

**27th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Is 5:1-7; Ps 80; Phil 4:6-9; Mt 21:33-43**

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This Sunday's readings have to do with bearing good fruit, the call of the Christian in this life. Thus Paul, in prison for Christ when he writes our second reading, reflects those "good fruits of the Spirit" (cf. Gal 5:22-24) which are our gift from God in Christ: "what is true, honorable, just, lovely, gracious, excellent," etc., living without anxiety, praying, applying what has been learned from persons such as Paul. This gives us the profound peace of God.

The first reading from Isaiah, and the gospel reading —Matthew's version of the parable in Mk 11— are closely matched. Using the image of a vine or vineyard for the people of Israel, the prophet poetically depicts the cares of the Lord for his people alongside the poor results achieved. The vineyard will suffer for this; perhaps this suffering will be purifying, as is the pruning of the vines in the parable in Jn 15.

In Mk 11, Jesus clearly refers to this Isaian parable, in order to convey a sense of the history of Israel. Mt largely takes over this passage, adding a couple of twists of his own. The servants sent are the prophets, traditionally mistreated and killed. The use of "tenant-farmer" (husbandmen or vine-dressers) for the ones to whom the vineyard is entrusted is significant; they are not *owners*, as is the "Lord" of the vineyard, but mere occupants without ownership rights (the Land is God's, see Lv 25:23). What is new in the history of Israel is the sending of God's Son, the real heir of everything; see Heb 1:1-2. This resulted in the greatest crime of all, the murder of God's Son. Jesus was the keystone of the whole building of God's people; rejecting him is rejecting the salvation which is found in the Kingdom of God. Only Mt says that "the Kingdom of God" (he usually says "Kingdom of heaven") will be taken away from "you" (apparently the "chief priests and elders" of Mt 21:23, as our translation indicates) and given to a "nation" (not "people") who will produce fruits. "Nation" indicates Gentiles, non-Jews; "people" usually means "Israel."

Much could be said about the great Ps 80, but space allows us simply to consider it a plea that God return to his people and visit his vineyard, a plea reproduced in Latin on the bronze door of the Carmelite church of St. Teresa in Rome (Carmel is the vineyard).