

Lectionary passages:-

Exodus 20 v1-4 & v7-9;

Isaiah 5 v1-7;

Psalms 80 v7-15;

Philippians 3 v4-14;

Matthew 21 v33-46

We have a farming parable for the day that is celebrated by many as Harvest.

It is a strange subject as we seek to put a spiritual and physical dimension to Harvest.

I remember in the old days of two Sunday services often the morning service was reserved for thanks to God for the physical produce with the youngsters bringing forward fruit and veg in celebration while the evening service sought to emphasise the growth of God's Kingdom.

The parable in Matthew...

This very much follows the story in Isaiah 5 when a landowner takes time to build a vineyard, putting a lot of love and care into it. Built a wall, set up a winepress, then rents it out to tenants.

At harvest time, the Landowner expects to share in the rewards of the crop. He sends his servants to collect the rent, but the tenants will not pay and beat the servants. They go away empty handed.

This happens more than once.

Eventually the man sends his son to collect the rent and get things back onto an even keel; surely they will respect him even if they have not respected the servants who went before.

But no, they kill the son and therefore hope to be able to inherit the vineyard now.

Jesus shows this as a picture of Israel and indeed of the world in which we live.

God created the world, he did his best, see the early part of Genesis when the world and all creation is seen as good, but then God is excluded and discouraged by the people of the world from interfering in their lives. Over the years God sends the prophets to call the human race and especially the nation of Israel back to himself. He wants to work with and share the benefits of human history. To have a relationship with men and women, but as we know from the scriptures those prophets are roundly rejected, many killed, Isaiah for instance was sawn in two!

Eventually God sent his son Jesus who shows love and care, he heals, feeds and blesses all who he meets but for this he is killed, not just by the Jews or the Romans but all of us kill Jesus when we refuse him a place in our lives, in the very lives he gave us and wants to share with us.

Many will have none of it! Are you like that?

The story goes on, telling of how the land owner behaves, he comes to punish those who do not accept his authority and today as we thank God for the blessing of his creation we are called to accept him again into our lives, to allow him to have a place, to acknowledge this world is his.

As are we called to show allegiance to him.

This thought makes many angry, BUT one day God will come to this world and re-establish his kingdom, do we not pray that in the Lord's prayer often?

He will establish a community who will pay the rent who will allow him be the landlord and who will respect the work and effort he has out into the creation we enjoy.

God calls us to serve him, to put him first, to love and honour him with our labours and pray our prayers in faith and hope. To put him back in the picture in a world where God is so often ignored excluded and even assumed not to exist!

God's goodness always calls us to a response, to offer ourselves to Him who gave himself for us, and never to seek to take over as it were to call the shots to run things for us.