

Matthew 21, 33-46

May I speak in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Our gospel reading today tells of Jesus in conversation with the chief Priests and elders. We need to glance back to v.23 – Jesus is teaching in the Temple and they interrupt Him to ask “By what authority are you doing these things (earlier in Ch, 21 Jesus had cleansed the temple) and who gave you this authority?” In modern parlance, we might ask “Who do You think You are?”

Jesus is telling them and us exactly who He is, He is the Son of God.

Now His audience would be familiar with vineyards having tenants. Large farming estates owned either by foreigners or wealthy Jews were common in Palestine, and the landowners often rented their vineyards out to farmers so that they could attend to their other interests. When the passage reads “beaten, killed, stoned” this reflects the treatment the prophets received at the hands of the Jews throughout the centuries, from Jonah in 810 BC to Malachi in 420 BC, and again Jesus’ audience would know all about the prophets.

So Jesus appears to be comfortably chatting away, talking of well-known scenes and it is possible that His audience were feeling dismissive of Jesus’ words – they had asked Him about spiritual authority and He starts talking about vineyards. On one level.

Jesus tells of how all the servants the landowner sent were treated very badly, all the prophets God sent were treated very badly. So finally, God sent His Own Son, V. 38 |But when the tenants saw the Son, they said to themselves,” This is the heir. Come let us kill him and have his inheritance.” This is the heir. They

recognized the heir, they recognized the Messiah. There are over 40 prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah in the Old Testament, they were looking out for Him.

Let us kill him and have his inheritance. We can see some faulty reasoning here. I haven't been able to find one example of a wealthy landowner dying without an heir and all his assets being distributed to his workforce.

Jesus asks His audience what will happen to tenants when the landowner returns, and they answer straightaway, decisively, no need to go 50/50 or ask a friend. It appears that landowners sacking their tenants for unsatisfactory tenantry was a regular occurrence.

Then Jesus taken them from the parable, to the Psalms, Ps. 118 v 22 to be precise, and from the psalms to coming face to face with themselves.....” The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.” V. 45 tells us “When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parable, they perceived that He was talking about them.”

Now, on Youtube and Facebook, we may hear numerous preachers telling us all we need to do is to get close to Jesus, speak to Him every day, sometimes throughout the day, and everything will be wonderful, our aches and pains will vanish, our depression and anxiety will be a distant memory, our bank balance will be forever in the black, and so on. Don't misunderstand me, it is good to always be aware of Jesus in our lives, it is a very good discipline to pray daily, Jesus IS our healer, Isaiah 53, v.5 tells us “By His stripes, we WERE healed,” past tense, our healing has already happened, but of the 50 names or titles of Jesus in the Bible, nowhere is He called “Prozac.” Jesus Christ did not suffer and die on the cross for our immediate physical comfort.

When the chief priests and Pharisees approached Jesus, He didn't say, “Come back when you have learned some manners, “He didn't say,

“Well, of course, I could tell you, but you are not capable of understanding the great work I am doing” They got the truth. Jesus says of Himself in John 14 v 6 “I am the way, the truth, and the life “They didn’t necessarily like the answer, but they got the truth. We have other examples in Scripture of people talking to Jesus and not getting what they want from Him. Martha, in Luke 10, 38-42 tells Jesus to tell her sister to help her, Jesus not only doesn’t, He tells Martha she has her priorities wrong for asking. An unnamed man in Luke 12, v 13-14 cries out to Jesus to tell his brother to divide his inheritance with him – Jesus refuses point blank.

We need to be discerning with the information we receive. Of course it’s fine to listen to a sermon on YouTube or Facebook, provided we check their comments and opinions with the Bible. One viewpoint I have come across more than once is “If your prayers are not being answered, or not answered in the way you want (basically, if you haven’t got customer satisfaction) then it is unconfessed sin that is stopping your prayers from being fruitful “and with our un-renewed minds we might think that’s fair. We may expect the person in front of the camera to be more knowledgeable than we are, we may have had to earn things in childhood and experienced our belongings being confiscated for any reason. We may believe we have to earn Gods love. We cannot. God’s love is given freely. Recorded in all four gospels we find Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, in extreme stress, He did not want to experience the agony of crucifixion; there was no sin in Him, and, Jesus, Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, did not get His prayer answered in the way He wanted.

So we see how reading and studying our Bibles will save us from the error of thinking of Jesus, maybe unconsciously, as a celestial vending machine.

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C S Lewis, Susan is talking to Mr. Beaver about Aslan, and she discovers he is a lion, when she

thought he was a man. Alarmed, she asks if he is safe. Mr. Beaver replies, “Safe? Whoever said anything about safe? Course he isn’t safe, but he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you”

And that is one of Jesus’ titles in the Bible, He is The King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords.

Alleluia.

Amen.