

Homily. 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. A. 7/8 October 2023.

There's no great mystery in the gospel parable even as there is a great warning and wake up call in its message. I say this because it's clear that the landowner is God, the vineyard is God's gifts to his people who are the tenants, the servants are the prophets and holy ones God sent to help get them back on track and the son stands for Jesus himself. This story, addressed to the Jerusalem Temple Priests and leaders, is a retelling of their abysmal response to all that God has tried to do to set them right. It's a condemnation of their hard heartedness and self centred ways.

But, what then is the fruit that God expected from these tenants? What is it that God wanted from these leaders and from God's people? To answer this we have to know something about God's word, something about what the many rejected and mistreated servants, and even the Son, came to correct. The message of the prophets can be summed up in a few words; fidelity to God shown by acting justly and lovingly towards our fellow men and women. The Good News of Jesus the Son can likewise be summed up simply; Loving the Lord our God with all of our mind, heart, soul and strength and doing to others, who are our sisters and brothers, as we would have done to us were we in their shoes. That's it; That's the will and way of God, the same yesterday, today and forever.

Of course, we all falter and fail in this, just as did those who first heard the parable, but this isn't the end of the matter. Because of Jesus we have chance after chance to change, to listen and hear again, to accept God's kind mercy and to take a different track forwards. The track of just, loving and humble action for others, the fruit of the vineyard, stays the same, but

the grace offered to us to choose to walk this track of peace remains open until the end of our days. Echoing this point, St. Paul calls us to live in ways that are pure, noble, good, true and honourable, relying on our faith in Jesus saving love and on prayer as our pathway to peace.

Different words, I know, but the same essential message and invitation.

If we can get this understanding clear, embedding it in our minds and hearts, then Christ the Keystone on whom everything hinges and holds in place, will calm our anxieties, save us from being exiled from of the vineyard and stop the roof from crashing down on us. He will pour out his mercy and pardon, granting us what prayer does not even dare to ask by transforming us, like the bread and wine of the Eucharist, into images of the very one we consume.