

October 4, 2026
27th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Matthew 21:33-43

Jesus said to the chief priests and 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.

Background:

In last week's Gospel, Jesus told the parable of two sons who were asked to work in their father's vineyard. This week's Gospel directly follows that, as Matthew presents another parable that Jesus addressed to the temple authorities. This parable speaks of a landowner who has personally done the difficult work of setting up the vineyard. It is speculated that the earliest form of this parable may have been simpler, without all the elements it ultimately has as presented by Matthew. Compared to Mark's version, Matthew's includes more detail, and thus makes clear what each element represents.

A basic understanding is that God, represented by the landowner, has generously created all things, and expects each person to fulfill the responsibilities God has bestowed on them. At the same time, the lived experience of the people of Jesus' time was that very few worked on land that was their own. Most labored for landowners, many of whom lived elsewhere. After covering the costs of social and religious taxes, and whatever was necessary to maintain the land's productivity, perhaps 20% of the crop's yielded value was left to sustain the families of the tenants that worked the vineyard. There was an even smaller amount for those who needed to share the proceeds with an absent landowner.

Even in this parable's most original form, Jesus spoke of the care God had provided in creation, and God's trust in the people by letting them be the stewards of God's work. Those in the parable who were sent to collect the rightful owner's portion represent prophets of the Old Testament who point to the coming of God's son. The son who died becomes Jesus, outside of Jerusalem, on the cross. The misguided tenant farmers were the religious leaders of the day.

The present-day reader might wonder where in the parable do we look to find meaning, and God speaking in our present lives. If we truly believe that God is actively at work in our history and our lives, then God is working in the scriptures and the parable as it was originally told by Jesus. God provided meticulous care in the course of creation, and then trusts the people to be the stewards of the work made available to them. God works in our lived reality now, and in our lives as we hear the scripture today. God desires to be present to us, and reminds us that our lives are to reflect God's faithful presence for all.

Reflection Questions:

1. Do you or your family have favorite stories that get told over and over?
2. In the retellings, do you ever find new meaning or new details of the stories that were not apparent earlier? Are you aware of changes in the story, depending on things like who is the teller, or the circumstances in which the story is being told?
3. Have you ever had to ask someone to care for something of yours (house, garden, pet, child) while you were away? Were emotions present within you as you made your request? Did the one you asked fulfill your expectations?
4. The landowner in the parable has done the difficult work of preparing the vineyard. Does the nature of the metaphor give you insight into your role in God's world? How does your life reflect the reality that God is the creator and you have been entrusted with care of creation?
5. Have there ever been times when you acted as if that which has been entrusted to your care belongs to you? Are there also times when your actions express your belief that God is the creator and you are God's steward?
6. Who are your heroes whose lives reflect a respect for God as the creator and that we are to be faithful stewards of God's creation?
7. In the parable, the landowner keeps sending his messengers, and, finally, his own son, to the tenants, even though they are treated cruelly each time. What does it say to you about God's relationship to you?
8. Can you talk to God as the Creator and your role as steward, the gift of creation with which God has blessed you, or some other aspect of this parable that is meaningful for you?

The Gospel background and reflection questions are prepared and distributed by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel, as edited from Reflections authored by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to [:annemarie.lom@gmail.com](mailto:annemarie.lom@gmail.com)

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fscs-calledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click there will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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Excerpts from the readings for October 4, 2026, the Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

My friend had a vineyard on a fertile hillside; he spaded it, cleared it of stones, and planted choice vines. But it yielded wild grapes. Now, judge between me and my vineyard: What more was there to do for my vineyard? Why did it bring forth wild grapes? Here is what I mean to do with it: let it be trampled! I will make it a ruin, overgrown with briars; I will command the clouds not to send rain upon it. The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his cherished plant; he looked for judgment, but see, bloodshed! he looked for justice, but hark, the outcry!

The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel. A vine from Egypt you transplanted; you drove away the nations and planted it. It put forth foliage to the Sea, its shoots as far as the River. Why have you broken down its walls, so that every passer-by plucks its fruit, the boar from the forest lays it waste, and the beasts of the field feed upon it? Once again, O Lord of hosts, look down from heaven, and see; take care of this vine, and protect what your right hand has planted, the son of man whom you yourself made strong. Give us new life, and we will call upon your name. O Lord, if your face shine upon us, we shall be saved.

Brothers and sisters: Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you.

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders: "A landowner planted a vineyard, and dug a wine press in it. 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. He sent other servants, more numerous than the first ones, but they treated them the same way. Finally, he sent his son to them, thinking, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw him, they said to one another, 'This is the heir. Let us kill him and acquire his inheritance.' They seized him 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, "Did you never read in the Scriptures: The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone? Therefore, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit."

Excerpts from Isaiah 5:1-7; Psalm 80:9, 12-16, 19-20; Philippians 4:6-9; and Matthew 21:33-43

Here are the Gospel background and reflection questions for October 4th, as authored by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. In the Gospel from Matthew, Jesus tells the chief priests and elders a parable about tenants who tend a carefully built vineyard while the owner is away. When the owner sends his servants to retrieve his share of the produce, the tenants mistreat and kill the servants. When he then sends his son, they kill him as well. Jesus asks, "What will the owner do when he comes?" and they reply, "He will put these men to death, and lease to tenants who will give him the produce at the proper times."

The other readings also have references to the tending of vineyards, and the resulting produce, or lack thereof, and the benefits of God's mercy, and of making good choices while tenants of God's creations. In the first reading from Isaiah, the owner of a vineyard had taken great care to prepare and plant a vineyard with choicest vines, but it yielded wild grapes. So he means to let it be grazed, trampled, ruined, and overgrown. Isaiah explains, "The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel; he looked for justice, but hark, the outcry!" Psalm 80 proclaims, "A vine from Egypt you transplanted; It put forth its foliage and shoots. Why have you broken down its walls? Once again, O Lord, take care of this vine; give us new life." In the second reading, Paul writes to the Philippians, "In everything, by prayer and petition, make your requests known to God. Keep on doing what you have learned and seen in me. if there is any excellence, and anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." "The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel." This explanation from Isaiah of what the vineyard represents in the first reading gets repeated verbatim as this Sunday's psalm response. The psalm verses are from Psalm 80, which has its own references to vine and vineyard situations. Like the first reading and the psalm, the Gospel also refers to things going wrong, against expectations, with what has been produced in the vineyard. In

the Isaiah reading, when the produce of the vines does not align with the care that went into preparing them, the vineyard is laid to waste. In the Psalm, the vineyard at first flourishes, but then is laid to waste, and this is followed by the plea, "Once again look down and take care of this vine, and protect what your right hand has planted." When the tenants of the Gospel vineyard kill those sent to retrieve the owner's share, "He will put those tenants out and lease his vineyard to tenants who will give him the produce." This much the chief priests and elders understand. At this point, Jesus explains it to them by referring to the verse familiar to them from Psalm 118, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." Then he concludes by including the subsequent verse, "By the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes!"

Joe

> i < May the Word light your way each day!