

Column for October 4, 2020
27th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Matthew: 21:33-43

Before we reflect on the Gospel for the 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, it is important to recall the context in which it was written. We mark the death of Jesus Christ at 33 AD and we know that Matthew's Gospel was written about 40 years later and relies heavily on the Gospel of Mark. Scripture scholars tell us that, at Matthew's time, a huge issue faced the growing followers of the Way—how to integrate the Gentiles into the community of believers. Were they to be circumcised? Didn't they have to follow the full prescriptions of Jewish law? On one level, through Matthew, we hear Jesus speaking to the Jewish leadership, the chief priests and the elders, and they know full well what he is talking about—the Gentiles are the stones that the builders rejected who are as precious as cornerstones.

We see again in this gospel the effectiveness of Jesus' parables because his teachings are for listeners of all times and they all, ultimately, pertain to doing the will of the Father to gain the kingdom of heaven. Essentially, doing God's will means producing good fruit. And, the work of modern day followers of Jesus is to produce that good fruit.

Our liturgical readings follow certain cycles, and it is amazing how this today's reading from Matthew, selected for the fall, is timed perfectly. What we doing today? Raking leaves and preparing gardens in anticipation of spring growth. Reviewing the coming end of the calendar year and the end of the liturgical year, reporting on our good fruit, and identifying areas for future growth. Returning our presidential ballots and ending an election year that has been the most strident, discourteous, and unprincipled in the history of our country. As disciples, we hope our votes will contribute to the fruits of fraternal charity, justice, and peace.

Overall, the message of the gospel today is a call for us to become servants of the harvest producing good fruit within our families, our churches, our businesses, our schools, our neighborhoods, and our networks. We are clearing all those landscapes so that we can better grow in obedience to God our Father and cultivate the kingdom of God, now and in eternity.

Dr. Rosemary Murphy