

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, May 30th 2016

I don't know about you, but I have a hard time with the Gospel reading about the vineyard tenants. It seems to me that if the vineyard tenants had the benefit of Peter's words, or internalized the words of Psalm 91, they would have treated the owner's servants and son not only decently, but kindly. Peter's words about the interdependence of faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, endurance, devotion, mutual affection, and love are a summary of how to do faith-based community living well. If we all also place our trust in God, surely things will be well.

But, living community well is often difficult, even when everyone has the best intentions.

Obviously, this parable was meant for the chief priests, scribes, and elders. (Even they recognized that, the Gospel tells us.) These were the people living their lives for God in a very particular way, in service to God's people through prayer and ritual, as educators, as leaders. Their roles came with quite a lot of power in society. Still, I find it hard to believe that power was their objective going into such a life. Perhaps for some it was. Most probably had a sincere desire to serve God and the people of God in the best way they could. They didn't start out vindictive like the vineyard tenants in the parable, trying to claim the Kingdom of God for themselves, trying to take God's place out of fear that they would lose the vineyard.

If I am a character in this parable, I am definitely one of the vineyard tenants (but much less violent). I work in ministry, on the parish and campus ministry staff, working in the vineyard to do my small part for the Kingdom. I like to think I know my little corner of the vineyard pretty well because, like most humans, I like having a sense of control. It is hard when someone comes in from a different corner and starts telling me how I should be doing things (and, as I'm sure you know, everyone has an opinion about music). "But I have practiced how to care for this particular plot!" I think. "You don't know how this part of the vineyard works as well as I do." I have to remind myself that outside perspectives can be valuable, that listening is often more important than being right, that even my best intentions can miss something. I have to remember to trust God first, and to treat others in the vineyard with love.

[Song: Holy Spirit, Come To Us – Taizé]

Holy Spirit, come to us! Kindle in us the fire of your love. Holy Spirit, come to us! Holy Spirit, come to us!

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