

August 23, 2018

Greetings to the all the Faithful of St. Andrew's,

Glory to Jesus Christ!

The Gospel reading for this Sunday is taken from Matthew 21 beginning in verse 33. This text records the Parable of the Vineyard and the Tenants. This section ends at verse 46.

The Land owner (representing God, of course) sends three waves of emissaries to the tenants in order to collect the produce of the land which was rightfully his. Those sent in the first two groups were violently rejected by the tenants. On the third attempt to collect what belonged to him we read that the landowner "sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'" (v.37). This *third* attempt ended no better than the others. In verse 38 and 39 we read: "But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.' And they took him and cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him."

After finishing the parable Jesus asks his hearers, "What will he (the landowner) do to those tenants?" (v.40). Both the hearers and Jesus agree that the landowner will, acting within his rights, "put those wretches to a miserable death, and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons" (v.41).

In verses 42-46 we read Jesus own commentary on the parable as well as Matthews's authorial comment at the end:

*Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures: 'The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it." When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. But when they tried to arrest him, they feared the multitudes, because they held him to be a prophet.*

Consider the following: 1. After the son's coming there are no more chances. One, two, three strikes you're out. 2. The one rejected by human beings is the one who is most important. 3. The author identifies the religious leaders, i.e. "the chief priests and the Pharisees," as the ones about whom Jesus was speaking and not the people in general. In fact, the "multitudes . . . held" Jesus "to be a prophet." 4. The kingdom of God can be taken away and given to anyone God wills. The Apostle Paul commands the Gentile believers not *to boast over* the Jews who did not accept Jesus as the Christ (Romans chapter 11). This boasting is not taken lightly by the Lord. Jesus does not make "superior" people, but servants that humbly take up their cross for the benefit of others.

The stone which was rejected is Jesus. The idea of a crucified Messiah was a stumbling block and from a human point of view foolishness, but for the Christian it is the central focus of our lives. The Apostle Paul writes:

*"For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of*

*the clever I will thwart.' Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Corinthians 1:18-24)*

When the Lord returns may we be found faithful and humble tenants who with gratitude are ready to give back to him what is rightfully his.

In Christ,

Fr. Herman