

20th September 2020
25th Sunday Ordinary Time
Saint Marcus and Saint Lawrence
Father Joseph Backowski

The Tenants of the Plantation

Today's Gospel is an unusual parable of a generous Master who wants all of his workers to have the same opportunity to return home to feed their family for the next day. This is the meaning of the daily wage and also why he gives each, even those who only worked one hour, the usual daily wage. The Master is always the Lord in the Parables. As I prayed and contemplated this parable this week, I made an interesting, shocking, mind rewiring discovery. This parable is important but, in these times, it is more important that we reflect deeply on the Parable of the Master and the tenants of his vineyard. This parable will come up in two weeks' time but we will be having a Mission Appeal so it seems fitting that we deal with it today.

Matthew 21:33-43

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people:

"Hear another parable.

There was a landowner who planted a vineyard,
put a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a tower.

Then he leased it to tenants and went on a journey.

When vintage time drew near,

he sent his servants to the tenants to obtain his produce.

But the tenants seized the servants and one they beat,
another they killed, and a third they stoned.

Again, he sent other servants, more numerous than the first ones,
but they treated them in the same way.

Finally, he sent his son to them, thinking,

'They will respect my son.'

But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another,

'This is the heir.

Come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance.'

They seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes?"

They answered him,

"He will put those wretched men to a wretched death

and lease his vineyard to other tenants

who will give him the produce at the proper times."

Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures:

The stone that the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone;

by the Lord has this been done,

and it is wonderful in our eyes?

Therefore, I say to you,

the kingdom of God will be taken away from you

and given to a people that will produce its fruit."

This is the discovery I made about our world this week: Large farms have always been a part of the human existence and there has always been an abundant need for laborers especially to this day. It was no different in the ancient world. Imagine picking grapes all day! Still, even to today grapes and much other produce is

harvested by hand. However, in a fallen world things can go wrong. Like the parable in today's gospel the parable of the tenants has the Lord as the Master and the Master goes away and leases out his vineyard just like many people lease out their farmland today! But when the Master sends his servants to collect his share of the harvest, they kill them. He does this twice. Finally, he sends his son and they kill him also because he is the heir. The tenants are plotting to seize the Vineyard by any means possible because they are greedy. They want to preserve their power and the money that comes from "their vineyard" when it really isn't theirs. The Vineyard is the house of Israel. The tenants are the religious leadership of the Jews: Chief Priests and the Scribes. The servants are the innocent prophets that were killed, notably Jeremiah and John the Baptist. The Son is Jesus, and the master is the Lord. The chief priests and scribes do not pick up on this right away and when Jesus questions them what the master will do about the wicked greedy tenants they respond "He will put those wretched men to a wretched death and lease his vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the proper times." This of course makes good business sense. Why keep people in charge who do not pay their bills or respect truth and authority? Jesus then says that the vineyard will be taken from them and be given to a people that will bear its fruit. This is a foretelling on Jesus' part of the Gentiles who will make up a large part of the Christian Church. As much as things change, they stay the same and it's not hard to imagine the wicked tenants of the parable in the ancient world.

This parable can be applied to our national history. Let's go on a historical journey to see how it applies. In the old south there was much produce that needed to be harvested. As a result, many plantation owners enslaved our African brothers and sisters to do their work. Cotton and tobacco

became the backbone of the southern economy. Yet both were extremely labor intensive and required massive amounts of labor to grow, to harvest, and prepare for market. Education was discouraged by plantation owners because there was “too much work to do.” The reality is discouraging education kept the slaves dependent on their plantation owners. The plantation owners would provide just enough resources for the slaves to make them think they were well taken care of but not enough to give them opportunity: the idea that they could survive without the plantation owner. For if given opportunity to develop their God given talents it could lead to slaves leaving or worse revolting against the plantation owners. So, the Vineyard is the Old South and its plantations. The Master of course is the Lord. The servants were those who brought the truth about slavery. People like Frederick Douglass, The Archbishop of New York: John Hughes and Abraham Lincoln. The tenants are the leaders of the Old south particularly the US senators led by Jefferson Davis. One of the servants who brought the truth about the injustice of slavery in the Old South was Abraham Lincoln. It had become clear to many that enslavement of our fellow man was outright wrong. However, the tenants: The Old Southern senators in particular lay in open revolt against this truth of natural law (that all human beings should be should be free). Their reason purely economic. When the elected servant President Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves as was his duty and obligation before God in Natural Law ultimately, he was shot in the back of the head by a southern coward named Booth. Let’s also not forget the many young men from 10 years old all the way up to 70 years old who went to the south to free the slaves and were kill by the hundred thousand in battle by the troops of the tenants. The disputed Presidential election of 1876 put the icing on the cake. Have you ever wondered how the south became segregated in the first place after the emancipation proclamation? Federal Soldiers had been working

to begin integration in the Old South as a part of Reconstruction. The Old South of course did not approve but they saw their opportunity to again cease control. The presidential election of 1876 was contested and so the election of the president was sent to the House of Representatives as per the constitution in 1877. In the compromise of 1877, the House of Representatives agreed to elect Rutherford B. Hayes as president if all Federal troops were to be removed from the south. The southern representatives agreed to this and the south was again back in the hands of the same old tenants.

Why is all of this this relevant, you might ask? It's not just our history, but I am finding that history is repeating itself before our very eyes. Come let us go on a journey into our contemporary world with the ancient world and our nineteenth century history to guide us. As we go along, what do we see? We find much unrest in certain areas of our country. We notice that the unrest tends to be large urban centers our largest cities. There is burning, looting, killing, and chaos. Yet, why? We ask. These are some of the most brilliant most successful cities in the world? Some of the citizenry feel oppressed. Maybe they in fact are. Now stay with me don't leave the journey just yet it may be interesting what we find. We find many of the people in these cities are our African American and Hispanic brothers and sisters. People working hard in the food service, hospitality, and processing plants trying to make a living for their families doing the necessary labor-intensive work we need to survive. Yet they seem not to be able to make it out of economic poverty and only a few manage to escape. Many remain locked in the inner city. Education is given lip service but the education of the individual is not valued lest they become creative and be able to leave the inner city or the lower economic class. Resources are provided to these same families by their elected officials but only enough to make them think they are happy. Yet true opportunity is not

provided them lest they should leave the inner city. It would seem that as we look around our inner cities is like the vineyard of the parable or the plantations of our past. God is the Master. The tenants are the elected officials. The servants are those who God sends to protect and defend the economically enslaved of the inner city. As we look closely it seems that we have been infected with a new slavery. An economic one. Think about this. The inner city is the plantation, the tenants are its elected leaders, the servants are those who uphold natural law who go to protect the slaves in the name of the master. These are the police. Its eerily similar isn't it. I almost fainted when I discovered this this past week. The tenants of the inner-city plantations have enslaved vast numbers of our population for their own good and for decades now. The people of our inner-city plantations are denied a quality education and are left to think they can only depend on their leaders. I don't know what could look more like slavery. The tenants: the elected leaders of our inner cities, are just like the tenants of the old south! Go look it up! Its scary. So, what should be done with them? They should not be put to a wretched death, we are Christians, but they should be removed from office. As it is prophesied in Pslam 109:8 May his days be few; may another take his office. These dishonest greedy, power, hungry tenets need to be removed. For the stand in league and in the tradition of the elected leaders of the Old south. They will purposefully keep others down to preserve their positions of power while trying to appear as great humanitarians. If you don't believe me all you have to do is go read about the old south and observe what is going on. The first of the innocent servants have now been attempted to be executed. I want you this week to look at the images of the female deputy shot in the jaw in LA with blood streaming down her uniform as she tends to her male partner trying to save him from death. Brothers and sisters, this is a modern day image of Calvary an Innocent man

dying as an innocent woman Mary stands by him. In LA two young, new, law enforcement officers minding their own business looking out for the good of others: Shot! For what? Intimidation just like the Crucifixion of the Son: was for intimidation by the religious leadership. Just like Lincoln was shot to Intimidate the North into giving up reconstruction. All this because the tenants in their mind must preserve their power in the vineyard, the plantation, whatever you want to call it: our inner cities. Brothers and sisters, we have an obligation now just as our predecessors did to free the slaves of our time. One of the keys is the opportunity for more effective education in our inner cities. I'm not sure how this is going to play out. Yet we know that it's happening. We may be standing on the precipice of another civil war. Yet there is no reason to despair we can find hope in the Generosity of the Lord that he has promised all the daily wage of heaven but we must be courageous. We must put aside our personal needs and stick to eternal principles of truth. We must reject the numerous contradictions presented as truth by the tenants they can no longer be trusted. They must be removed. I'd invite you to do a google search on the presidential election of 1876. I'd also ask that you familiarize yourself with two senators from the 1850's Senator Jefferson Davis and Senator Stephen Douglas. It is important that we all understand the long tradition and track record of these tenants because it is quite revealing. God puts us here for the good of each other. And we must call out injustice when we see it. It is important to know what came before so that we don't end up fooled by the "tenants of the vineyard" who are only looking to preserve and advance their economic and political power.

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