

Monday's Gospel: The Murderous Tenants

Gospel for Monday in the 9th Week of Ordinary Time, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mk 12:1-12*)

And Jesus began to speak to them in parables. “A man planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a pit for the winepress and built a tower, and leased it to tenants and went into another country. When the season came, he sent a servant to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. And they took him and beat him and sent him away

empty-handed. Again he sent to them another servant, and they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully. And he sent another, and him they killed. And so with many others: some they beat, and some they killed. He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' And they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. Have you not read this Scripture:

“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?”

And they were seeking to arrest him but feared the people, for they perceived that he had told the parable against them. So they left him and went away.

Commentary

With the parable of the vineyard, Jesus denounces the attitude of the leaders of the people, who refused to accept and even killed the prophets that God sent them; and, above all, he denounces in advance their rejection of the Son of God himself, whom they will throw out of Jerusalem and kill, as the tenants did with the son of the owner of the vineyard.

By extension, the parable not only denounces the behavior of Jesus' contemporaries, but also the indifferent and even hostile attitude with which people can react to the

action of God, who is always solicitous for our good, and who sends those who can help us bear fruit, but whom we may reject because they make us uncomfortable. God in his goodness offers us his grace and care, as the owner did with his vineyard and God with Israel. This requires on our part the good will to want to yield fruits of virtue and holiness, and to take advantage of God's grace and not reject his call to bear fruit.

Although the parable has a tragic tone, Jesus' words also offer a message of hope. As Pope Francis said, "God's disappointment at the wicked behavior of mankind is not the last word. This is the great novelty of Christianity: a God who, even though disappointed by our mistakes and our sins, does not fail to keep his Word, does not give up and, most of all, does not seek vengeance!"^[1]

“My brothers and sisters,” the Pope continued, “God does not avenge himself. God loves, he does not avenge himself. He waits for us to forgive us, to embrace us. Through the ‘rejected stones’ – and Christ is the first stone that the builders rejected – through situations of weakness and sin, God continues to circulate ‘the new wine’ of his vineyard, namely mercy. This is the new wine of the Lord’s vineyard: mercy. There is only one obstacle to the tenacious and tender will of God: our arrogance and our conceit which, at times also becomes violence! Faced with these attitudes where no fruit is produced, the Word of God retains all its power to reprimand and reproach: ‘Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it.’”^[2]

^[1] Pope Francis, Angelus, 8 October 2017.

^[2] Ibid.

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