



Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

† Sunday 8th October 2017

In England and Wales: Harvest Thanksgiving – CAFOD collection

In England and Wales Cycle of Prayer:

For Prisoners and their Dependents

Keynote: Destined to be spiritual and bear fruit in the Lord's vineyard

Prophet Isaiah 5:1-7

'Let me sing to my friend the song of his love for his vineyard,' says the prophet. What follows is a parable set in the style of a song, which tells of the love that the Lord God has for the people, and how disappointing is their response, for *'my friend has a vineyard on a fertile hillside, he dug the soil, cleared it of stones, and planted choice vines in it... he expected it to yield grapes, but sour grapes was all that it gave.'* The contrast is between the lavish care and generous expectations of the vineyard owner, and in the end the poor harvest return – for the grapes are not just 'sour,' but rotten to the roots! So given that God's People are unproductive and unfaithful, what will the owner do? *'I will lay it waste, unpruned, undug; overgrown with briars and the thorn. I will command the clouds to rain no rain upon it.'* The vineyard of the Lord – that chosen place that had prompted the initial song of pride and love – has turned out to be without value. There is no pride in it. Today's gospel provides us with this clear lesson, lest *'the kingdom of God be taken from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.'*

Responsorial Psalm 79 [80] – A psalm seeking God's favour again

Letter of Paul to the Philippians 4:6-9

The apostle Paul while engaged on his missionary travels was repeatedly imprisoned. So once again he writes from prison to the faithful of the Church. *'There is no need to worry,'* he says, *'but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving.'* There is somehow great strength in these words. So often our prayer is one only of asking, and we forget the all-important 'thank you'. Paul reassures us, *'that the peace of God, which is so much greater than we can understand, will guard your hearts and your thoughts, in Christ Jesus.'* Finally the apostle urges his readers, *'Keep doing all the things that you learnt from me and have been taught by me and have heard or seen that I do. Then the God of peace will be with you.'*

Gospel according to Matthew 21:33-43

Here another parable about a vineyard, that Matthew understands as applying to the Kingdom of God [the People of God], and carries within it a hint of the expected return of Christ at the end of time. *'When vintage time drew near the landowner sent his servants to the tenants to collect the produce. But the tenants seized his servants thrashed one, killed another and stoned a third.'* After other servants had been sent and dealt with in a similar fashion, *'the landowner sent his son to them. "They will respect my son", he said.'* But the wicked tenants seized the heir and killed him. Then Jesus says by way of a warning for all who will listen, *'It was the stone rejected by the builders that became the keystone. This was the Lord's doing and it is wonderful to see... I tell you, then, that the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to people who will produce its fruit.'*

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