

**We again hear another parable from Jesus**

**His parables were meant for those listening to him**

**So he spoke of things they knew**

**Many of them involved fishing, vineyards and parenthood**

**Things we can still relate to as well**

**Because we still fish**

**We grow crops**

**And all of us have parents**

**Most are parents**

**Today's parable of the vineyard has many aspects**

**It speaks to the ancient Israelite community**

**The wild grapes are those that rejected Jesus Christ**

**Those that rejected their covenant with God**

**Tearing up the vineyard and planting new plants**

**That is offering the kingdom to the gentiles**

**But it also speaks to our own hearts**

**How when we sin**

**We are rejecting God**

**We become those wild grapes**

**And how when we enter into a conversion**

**The vineyard of our hearts are torn up**

**Plowed under**

**New plants are the virtues we cultivate**

**Turning back to our heavenly Father**

**These things are part of the human condition**

**They have been with us from the beginning**

**God knows this**

**And He chooses to continue to call us**

**To invite us into a conversion**

**To create natural hearts in us**

**And to remove our stony hearts**

**In our reading from Isaiah, the people of God are on trial**

**And they are found wanting**

**They have been given everything**

**They are God's beloved**

**Yet they chose to turn from His covenant**

**He had chosen a fertile hillside**

**Israel was the Chosen People**

**The choicest vine**

**The Lord did all he could in the vineyard**

**He cultivated the ground, cleared it of stones**

**He kept watch over it**

**He gave the Promised Land to His people**

**He fought for them**

**Giving the richest land for his people**

**But the quality of the harvest was wild grapes**

**So sour you could not even eat the grapes**

**Much less make a quality wine**

**They knew all of this**

**And they rejected his covenant**

**And so Isaiah foretells what will happen to the House of Israel**

**They will become a ruin**

**Overrun and trampled down**

**Because they rejected God's covenant**

**God remains faithful**

**But sometimes we are not very good being friends of God**

**St Paul gives us a lesson being friends of God**

**He knew what it was to be opposed to Him**

**When he persecuted the early Church**

**But Paul heard the voice of the Lord**

**He accepted it and entered into his conversion**

**A conversion he would enter into and live for the rest of his life**

**He tells us whatever is true and honorable**

**Whatever is just and pure**

**Whatever is lovely and gracious**

**Any excellence and worthy of praise**

**Think about these things**

**And continue doing what we learn from him**

**Imitating Christ**

**So his peace will guard our minds and hearts**

**These things will keep anxiety from ruling over us**

**We may still have pain and suffering, as Paul did**

**We may be rejected, as Paul was**

**He was shipwrecked, put in prison and beaten**

**But none of this caused anxiety**  
**Because he was centered on Christ**  
**The same yesterday, today and forever**  
**Paul shows us what it is to be a friend of God**  
**Jesus' followers would have known Isaiah very well**  
**So he gives this old parable a new perspective**  
**This parable was given at a specific time and place**  
**He was speaking to them during Holy Week**  
**After his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem**  
**He had been facing great opposition from the religious leaders**  
**We know that the worst was yet to come**  
**But the people were supporting him**  
**The vines that are planted are our souls**  
**We are his vineyard**  
**The hedges that surround his vineyard are his laws**  
**The commandments, the precepts of the Church**  
**The protection of the angels**  
**We are attached to each other through love**  
**Like many vines growing together**  
**The roots of the plants intertwined in the soil**  
**The shoots of the vines attaching us to our neighbors**  
**At times helping others to grow**  
**At times allowing us to rest when we need it**  
**Then he went on a journey**  
**This journey is God's patience with us**

**At harvest time he sent servants to obtain his harvest**

**They are beaten, stoned and killed**

**These are our sins**

**This is what our sins do to the heart of God**

**But in our pride, we do not see reality**

**Finally, he sends his son**

**And they think, if we kill the heir**

**We will inherit the land**

**Sin had blinded them and affected their right judgment**

**The kingdom is promised to the meek and lowly**

**Not the powerful and haughty**

**To inherit the kingdom,**

**We are called to give up home, family and property**

**These tenants extort the home, family and property of the landowner**

**The son was not sent to punish the tenants**

**But they saw it this way**

**Because that is what they would have done**

**The landowner sends his son as an offer of repentance**

**To call them to conversion**

**So he asks: *what will the landowner do?***

**They respond:**

***He will put those men to a wretched death***

***And lease his vineyard to others***

**Remember, he is speaking to religious leaders after Palm Sunday**

**With this response they pass judgment on themselves**

**The vineyard is here for each of us**

**Planted at our baptism**

**We cultivate it through our actions**

**Not in words alone**

**But how well we live the commandments**

**What is the practice of my faith like?**

**Is it only when convenient?**

**Why is this church packed on Christmas, Easter and Ash Wednesday?**

**There is something many people recognize in their hearts**

**How do we cultivate that when we speak with them?**

**That is what it means to say our vines are interconnected**

**Not only with those that practice their faith in a regular way**

**But also with those that need our support**

**The kingdoms, empires and nations of the world rise and fall**

**When we study why**

**Rarely do they fall from the outside**

**They may be attacked**

**They may suffer some defeats in battles**

**But the ultimate cause of almost every worldly power was from within**

**Nations and peoples turning from God's law, from His covenant**

**God's vineyard will last**

**And we will not be driven out**

**If we are judged not worthy**

**It will be from within**

**Now is the time for each of us to listen to the invitation in our heart**

**Honoring God**

**Respecting His law**

**Respecting marriage between one man and one woman**

**Respecting marital fidelity**

**Learning about and practicing NFP**

**Putting aside contraceptives and the culture of death**

**Protecting all human life**

**Especially the unborn and the elderly**

**Caring for the poor**

**Following St Paul**

**Renouncing anxiety**

**And placing God in the center of everything we have and everything we are**

**So His peace that surpasses all human understanding**

**Will fill our hearts and minds**

**And we can truly become friends with our best friend**