

## **Cornerstone**

October 4, 2020, 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Gospel of Matthew 21:33-43

Fr. Brad

Jesus teaches us the love of all. This means a desiring that all come to Christ. This means loving our enemies as well as our friends. And though we may not feel like it sometimes, we are called to make the loving choice. It is in our human weakness that we fall short of consistently looking deeply enough within ourselves and into the situations of others to inform our ability to be as compassionate as the Lord invites us to be.

It is true we cannot be all things for all people. And yet we are called to go more deeply into ourselves, examine our consciences and our relationships with other people. Putting ourselves in other peoples' shoes takes time and effort. Without taking time to do this, we risk quickly fall into judgmental or even racist attitudes. We can become dismissive, and find ourselves becoming insensitive and self-interested.

As well as the need for self-reflection, we need to take the time to re-awaken our awareness of the gifts and opportunities afforded us in order that we might shed the trappings of entitlement.

St. Paul reminds us to ask for what we need through prayer and supplication, that God may guard our minds and hearts.

Both the 1st Reading and the Gospel allude to the image of the land owner and the tenants in the vineyard. Isaiah alludes to the wild grapes and the temptation to greed. The landowner has entrusted the care of the vineyard to the tenants.

In a certain sense, the concept of ownership by us as human beings in this world is a misnomer - - an illusion. There is really no such thing as full ownership in this passing world. Eventually, our life styles must change, somebody will take over our worldly role, etc. an eventually we lay down our very lives in this world.

At best we are like the tenants in the vineyard, doing our part, tending the vineyard for its fruit and not claiming full ownership. Do we recognize that our Creator is the one in charge and can we accept that living by that is a work in progress? In our human weakness we inevitably struggle with our own egos, pride and self-interest and we struggle with letting go.

In both readings, the landowner gives responsibility to his tenants to be fruitful. What does being fruitful mean? It means tending to pruning out the weeds of worldly ambition, love of material possessions, contempt for the poor or those different from us.

It also means recognizing that our fruitfulness does not mean literally, the productiveness from our own work but, from not resisting the work of the Spirit within us.

The fruit God is looking for is the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience and long-suffering.

And in the Gospel version, Jesus says the landowner goes **the extra step of sending his own son** after the previous messengers are attacked and killed.

Most of us would stop short of that if we saw that the tenants were abusing their responsibility.

Certainly in today's job world, the average reaction would be to fire the tenants on that basis or, if you couldn't fire them, at the very least, keep one's self and loved ones at arm's length from such abuse.

Nevertheless the landowner sends his son, family, something of himself - - a message of just how far God, represented by the landowner, will go to convince the tenants to change their ways and live up to the responsibility given them. Here, we are shown that **danger and risk are secondary to compassion.**

So, one question for each one of us is, '**how far will we go out of love**' for the common good and for the salvation of all, including those we may be at odds with in hope of reconciliation and conversion?'

And secondly 'do we see ourselves **as simple humble tenants** in the vineyard, **tending to the job at hand**, working not just for ourselves but **for the glory of God, trusting in faith** that He will take care of His tenants in ways that we could never be able to do for ourselves. Or are we tempted to try keeping for ourselves what belongs to God?'

And finally, one last lesson from today's Gospel to reflect on - - if the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, we may ask ourselves, '**what is it in our lives that we are rejecting** that could very well be the **cornerstone that needs to be accepted?**' Could it be a relationship?, a conviction about something?, what are we avoiding?, do we need to follow through on something we've been putting off?, do we need to accept a certain reality that we have tried to deny?, do we need to let go finally of something we have been carrying for far too long?, what do we still fear that is not of God?'

Jesus urges his listeners and us today, to leave no stone unturned.

And we learn that God reveals himself when, where, and by whom we might least expect it.

This is the radical inclusivity within Jesus' message. We are called to allow His Spirit to permeate us. And it is not about the success brought about by our own efforts but by our responding to Him and each other with love and joy, patience, peace, perseverance and compassion.