

Living the Gospel in Everyday Life....



27th Sunday in Ordinary Time
October 2, 2011
Matthew 21:33-43



What's Going On Here?

GOSPEL: Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people: "Hear another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went on a journey. When vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to obtain his produce. But the tenants seized the servants and one they beat, another they killed, and a third they stoned. Again he sent other servants, more numerous than the first ones, but they treated them in the same way. Finally, he sent his son to them, thinking, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance.' They seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes?" They answered him, "He will put those wretched men to a wretched death and lease his vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the proper times." Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures: *The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; by the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes?* Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit."

HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW? Once again, Matthew challenges those leaders who refuse to hear the gospel of love and finally reject Jesus himself. Using the image of the vineyard, a common Gospel metaphor, Matthew portrays God as the hard-working owner who himself plants, nurtures, and protects his vineyard before turning it over to the tenants for ongoing care. Those trusted stewards, however, become traitors, going so far as to think they own the land, as if they have a right to it. Mired in their treachery, they lose sight of what it means to tend the vineyard and ultimately resort to murder. So caught up in their greed for wealth and their fantasy of power, they foolishly believe that they would become heirs to the owner's fortune if they get rid of his son. They forget the difference between stewardship and ownership, between rights and responsibilities. They misunderstand their place in the scheme of things. Their folly offers us an opportunity to look to our own "gardens." Our creator God planted the seeds of love in us; God built a protective hedge around us with the gifts of faith and hope; the graces of Scripture, the sacraments and prayer; the blessing of community. God then "leased" this garden of love to us. It is we who are the tenants, called to make a safe home for God's spirit within us, called to be stewards of the gift of love, called to bear fruit for the world. Humility - an honest acknowledgement of both our gifts and our liabilities - allows us to see who we are in relation to God and who God calls us to be in the ongoing creation of the kingdom. The prophet Micah said it well, "You have been told, O People, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do right and to love goodness and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8)." We cannot help but do God's will if we allow these words to sink deep into the rich soil of our hearts where God's love will flourish and bear fruit for the community.

Questions For Reflection

- * *What are some of the ways I tend the garden of love God has planted in me?*
- * *How can I be sure of remembering that the garden isn't just for myself, that I am called as an individual-in-community?*
- * *What is the difference between stewardship and ownership, between rights and responsibilities? How does remembering these differences offer protection for my faith life?*
- * *Am I able to see my stewardship of God's gift of love as ministry? How can I do ministry just as I am, where I am, at this time in my life?*
- * *What do I think of Micah 6:8?*