

THE WORD OF THE LORD

Matthew 21:33-43



33 Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people, 'Listen to another parable. There was a man, a landowner, who planted a vineyard; he fenced it round, dug a winepress in it and built a tower; then he leased it to tenants and went abroad. **34** When vintage time drew near he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his produce. **35** But the tenants seized his servants, thrashed one, killed another and stoned a third. **36** Next he sent some more servants, this time a larger number, and they dealt with them in the same way. **37** Finally he sent his son to them. "They will respect my son," he said. **38** But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, "This is the heir. Come on, let us kill him and take over his inheritance." **39** So they seized him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. **40** Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?' **41** They answered, 'He will bring those wretches to a wretched end and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will deliver the produce to him when the season arrives.' **42** Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the scriptures: "It was the stone rejected by the builders that became the keystone. This was the Lord's doing, and it is wonderful to see"? **43** I tell you then that the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.'

Other readings: Isaiah 5:1-7 Psalm 79 (80) Philippians 4:6-9

The prophets frequently compared the people of Israel to a vineyard. The prophet Isaiah, in today's first reading, speaks of the vineyard cherished by the Lord which produces only sour fruit. Jesus takes this parable of Isaiah as his starting-point. Instead of placing the emphasis on the quality of the grapes produced in the vineyard, Jesus speaks of the tenants of the vineyard who refuse to give the landowner his produce. The tenants abuse the servants of the landowner and eventually kill the landowner's son. Jesus is now in Jerusalem and he directs these words to those in authority, who, like many of their forefathers, do not heed the messengers of God and fail to produce a harvest of good works for God. It was principally the religious leaders who rejected the message of Jesus. In spite of this behaviour of some of the leaders of Judaism in Jesus' day, Christians still cherish the Jewish roots of our faith, and value the Old Testament and the Jewish traditions of Jesus and his gospel. This parable contains a warning to listen and to respond, to 'produce the fruit of the kingdom'. Once again in this gospel the evangelist points to the receptivity of the Gentiles 'who will produce the fruit' of the kingdom. The Church of Christ welcomes all those who heed the message, both Jew and Gentile.

Do I endeavour to bear fruit in response to the gospel message?

Do I treasure the traditions of my faith, both its Jewish roots and Christian fulfilment?

We pray for wisdom and humility among the leaders of our faith.

We pray that the mission of the Church may prosper throughout the world.