



Blessed Sacrament Parish
Homily by Father Chris Comerford
October 8, 2017 Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading I Isaiah 5:1-7

Psalm 80:9-20

Reading II Philippians 4:6-9

Gospel Matthew 21:33-43

Homily

We have another agricultural parable. It fits because it is about an area of the Holy Land. The people understood this in a great way and we hear another wonderful story about vineyards. Now the fact that Jesus mentions the vineyard draws the people back to Isaiah, back to the first reading we heard today. In Isaiah, the reading makes you think about wild grapes and the vineyard that had fallen into disrepair with wild fruit and something needs to happen. And Jesus is going to give us an example of how the people thought the vineyard was theirs.

We see this beautiful vineyard planted within a hedge with a wine press and a tower. The owner leased it out to tenants. We may think this is kind of odd but it was pretty common during that time period. A lot of people today own farmland but then lease it out to someone else who does the farming for them because they do not want to have all the big equipment that it takes today to farm. That is pretty common.

Then the harvest time comes, the owner sends his servants to obtain the produce — and they kill them. Wow. Tortured, beaten and killed. The owner sends more servants and the same thing happens. What is going on with these tenants? Maybe they kind of saw the land as theirs. They think, “We did the work, it should belong to us.” Sometimes it is easy to have that attitude, even when something doesn’t belong to us, we treat it as if it is ours. And we see that is what is happening because the tenants thought they deserved more. The owner went so far as to send his son. He thought, “They respect my son.” What goes in the tenants’ minds? The tenants think, “Here’s the one who is going to be the heir and will inherit all of this. Let’s kill him and we will get the inheritance.” It is crazy to think that way — that the vineyard will be theirs if they kill the son of the owner!

It is a challenge to look at this but there is a deep meaning here. We see the fact that God has given us so much, but sometimes we act like it is ours and that we are the ones who have done everything. It is easy to have that attitude. The challenge then is to be good stewards of what God has given us. Jesus asks the chief priests and elders this question, “What’s the owner going to do?” Then Jesus let’s them answer, “They should

put those men to a wretched death and lease his vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce.” They knew what the answer should be. But if they had realized that Jesus was talking about them in using this parable, their answer may have been different.

This goes on to show, “He’s the one. He’s the son who is going to be rejected, thrown out of the vineyard and killed.” How gruesome. So many people died because they followed Jesus. That is the point, because now the vineyard is the church and they thought they were going to inherit it all. But Jesus told them, “The Kingdom will be taken away from you and given to a people who produce fruit.”

We have heard so often how that’s what we are called to do, and that is how we know God’s Kingdom is the right place — because it produces fruit. That means it takes effort on our part. We just can’t all receive and sit back and say, “Oh. I know I should follow God, but I have all these other things I want to do.” We are called to be workers in the vineyard and that means living out our faith and living out what we say we believe, not just thinking about ourselves — but thinking of others.

It is a challenge to do that. We don’t want the vineyard to be overrun with weeds and wild grapes like Isaiah told them. We need to bear fruit and follow the plan God has for us. It is a challenge to live our life this way and to realize what God is calling us to do. But it is wonderful to realize this and play the part that we have been given out of faithfulness.

Today we have our eighth graders, and this is important because it is their moment this Sunday when they prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation in the church. They have several things they need to complete in preparing for that sacrament. Today they are going to promise publically, in front of all of you, that they are going to do that. It takes a lot of preparation. They will be saying, “I want to receive these gifts of the Holy Spirit, and God willing, to live the way that God is calling me to live.” It isn’t just for you to sit there and say, “Oh. That’s nice.” No. You have something to do for them. Pray for them. Encourage them. Support them so they will say, “In this world I want to follow Christ.” But they need our love, they need our support.

We pray for that. We pray for them. We ask that the Holy Spirit will transform their lives if it hasn’t already done so, and that they will receive all the gifts that God has intended for them. Let’s seek to be good workers in the vineyards. We are not servants. We are sons and daughters. God has invited the family. He wants to make us his heir to all of that, but we are called to work for the Kingdom, we are called to produce good fruit. Let us be open to the way God is calling us — to be his good workers and to be thankful for all of the blessings that he has given to us.

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