

## 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time 2020

In order to understand this weekend's readings, we need to have a little bit of understanding of ancient Israelite history and culture as recorded in the Old Testament.

In today's first reading, we hear from the Prophet Isaiah, "Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard," We need to remember that the Israelites are the Chosen People of God – and that's the clear message in the entire bible. God has blessed them with many things such as giving them the Law, the Prophets, the Covenants, the liberation from slavery – God set them up as a standard for all the nations of the world, and so, this means that much is EXPECTED of Israel – They're meant to live up to their calling, and God chastises them if they don't.

Now, one common trope or image in the biblical tradition is THE VINEYARD, and Isaiah and Jesus use this particular theme of the vineyard in their poems and parables.

Isaiah refers to God as "The Beloved", who built a beautiful vineyard that was meant to bring forth much fruit. Isaiah continues, "My beloved (meaning The Lord) had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines...he expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded WILD GRAPES." Now, what are these WILD GRAPES? The Wild Grapes symbolize infidelity of Israel. THE WILD GRAPES ARE THE COLLECTIVE AND INDIVIDUAL SINS OF THE PEOPLE.

Throughout the Old Testament, there's a steady theme of infidelity to God – and that's what the Old Testament prophets always preach about – Israel is UNFAITHFUL TO THE LORD – THE LORD HAS DONE SO MUCH FOR ISRAEL AND IN RESPONSE, THE PEOPLE ARE UNFAITHFUL TO HIM.

Not only that, the other great sin the Israelites committed against God was IDOLATRY. We often hear the Israelites worshipping the false gods of the Babylonians, Sumerians and Persians.

And so, God uses a strategy. Isaiah says, “Remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down, I will make it a waste...” God allows them to feel the effects of their sin. Even today, we are experiencing the consequences of our sinfulness. Pope Saint John Paul II called it the “Culture of Death.”

Now, what does all this have to do with us? As Catholic Christians, we are participants of the New Covenant - the New Covenant that Jesus established. We are the successors of the Old Covenant, and just like our ancient Israelite ancestors, we can and have been unfaithful to God at times. For example, when we don't follow the Commandments, we are unfaithful to God. When we lack charity and respect for our family, friends, strangers, even ourselves, we are unfaithful to God. When we refuse to forgive others, we are unfaithful to God. When we hide our faith from others, we are unfaithful to God. When we commit violent acts towards others; when we don't love God and our neighbour, we are unfaithful to God. When we worship money, or material possessions, even ourselves or other people; when we worship anything else other than God, we are unfaithful to God by committing IDOLATRY.

And so, as people of the New Covenant, how are we tending the vineyard? We too have received the Law, the New Covenant, liturgy, sacraments, even the Incarnation; but how are we responding to the Lord's invitation with works of justice, love, peace and respect for others? Are we “good grapes” or “wild grapes?”

God allows us to experience the consequences of our sin – BUT WE SHOULD NEVER GIVE UP, AS JESUS SAYS, “THE STONE THAT THE BUILDERS

REJECTED HAS BECOME THE CORNERSTONE.” We can trust Him. He will strengthen us. God will never give up on us, and so we should never give up on HIM.