

In our Gospel reading, Jesus tells another parable to the chief priests and elders of the people. This one is about a landowner and a vineyard. In the parable, there are tenants of the vineyard who refuse to give the landowner the produce that is due to him. They beat and even kill the servants the landowner sends to them. When the landowner sends his son, they kill him, too. Jesus asks His audience, “What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes?” They answer, “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.” Then Jesus turns the parable on them: “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.”

It’s obvious that the parable is a criticism of the Jewish leadership of the time. But it’s also a warning to us, who are supposedly “the people that will produce its fruit.” As Christians, we do believe in the Son of God, who came to save us. In terms of the parable, we do not see ourselves like the tenants who kill the son of the landowner. Perhaps we are not like them, but I think we need to ask ourselves if we don’t participate in killing His message?

At times it can be incredibly easy to let the wisdom of the world influence how we live the Gospel, instead of letting the wisdom of the Gospel influence how we live in the world. When we carry resentments, or condone violence, or hold prejudices, or refuse to love, we contribute to the hindering of the Gospel. When we don’t take the demands of the Gospel seriously, because we find them inconvenient, we, in the language of St. Paul, put up “stumbling blocks” to the Gospel being heard. People can’t hear the Good News if all that they see is Jesus’ followers living according to the ways of the world like everyone else.

This is not to say that following Christ is always easy. Very often, it is not. Showing forgiveness, compassion, and mercy, even to those we may consider enemies, can be extremely difficult. But again, we are reminded of all that Jesus has done for us, so that we might be saved from slavery to sin and fear of death. If we can be open to God’s love for us in Jesus Christ (“Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God.” – see our second reading from Philippians), and be open to *sharing* that love (producing “good fruit”), we will receive “the peace of God that surpasses all understanding.”

Doing God’s will gives us a peace that the world cannot give. May we not be like those who kill the message of the Gospel by hostility or indifference. Instead, may we be good tenants, faithful stewards of the many gifts that God has given us, and live the Gospel to our utmost.

May God continue to bless us all.

In Christ,

Fr. Phil, CP