

**Introduction**

In today's gospel reading, Jesus tells a vineyard parable, which serves as an image of Israel, the prophets' mission, and Christ's death. For Christians, the vineyard also speaks of God's love poured out in the blood of Christ, given to us for the forgiveness of sin. Grafted onto Christ the vine at baptism, we are nourished with wine and bread so that we may share Christ's sufferings and know the power of his resurrection.

**\*CALL TO WORSHIP**

We are created in the image of God.

**We are commanded to love God and one another.**

We are required to do justice, love mercy,  
**and walk humbly with God.**

We are called to follow Jesus.

**In this time of worship, may we remember God's intention for us,  
Christ's call upon us,  
And the Spirit's movement in us. Amen.**

**\*CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who creates, redeems,  
and sustains us and all of creation. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Faithful God, **have mercy on us. We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We turn from your loving embrace and go our own ways. We pass judgment on one another before examining ourselves. We place our own needs before those of our neighbors. We keep your gift of salvation to ourselves. Make us humble, cast away our transgressions, and turn us again to life in you through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

God hears the cries of all who call out in need, and through his death and resurrection, Christ has made us his own. Hear the truth that God proclaims:

Your sins are forgiven in the name of † Jesus Christ. Led by the Holy Spirit, live in freedom and newness to do God's work in the world. **Amen.**

**Prayer of the Day**

Beloved God, from you come all things that are good. Lead us by the inspiration of your Spirit to know those things that are right, and by your merciful guidance, help us to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

## First Reading: Isaiah 5:1-7

*The prophet sings a sad, parable-like love song about the relationship between God and Israel. In this song Israel is compared to a promising vineyard. Despite God's loving care, the vineyard that is Israel has brought forth "wild grapes" of injustice and distress, when fine grapes of justice and righteousness were expected.*

<sup>1</sup>Let me sing for my beloved my love-song concerning his vineyard:  
My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill.

<sup>2</sup>He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines;  
he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it;  
he expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes.

<sup>3</sup>And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah,  
judge between me and my vineyard.

<sup>4</sup>What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it?  
When I expected it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?

<sup>5</sup>And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard.

I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured;  
I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.

<sup>6</sup>I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed,  
and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns;  
I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

<sup>7</sup>For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel,  
and the people of Judah are his pleasant planting;  
he expected justice, but saw bloodshed;  
righteousness, but heard a cry!

## PSALM: Psalm 80:7-15

<sup>7</sup>Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

<sup>8</sup>**You have brought a vine out of Egypt; you cast out the nations and planted it.**

<sup>9</sup>You cleared the ground for it; it took root and filled the land.

<sup>10</sup>**The mountains were covered by its shadow and  
the towering cedar trees by its boughs.**

<sup>11</sup>You stretched out its tendrils to the sea and its branches to the river.

<sup>12</sup>**Why have you broken down its wall, so that all who pass by pluck off its grapes?**

<sup>13</sup>The wild boar of the forest has ravaged it,  
and the beasts of the field have grazed upon it.

<sup>14</sup>**Turn now, O God of hosts, look down from heaven;**

<sup>15</sup>behold and tend this vine; preserve what your right hand has planted.

## SECOND READING: Philippians 3:4b-14

*Paul reviews some of his supposed credentials, which no longer have any bearing in comparison to the right relationship he has been given through the death of Christ. The power of Christ's resurrection motivates him to press on toward the ultimate goal, eternal life with Christ.*

[Paul writes:] <sup>4b</sup>If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup>circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup>as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

<sup>7</sup>Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. <sup>8</sup>More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup>and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. <sup>10</sup>I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup>if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

<sup>12</sup>Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. <sup>13</sup>Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup>I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## \*GOSPEL: Matthew 21:33-46

*Jesus tells a parable to the religious leaders who are plotting his death, revealing that their plans will, ironically, bring about the fulfillment of scripture.*

[Jesus said to the people:] <sup>33</sup>“Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. <sup>34</sup>When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. <sup>35</sup>But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. <sup>36</sup>Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. <sup>37</sup>Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ <sup>38</sup>But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.’ <sup>39</sup>So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. <sup>40</sup>Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” <sup>41</sup>They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.”

<sup>42</sup>Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the scriptures: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes’? <sup>43</sup>Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. <sup>44</sup>The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.”

<sup>45</sup>When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. <sup>46</sup>They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

## Prayers of Intercession

With confidence in God's grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world,  
and all those in need.

*A brief silence.*

Holy God, you call us to work for peace and justice in your vineyard. Refresh the church with your life, that we may bear fruit through work and service. Lord, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

Thank you for the abundant harvest of the earth. Bless and care for those whose hands bring the fruits of the earth to the tables of all who hunger. May we be inspired by your servants who cared deeply for your creation. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Curb the impulses of greed and pride that lead us to take advantage of others. Grant that world leaders (*especially*) seek the fruits of the kingdom for the good and welfare of all people. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Sustain all who suffer with the promise of new life. Assured of your presence, heal our pain and suffering, and equip us to embrace all bodies aching for wholeness of mind, body, and soul. We call to mind those who are struggling today (*especially*). Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all managers in our community and for all who seek employment. Give hope and a future to those who lack meaningful work, those who have been marginalized or abused in the workplace, and those who desire new opportunities. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Thank you for the saints who teach us to live faithfully in your vineyard. May our chorus join theirs until our labor is complete. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Listen as we call on you, O God, and enfold in your loving arms all for whom we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## Offering Prayer

Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. You have set before us these gifts of your good creation. Prepare us for your heavenly banquet, nourish us with this rich food and drink, and send us forth to set tables in the midst of a suffering world, through the bread of life, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

## Blessing

Mothering God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you and lead you into the way of truth and life. **Amen.**

## Dismissal

Go in peace. Remember the poor. **Thanks be to God.**

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