

## **27TH SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME, CYCLE A**

Isaiah 5: 1-7 + Psalm 80 + Philippians 4: 6-9 + Matthew 21: 33-43

Holy Spirit Catholic Church: Sunday, October 4, 2020

“Hear another parable,” Jesus says to the religious leaders.

Having already tried to break into their locked hearts like a thief in the night with his

“Parable of the 2 Sons”, Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel tries yet again to find a way in.

With his “Parable of the Tenants”, Jesus hurls yet another fiery dart of love at their frozen, self-righteous hearts.

By his piercing words of persuasion, Jesus invites sinners to change their minds, to see their sin, to turn back to Him.

He is powerfully persistent in his desire for their conversion.

In this parable, he holds up a mirror to these religious leaders, so they might see themselves clearly and humbly admit their need for God’s mercy.

Jesus glimpses his destiny in their hard-hearted, arrogant opposition, that these leaders who have been given stewardship of the vineyard of Israel will soon throw him outside the vineyard and kill him on the hill of Golgotha. Yet, Jesus shows he is more concerned with saving them from eternal death than he is of dying a terrible death.

The Beloved Son of God, the landowner’s son, is going to “have his vengeance” on these greedy religious leaders by overwhelming them with His mercy, all the way to the cross.

But lest we be tempted like we were last Sunday to think Jesus is only challenging the self-serving religious leaders of his day, we are invited to think again and to think differently.

This parable invites us to conversion, to examine our conscience, to see ourselves being called to a change of heart leading to a change of life.

These words of the Gospel are not lifeless words etched on a page from history, but the living word of God, and the Living Word made Flesh addresses them to us here and now.

For the seeds of greed planted in the hearts of those religious leaders who conspired to kill the Son of the Landowner, the Son of God, also seek to take root in our souls.

It is a particular kind of greedy seed—a greed having to do with religious “attitudes” which we hold tight and which slowly kill the spirit.

Thus, when we examine our conscience, are we conscious of a certain pious smugness?

Are we aware of a type of self-congratulation derived from doing our religious duty, of an attitude of being better than “them”--- whoever it is we look down our nose at?

Do we do so-called charitable acts as a performance for others to see, to bolster our self-image as good Christians rather than solely for the benefit of the recipients of our charitable actions?

Is there a gnawing awareness that despite professing a God-centered faith that instead “I” continue to be very much at the center of “my” life, that everything revolves around me and my desires, instead of my life revolving around God?

Like the religious leaders listening to Jesus in the temple, have we restricted our relationship to God to only one small corner of our life, our time in this temple?

So that the Lord Jesus is not the Lord of my marriage, but I am.

So that the Lord Jesus is not the Lord of my work, but I am.

So that the Lord Jesus is not the Lord of my politics, but I am.

So that everything I do outside of this temple has nothing to do with Him or producing the fruits of His kingdom, which are justice, peace, and love.

The Risen Jesus by the power of His Spirit keeps offering to be with us and act through us in every situation and in every relationship.

The call to conversion comes to each of us in every part of our life where we have become greedy.

So that in our greed to always be right, we might be more generous in admitting our wrongs.

So that in our greed to win every argument, whether in person or on social media, we might instead open our heart to listen to the other side.

So that when greed causes us to think that my life and my stuff are mine, we might instead open our ears to the cry of the poor and the doors of our borders to those fleeing horrific violence.

Recognizing our sin, seeing how we are constantly putting our self at the center, is only the first step of conversion.

The next step is to invite the Risen Lord to be the cornerstone of our life, to be the One on whom we build everything in our life.

For without Him, we can do nothing of lasting value, all our efforts are in vain.

What is interesting about this parable is that the events which unfold in its telling only happen because the owner (God) went away on a journey.

This "Parable of the Tenants" packs a powerful punch because the landowner is absent from the scene.

Because when people look for God in a visible form, they will see only each other. When they look for Christ, they will see only Christians.

This is the reason the Risen Christ has entrusted us with His Spirit so that everything that is His may be ours.

Or better yet, by his death and resurrection and the Spirit given to us, the Risen Lord has implanted in us a wholly new life, with all the same energies and principles of life that give thrust to his own life: his joy and unity with the Father, their mutual knowledge and love, the very glory of the Holy Trinity. Wow! That's amazing, isn't it!!

We produce the fruits of his dynamic presence by making him visible to others through our thoughts, words, and deeds!

Or as St. Paul so poetically states, by choosing to think about whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely and gracious.

The invitation is not to be "like" Jesus but to allow Him to live in us.

The question we are to ask in every situation is not "What would Jesus do?" but "What will I do enlivened by the Spirit of Jesus?"

The point of Holy Communion is we invite Him to live in us, to work through us.

Jesus does not want his followers each reflecting a little piece of him in their lives.

No, what he wants is to have his one life expressed fully in each of his followers!

Christ shining in a 1000 Billion Faces reflecting him in their own God-given uniqueness!!

Thomas Merton once wrote: *"A witness of a crime, who just stands by and makes a mental note of the fact that he is an innocent bystander, tends by that very fact to become an accomplice."*

In the vineyard of the world today, we witness gruesome and unimaginable horrors, we see widespread and unnecessary waste, we hear silent or eerily audible screams of the vulnerable---do we make mental note of these crimes, OR are we stirred to action in some concrete way?

The God of love and compassion desires a response from us.

Do our lives produce the fruit of God's justice and mercy?