**Notes for Next Sunday**

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 5:1-7

**I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. ﻿2﻿ He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit. ﻿3﻿ “Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. ﻿4﻿ What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad? ﻿5﻿ Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled. ﻿6﻿ I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briers and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it.” ﻿7﻿ The vineyard of the LORD Almighty is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.**

This skillful parable was likely proclaimed at the Feast of Booths when Israel celebrated God’s blessings of the harvest. It begins in the style of a joyful love song, filled with harvest imagery, but soon turns into an indictment (v 3). Parables of this type are designed to get listeners to pass judgment upon themselves. The narrator elicits his listeners’ outrage at a hypothetical injustice. Their response is then applied to a real situation involving the audience. Only then do they realize that the story is about them (cf Mt 21:33–46 today’s Gospel). (TLSB)

God had made Israel His people and had separated it from other peoples. God then had also driven out the heathen. Vineyards were usually located on hills and mountains where they could obtain a lot of sunshine. Every mountain peak had fertile soil. It was the nature of mountain soil to be fertile and productive. Because of it rocky heights and mountain **s**trongholds it was a secure, well-protected country (v. 1).

The ground was tilled (v. 2). This may have been done by hand instead of with an animal-drawn plow because vineyards were planted on steep hills. (TLSB)

Choice vines (v. 2) were cultivated known to produce excellent fruit. (TLSB)

A watchtower (v.2) is centrally located to enable the watchman to guard against theft at the time when the grapes ripen – a piece of standard equipment for a good vineyard.

God looked for spiritual fruit but only got bad fruit (vv. 2, 4).

When God found no good crops He had Babylon come and capture the Israelites and have their once bountiful land become a wasteland (v. 6).

God stressed that His people take care of those who needed it like fatherless children and widows. His people, especially the leaders were not providing justice to the lowly and oppressed (v. 7).

GOSPEL – Matthew 21:33-46

**33﻿ “Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. ﻿34﻿ When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. ﻿35﻿ “The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. ﻿36﻿ Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. ﻿37﻿ Last of all, 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, let’s kill him and take his inheritance.’ ﻿39﻿ So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. ﻿40﻿ “Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” ﻿41﻿ “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,” they replied, “and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.” ﻿42﻿ Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: ”‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? ﻿43﻿ “Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. ﻿44﻿ He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.”﻿45﻿ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them. ﻿46﻿ They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.**

The parable that Jesus tells here is very similar to the one told in our Old Testament reading. The difference is that Isaiah does not include Jesus’ role. Also Isaiah was addressing Judah before they were led into the Babylonian Captivity. Jesus’ parable is directed at the religious leaders of His day.

This is the second of three parables spoken by Jesus shortly after his triumphal entry into Jerusalem (cf. last week’s Gospel, 21:23–27 [28–32]; and next week’s, 22:1–14). All three parables are spoken, in succession, after the chief priests and elders of the people had questioned Jesus’ authority (21:23). By this late point in Jesus’ ministry, the division between Him and the leaders of the Jewish people is sharply drawn. Our Lord’s imminent death, resurrection, and sending of the Spirit at Pentecost (“When . . . the owner of the vineyard comes,” v 40) are important for understanding Jesus’ words to the Jewish leaders.

Jesus begins by describing a vineyard that is totally equipped, a place in which workers would enjoy working. God’s old covenant kingdom was likewise very well endowed. However, the workers entrusted to produce fruit refuse to acknowledge their responsibility to God, their proprietor. They mishandle the servants (prophets) sent to collect the rightful portion owed the owner. Finally, to cap it off, they kill the s(S)on of the owner. Jesus heightens the dramatic tension at this point in the story by turning to his audience and asking, “What would you do to tenants who acted that way?” Their twofold answer is: “Punish the perpetrators and rent the vineyard to truly productive workers!” The second idea is mentioned, namely to open the Kingdom to Gentiles.

The tenants are the Jews, or their leaders. The servants represent the OT prophets, many of whom were killed. The son represents Christ, who was condemned to death by the religious leaders.

In verse 42 Jesus quotes Psalm 118, showing that those who trash God’s Anointed One will themselves be trashed. Jesus is the one to whom all people are ultimately accountable.