

Homily100420

GOD'S VINEYARD. THE EARTH. THIS COUNTRY. OUR HOMES.

Isaiah the prophet lived about seven hundred years before Christ. He tells a simple story of a friend who lavished his time and attention on making the very best vineyard. After all his effort and after planting the best grapes he came to receive the harvest of grapes. They were sour. Not fit to be eaten. Not fit to become wine. He was so disappointed. He had done everything. The prophet tells the story to the people of his own day. The point is: the vineyard is the people of Israel. The friend is God. Despite all the Lord had done, they did not trust or obey or live his way. They did not become choice grapes or fine wine. What they had become was selfish. Sour grapes.

Jesus tells a very similar story in Matthew's gospel today. Except here the vineyard owner entrusts his vineyard to others to work the vines and produce a harvest. When he sends his representatives to receive his proper share of the produce of the vineyard, they are beaten and even killed. More than once. Then the owner sends his beloved son. He is thinking they will respect this one most of all. They kill him. They are thinking that with the heir out of the way, the vineyard itself will become theirs. What they too had become was selfish. More sour grapes.

My friends, we can hear these two stories about people who lived two thousand seven hundred years ago or two thousand years ago. But that misses the point. What is God's word trying to say to us today? What is the vineyard, for us listening today? Is it our earth? Our planet? And how have we been treating it? Is it our country? And how have we been living the values of our homeland especially in our own time? Is the vineyard our home? How have we been living the virtues of family life? It is the Lord who has made our earth and placed us on it. It is Our Lord who has fashioned our country and allowed us to live here. It is Our Lord who has given us the gift of life and the capacity to create a home. How are we living the virtues of a moral life?

I believe that we will never again see a year like 2020. It is not over yet. In one month we have a presidential election. That election is about leadership at the national and international level. It is vitally important and our country is so divided. We all know this. We are all very aware of this. But there are some dangers we are not yet seeing. One of them is this. We begin to think that whether our world, our vineyard, is cared for depends mostly on who the president is. We begin to think that whether our country is moral and good depends mostly on who the president is. We begin to think that whether our homes are moral and virtuous places depends mostly on who the president is. But in our heart of hearts we know that this way of thinking is not quite true. As important as the president is. As important as leadership is.

In our heart of hearts, we know that what we do makes such a difference. How we are makes such a difference. We know that if we cooperate with God's grace and care for our earth, then the vineyard will yield a rich harvest. Otherwise, not. We know that if we who live here, live the moral way of Our Lord, then our country will be good. Otherwise not. We know that if,

by the grace of Christ, we live a virtuous life, and teach our children how to live, then our homes will be safe havens. Otherwise not.

My friends, God has given us all the grace and help we need. God continues to do so. But whether we are cooperating with that grace, that depends on each of us. God is clear in what he has created and what he is doing to recreate the face of this earth. We can either accept what God has revealed and live it. Or we can seek to substitute something of our own making and live that. But THAT will not yield a harvest. THAT will yield wild grapes. More sour grapes. How do I know this? Look at how we have been living on our earth, in our country, in our homes these past fifty years. I submit to you we have forsaken the way of the Lord. We have given into immorality. We have settled for mediocrity. We have failed to step up to safeguard what is true and beautiful and good and holy. We have begun to think it is somebody else's responsibility. Wild grapes. Sour grapes. We don't even have to look around. They are everywhere. Nationally. Politically. Domestically. Personally. Too often.

Sometimes we sing the Hymn: Let There Be Peace On Earth. It is a beautiful song and one of my favorites. Sometimes I have to stop singing it because of the emotion inside of me. And then there is that final line: Let there be peace on earth—and let it begin with me. Yes. With all that Christ has done and is doing, now—let it begin with me. With you. With us. Even more than with who's president.

May the Lord bless us all today and give us his peace.