

Read

Isaiah 5:1-7

Psalms 80:9, 12, 13-14,
15-16, 19-20

Philippians 4:6-9

Matthew 21:33-43



REFLECTION

In today's Gospel, we can understand the landowner to represent God and the tenants as representing the sinful nature of humanity. The tenants steal the landowner's produce for themselves and beat or kill those who come to gather the landowner's produce. They represent the selfish, greedy, cruel, and sometimes even violent nature that can be seen in our world. The landowner tries sending his own son (think about God sending Jesus into the world) to reason with the tenants, thinking that the tenants will respect the landowner's own flesh and blood. But even the landowner's son is not safe. This story is a dark reminder of the human tendency to turn away from God and focus on our own desires. Sadly, there are a lot of examples we can look at in today's world where these sinful tendencies are present. It might feel overwhelming to think about what we would have to do to stop or at least slow down the evil in the world, but as Jesus teaches us, we must try.

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How does God's kingdom look different from the world we live in?
- ❖ How can our actions produce good fruit that transforms the world?

LIVING THE WORD

Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 8, 2023

ACTION

Choose one injustice in the world and do some research on it this week. Maybe it is about the rights of workers of large corporations. Or maybe it has to do with racial injustices. Or you could research the perils that refugees face. Find a topic that interests you. Then learn about the issues. It is important to know the facts so that we can come up with more effective ways of resolving the problem. After learning about one issue, write down a few ways you can make a difference in your daily life and plan to do them over the next few weeks.



"Make a Difference"

—Danny Gokey <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOclXz4bzqM>



October 8, 2023

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #139A

Isaiah 5:1-7

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Philippians 4:6-9

Matthew 21:33-43

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

One lesson that we can take from today's Gospel passage and the parable of the tenants is that greed turns our hearts bitter and gets in the way of doing God's will. Jesus tells the parable to the chief priests and elders to help them see how they have turned away from serving God and are too focused on serving their own interests. In doing so, they have rejected God and have given away their faith. In today's reflection and activity, the teens are encouraged to consider how they can serve others and act with generosity in response to God's blessings in their own lives.

Q FOCUS: *Christians are called to give to others in generosity.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

St. John XXIII, born as Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, was from Italy. He died in 1963 and we celebrate his feast day on October 11. He was elected pope in 1958. One of the most memorable and influential legacies he leaves behind is calling the Second Vatican Council, which began in 1962 and continued on after John XXIII passed away. This council helped the Church engage with the modern world and called for a renewal of the faith. He also worked diligently to bring about peace in a troubled world. He was canonized as a saint by Pope Francis in 2014.

Church Teaching Connection

"In any age, those who have authority, any authority, also in the Church, in the People of God, may be tempted to work in their own interests instead of those of God. And Jesus says that true authority is when one performs service; it is in serving, not exploiting others. The vineyard is the Lord's, not ours. Authority is a service, and as such should be exercised for the good of all and for the dissemination of the Gospel. It is awful to see when people who have authority in the Church seek their own interests" (Pope Francis, Angelus Message, October 4, 2020).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 21:33-43

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

Jesus said to the chief priests and the 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."

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

We live in a world where people are so used to getting what they want that we don't even recognize all the times that greed takes over our hearts. Jesus is again interacting with the religious leaders in today's Gospel passage. His parable illuminates the inner workings of their hearts. There is a landowner who prepared his land to turn a profit and then hired tenants to run its growth and production. After being away for a while, he sent his servants to collect the profits for him land.

Imagine what that must have been like for the tenants. They had spent a great deal of time working the land, day in and day out, caring for the fruit they were harvesting. They put great effort into this vineyard, and now the owner was wanting his profits when he didn't do any of the physical labor.

- What are some things that young people might take for granted or feel that they are entitled to?
- What are some reactions a person might have if they don't get what they think they deserve?

Instead of remembering that the land and its profit did not belong to them and that the owner put his own money and work into preparing the land, they thought they were entitled to everything and greed took over their hearts and actions. This caused them to act violently. When the owner's servants show up to collect, the tenants beat them and murdered them. As a last resort, the landowner sent his son to get the profits. Knowing he was the heir only fueled their greed, leading to another death.

This is an extreme example of how greed can turn someone's heart, but it can still teach us about our lives today. Our culture focuses strongly on what we want and what we can get. From a young age we are often asked, "What do you want for your birthday? What do you want for Christmas?" These questions can give us the belief that we should get whatever we want. Too often, we forget that we are called to be other-focused and not me-focused. Jesus teaches us to love our neighbors as ourselves.

- For you, what does being focused on others look like in practice?

In the Gospel today, the tenants were only focused on what they wanted, not how their actions would affect others. Are there times in your life when you were more focused on yourself rather than helping others? Jesus knows that this is deeply rooted in the hearts of the chief priests and the elders. He knows that this is something they struggle with but that they will not admit. Greed never leads to generosity. Rather, it will break down a soul that was made for life, love, and kindness. The religious leaders were given the responsibility of leading others to lives of faith, but for many of them, their actions rejected God's way and only served their own interests. We are called to consider how God has blessed us in our lives and the way we can share those blessings with others. We are also called to share with others the Good News that we have heard about Jesus Christ.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 42.

Being just and others-focused leads to a generous heart.

When we submit to greedy ways, we need to ask for forgiveness.

God will always provide for all your needs.

Act on the Word

Be for Others

For this activity, you will need paper and pencils and a copy of the "Prayer for Generosity" by St. Ignatius of Loyola. You can find this online.

Ask the teens to think of a couple of people in their lives that they could quietly bless over the next week. The goal of this activity is to help them be others-focused without getting recognition for the blessing they are to those people. Encourage them to think of one person a day to be generous toward. Acts of generosity could include things like showing extra kindness to someone, paying for the person behind them in the drive-thru, helping someone at a practice they are attending, helping a parent with a chore without being asked, doing a kind deed for a neighbor, or helping a sibling with homework. If teens need more suggestions, the whole group can brainstorm

ideas together. Then the young people should write down what their action plan for the week is or add them as reminders in their phones. Remind the teens that serving others is what Christ calls us to, and hearts are transformed as we choose to follow Christ's example.

Once everyone is finished writing down their plans, close the activity by praying St. Ignatius' "Prayer for Generosity" that you prepared ahead of time. Have the teens repeat each line after you.

Closing Prayer

O Lord,
your blessings are many
and your grace fills the world.
Yet, we hold fast to our meager possessions,
and in doing so, deny others their daily bread.
Open our hands and unleash our
stores of kindness and love,
so that your love may be shared with all.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.