

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

[Reading I: Isaiah 5:1-7](#)

[Responsorial Psalm: 119:57, 72, 76-77, 127-128, 129-130](#)

[Reading II: Philippians 4:6-9](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 21:33-43](#)

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/100823.cfm>



Poetry often opens a new perspective on reality. It brings a focus upon some aspect of one's experience. The prophetic ministry also involves awakening a new awareness, a new vision of life and reality. It is about seeing things as God sees them.

Isaiah fulfills this ministry in the selection for the first reading today. The care and dedication of a landowner for his vineyard is described. He has done everything that one could imagine for the vineyard from preparing the land to planting choice vines. When the vines did not produce grapes, he gave up and left them to animals to eat.

He then makes a connection to how God has cared for the people of Jerusalem and Judah. He brought them from slavery, gave them a homeland, and created a covenant with them. They, however, have not produced the fruit of right behavior or justice in the land.

In the Gospel, Jesus presents a similar theme, but the focus is on accepting God's message spoken through the prophets and by Jesus. Those who were leaders in the community focused more on themselves and the message that they wanted to give. They have not listened to nor followed God's message.

On one level, it was used by the early church to give support to the mission to Gentiles, who were becoming a large portion of the Christian community by the time Matthew wrote his Gospel in the eighties. Those who were tied to their Jewish ways missed the message so that when Gentiles respond, they should be welcomed.

The parable is also addressed to the church today. The message of God through Jesus is addressed to everyone. When we think we understand the message and put it to work for our purposes, we are no longer listening to God but only to ourselves. The Word of God is always offering God's vision and the message is always bigger than what we grasp today. The Word of God should continue to make us uncomfortable and challenge us each day.

We are required to read the scriptures carefully as a message to the human family and to open our hearts to what more God wishes to say to us this day and in this situation of life. Reading scripture is not like reading a novel or a textbook. One must be aware of God's presence in our lives and open to what God wants to say to us. There may be one sentence or one phrase that will open within us a new understanding. One does not need to process the whole passage as one would do in scripture study. Holy Reading (Lectio Divina) can be very fruitful with one word that strikes us and moves us to an in-depth conversation with God.

St. Paul writes to the Philippians, "*in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God.*" Paul invites these early Christians to have a continuing dialogue with God. In sharing our circumstances, our needs, and our worries, we enhance our intimacy with God. With those whom we do not know well, we often present a self-sufficient image. "I am OK," or "I am doing fine." It is only with those with whom we feel safe that we can be vulnerable and reveal our needs and struggles.

God is the one who is always with us. When we make known our requests to God, we are opening ourselves and being vulnerable. This vulnerability deepens the connection, the trust, and the reliance one has with one's confidant. When we dialogue with God about our experiences, about what we need, and about our struggles, there is a growing connection and awareness that God is with us in every situation.

Petitionary prayer has been part of both the Judaic and Christian traditions from the earliest texts. Abraham bargained with God over the fate of Sodom. (Gen 18: 16-32) Moses interceded for Israel. (Ex 32: 11-14) Jesus teaches us to ask: "Ask and it will be given you." (Matt 7:7) Jesus, in his agony, asks God to take this cup away. (Matt 26:39) Jesus gives us the Our Father to ask for our daily bread. (Matt 6: 9-13)

Christian tradition has honored the practice of praying for one another. Intercessory prayer was part of the Jewish practice in local synagogues and was carried over to Christian liturgies where intercessory prayer is offered regularly. These are universal in nature so that each person can lift those whom they know or know about, like victims of disasters, the sick, and church leaders. The general nature of the prayers at mass allows each person to make them concrete in our hearts and minds. Then everyone responds and everyone prays for all who have been brought to mind.

Themes:

Church as the People of God
Proper use of Religious Authority

Bearing Fruit in the Reign of God
Intercessory Prayer

Reflection Questions:

How do you try to listen for God's message in the scripture passages that you read?

How can the authority of the Scriptures or church leadership be used properly? How can they be used improperly?

Try reading the selection for today from Paul's letter to the Philippians in a prayerful style. Allow one phrase or one word to touch your heart and let it be a starting place for a dialogue with God.

How and when do you pray intercessions for those you know or more universally?

Prayer suggestions:

For the Church: that we may be a fruitful garden, producing a harvest rich in justice, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness

For a deeper relationship with God: that we may not be satisfied with simply using religious words and gestures but rather make the Gospel the source of all our words and deeds

For humility: that we may recognize what is truthful, just, honorable, and worthy of praise in ourselves and one another and further the reign of God through these gifts

For the grace to examine our motives: that we may allow Christ to rid us of the stones of injustice and the briars that block our ability to hear the cries of those who suffer

For all who experience anxiety or live with fear: that the peace of God that surpasses all understanding may fill their minds and hearts