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, fill your minds with everything that is true, everything that is noble, everything that is good and pure, everything that we love and honour, and everything that can be thought virtuous or worthy of praise. Keep doing all the things that you learnt from me and have been taught by me and have heard or seen that I do. Then the God of peace will be with you.

■ **The word of the Lord.**