

## UNWORTHY TENANTS

MATTHEW 21:33-43



In today's Gospel Jesus tells the story of a landlord who cultivated a vineyard and leased it to tenants. It was common in Jesus' time for land to be owned by absentee landlords, who would send their servants to collect the rent from the tenants at harvest time.

However, when the landlord in this parable sends his servants to collect the rent, they are treated brutally. One of them is killed. The landlord responds by sending a larger number who are treated in exactly the same way. As a last resort, he sends his own son, thinking the tenants would never hurt him. But he is badly mistaken. They throw his son out of the vineyard and murder him.

Matthew uses this parable to summarise the story of God's relationship with God's people. The characters in the story are symbolic. The landlord represents God, the tenants are the people of Israel, and the servants are the prophets, whom God has continually sent to Israel to remind the people of their true destiny. All of them were rejected and despised.

Finally, God sends his son Jesus, who, like the son in the parable, will be murdered by those to whom he came. The landlord will punish the tenants by leasing the vineyard to new tenants. This is Matthew's way of telling his readers that the Kingdom of God will be given to the Gentiles, the outsiders as it were, those who were not part of the original story. Since the Son has been rejected by the people he came for, he must go to others instead. ■

### PRAY

In today's second reading, St Paul tells us that if there is anything we need we should pray for it, trusting in God. Pray today for your needs and the needs of the community.

### SAY

**"Father, thank you for sending your Son to show me how to live. Help me to live a good and fruitful life."**

### DO

Think about your relationships. Is there a person or friendship you have rejected? What steps do you need to take to restore it?

### LEARN

God never stops giving us the chance to turn back towards him.

God always sees the good in us, our potential; God never rejects anyone.

God's message is intended for everyone.

### REFLECT

**B**ack in 2000, a young Irish-American quarterback dreamed of becoming a professional NFL footballer. At the end of each season, there is what's known as the draft, when the 32 professional NFL teams pick the best young college players to bolster their squad. The team with that season's worst record gets the top pick, followed by the second-worst team, and so on. This process goes on through seven rounds. It's a way of trying to ensure that each team is competitive.

The young quarterback hadn't impressed the scouts in college. He was slow, awkward, he didn't seem to have the X Factor, still he hoped to be an early pick. He wasn't picked in the first round, or the second, or third, or fourth, or fifth. He feared he was going to be rejected. Finally, in round six, as an afterthought, the New England Patriots chose him as a possible backup quarterback. He was the 199th player selected—near bottom of the pile.

Last January, Tom Brady retired, aged 45. In the 23 years since the Patriots picked him as an afterthought, he had broken every NFL record by a mile - most career wins, most touchdown passes, most completions, most yards gained. And he had won seven Superbowls, more than any individual or team in history, winning four of them after his 37th birthday. The player nobody wanted had become the greatest ever; the reject selected as the 199th pick had become the GOAT (greatest of all time).

Tom Brady was rejected by the top coaches and scouts. But he didn't let rejection get him down. He trusted in his ability, his potential, and he became his team's cornerstone, its anchor, the key to its years of success.

In today's Gospel, Jesus quotes a verse from Psalm 118 - "the stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone." It is a prophecy of his death and resurrection. He will be rejected by the religious leaders and put to death on a cross. But that is not the end of the story. Death will not have the final word. Jesus will be raised from the dead to become the cornerstone of the new community called Church.

This parable is a reminder, too, to never let rejection or failure get us down. We all have wonderful potential. We just need to see it and use it. ■

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

Within your will, O Lord, all things are established,  
and there is none that can resist your will.  
For you have made all things, the heaven and the earth,  
and all that is held within the circle of heaven;  
you are the Lord of all.

**GLORIA**

Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,  
we bless you,  
we adore you,  
we glorify you,  
we give you thanks for your great glory,  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,  
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,  
you take away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us;  
you take away the sins of the world,  
receive our prayer;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,  
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.

**COLLECT**

Almighty ever-living God,  
who in the abundance of your kindness  
surpass the merits and the desires of those  
who entreat you,  
pour out your mercy upon us  
to pardon what conscience dreads  
and to give what prayer does not dare to ask.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of  
the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever  
Amen.

**FIRST READING**

Isaiah 5:1-7

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.  
Let me sing to my friend  
the song of his love for his vineyard.  
My friend had a vineyard  
on a fertile hillside.  
He dug the soil, cleared it of stones  
and planted choice vines in it.  
In the middle he built a tower,  
he dug a press there too.  
He expected it to yield grapes,  
but sour grapes were all that it gave.  
And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem  
and men of Judah,  
I ask you to judge  
between my vineyard and me.  
What could I have done for my vineyard  
that I have not done?  
I expected it to yield grapes.  
Why did it yield sour grapes instead?  
Very well, I will tell you  
what I am going to do to my vineyard:  
I will take away its hedge for it to be grazed  
on,  
and knock down its wall for it to be trampled  
on.  
I will lay it waste, unpruned, undug;  
overgrown by the briar and the thorn.  
I will command the clouds

to rain no rain on it.  
Yes, the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts  
is the House of Israel,  
and the men of Judah  
that chosen plant.  
He expected justice, but found bloodshed,  
integrity, but only a cry of distress.  
The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**PSALM**

Psalm 79

Response:  
The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

1. You brought a vine out of Egypt;  
to plant it you drove out the nations.  
It stretched out its branches to the sea,  
to the Great River it stretched out its  
shoots. (R.)
2. Then why have you broken down its  
walls?  
It is plucked by all who pass by.  
It is ravaged by the boar of the forest,  
devoured by the beasts of the field. (R.)
3. God of hosts, turn again, we implore,  
look down from heaven and see.  
Visit this vine and protect it,  
the vine your right hand has planted. (R.)
4. And we shall never forsake you again:  
give us life that we may call upon your  
name.  
God of hosts, bring us back;  
let your face shine on us and we shall be  
saved. (R.)

**SECOND READING**

Philippians 4:6-9

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the  
Philippians.  
There is no need to worry; but if there is anything  
you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer  
and thanksgiving, and that peace of God, which  
is so much greater than we can understand, will  
guard your hearts and your thoughts, in Christ  
Jesus. Finally, brothers, fill your minds with  
everything that is true, everything that is noble,  
everything that is good and pure, everything that  
we love and honour, and everything that can be  
thought virtuous or worthy of praise. 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.  
The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia! I call you friends, says the  
Lord,  
because I have made known to you  
everything I have learnt from my Father.  
Alleluia!

**GOSPEL**

Matthew 21:33-43

A reading from the holy Gospel according to  
Matthew.  
Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of  
the people, 'Listen to another parable. There was  
a man, a landowner, who planted a vineyard; he  
fenced it round, dug a winepress in it and built  
a tower; then he leased it to tenants and went  
abroad. When vintage time drew near he sent his  
servants to the tenants to collect his produce.  
But the tenants seized his servants, thrashed  
one, killed another and stoned a third. Next  
he sent some more servants, this time a larger  
number, and they dealt with them in the same

way. Finally he sent his son to them. "They will  
respect my son" he said. But when the tenants  
saw the son, they said to each other, "This is the  
heir. Come on, let us kill him and take over his  
inheritance." So they seized him and threw him  
out of the vineyard and killed him. Now when the  
owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to  
those tenants?" They answered, "He will bring  
those wretches to a wretched end and lease the  
vineyard to other tenants who will deliver the  
produce to him when the season arrives." Jesus  
said to them, 'Have you never read in  
the scriptures:

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 a people who will  
produce its fruit.'  
The Gospel of the Lord.  
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

I believe in God,  
the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
*(all bow during the next two lines)*  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
he descended into hell;  
on the third day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God the  
Father almighty;  
from there he will come to judge the living  
and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and life everlasting.  
Amen.

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Accept, O Lord, we pray,  
the sacrifices instituted by your commands  
and, through the sacred mysteries,  
which we celebrate with dutiful service,  
graciously complete the sanctifying work  
by which you are pleased to redeem us.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

The Lord is good to those who hope in him,  
to the soul that seeks him.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Grant us, almighty God,  
that we may be refreshed and nourished  
by the Sacrament which we have received,  
so as to be transformed into what we  
consume.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.