

Fr. Rudy's Reflections

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 8, 2023

We Are the Tenants of God's Vineyard

My Sisters and Brothers in the Risen Lord,

Many of the New Testament's Gospels help us to learn more about God and ourselves, especially when Jesus speaks in parables to present our faith in an allegorical light. Jesus had the intention to simplify spiritual truths and create relatable stories so they might be assimilated into our own lives. The definition of a parable is "a placement side-by-side for the purpose of comparison." And it is true that "'Tis a gift to be simple, 'tis a gift to be free; 'Tis a gift to come down where we all ought to be."

On this Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, we hear in Matthew's Gospel Jesus imparting a parable that invites us to reflect on the profound relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament, but with the addition of the arrival of Jesus as the landowner's heir. This parable, often referred to as the "Parable of the Wicked Tenants," extends the trajectory of prophet Isaiah's "love song" of God's vineyard and its impact on our lives. Isaiah's vineyard is tended by God, the loving landowner, and we, as tenants, are entrusted with the talents and blessings God has granted to us on earth. The metaphor beautifully captures the essence of our relationship with God and our ultimate responsibility to God's vineyard.

As Jesus's parable unfolds, however, we see the landowner sending servants (who represent the Old Testament prophets) to collect the produce from the vineyard, but tragically, they are mistreated, rejected by the tenants, and killed. Jesus then describes the landowner's heir who symbolizes the culmination of God's plan to send his son as the long-awaited Messiah to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to call us to repentance. Jesus, however, is rejected and crucified, just as the landowner's son is killed by the tenants in the parable. This episode serves as a stark reminder of our own responsibility for Jesus's suffering and death.

All of us are the tenants in God's vineyard, blessed with unique talents and gifts to serve the landowner and enhance God's crops. Are we using our talents for the greater good here on earth as God intends? Or, are we, like the wicked tenants, selfishly hoarding all we have been given for our own worldly self-ambitions?

God, our landowner, desires to see the fruits of love, compassion, and justice in the vineyard, and God calls us to be good stewards during our time here on earth. God's gifts to us should benefit not only ourselves but also our neighbors and the world at large. Let us, dear friends, reflect on the message of this parable. As we embrace Jesus Christ in our daily lives, let us strive to care for the fruits of God's Kingdom and fulfill our role as the faithful and compassionate tenants in the divine plan. *It is easy to forget that what we have is not ours, but belongs to our Lord.*

Yours in Christ,

Father Rudy