

Our Gospel reading today has another parable in which Jesus speaks about the vineyard; the image of the vineyard represents, symbolizes, God's kingdom. So what happens in today's story? The ownership of the landlord is rejected by the tenants and violently so. They claim the vineyard as their own so they kill the landowner's emissaries; they even kill his son.

Now when did Jesus tell this parable? In Matthew's Gospel, on Palm Sunday, Jesus triumphantly enters Jerusalem; he enters the temple and drives out the money changers, cleanses the temple of all who are carrying on business there. But before he celebrates the last supper and enters his passion he continues to teach. And like the parable we heard last Sunday, today's second parable about the vineyard comes from this moment.

And so this parable is meant to be read as an allegory for what is about to happen to him. God has sent the prophets to Israel and they did not heed their message; they killed the prophets. Now God has sent his Son and they still do not listen and so the Son will be killed too. But God's wrath is intense; the evil tenants will be put to death and the vineyard will be given to those who will produce the fruits of the kingdom.

On another level these vineyard parables also help interpret what is happening in the early Christian community. As Christianity grows and the Church begins to welcome more and more non-Jews into her midst their faith and way of life grows more distant from the Jewishness of the first disciples. It becomes rather foreign and so the followers of Jesus are being pushed out of the Jewish fold; they are expelled from the synagogue. And so these parables help them understand their plight. The new Christian community, the disciples of Jesus, are the ones who are the true tenants of the vineyard. In Jesus there is a new covenant and God has called them to bear fruit for the kingdom.

2000 years later we are not living through similar struggles. So what do we today do with this parable? Do we gloat that we are on the side of the chosen ones. We are the new tenants of the vineyard so God looks favourably upon us.

When we look at the attitude of the tenants in this parable they claim ownership of something that is only on loan to them. This claim it is ours leads them to kill those sent by the rightful owner.

So maybe we can maybe see it from that perspective. How does that claim 'mine'? This is mine and no one else's. How does this attitude blind us to the action of God in our lives?

Maybe the word of God, this difficult parable, can lead us to exercise a dose of humility as we recognize that is not always about mine and that God's word calls us to a broader, more open, more generous perspective.