

1. Read (Seek) — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

2. Meditate (Find) — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

3. Pray (Ask) — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

4. Contemplate (Taste) — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence. **How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

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[1] Catechism of the Catholic Church 755

[2] Hernandez, In Conversation with God 5, 28.1

[3] Navarree Bible, Gospel of Matthew pg. 143

[4] St. Ambrose, Commentary on St. Luke's Gospel, 20, 9

Quick Connect

What is the Gospel saying? Matthew 21:33-43 — Pg. 1

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What is God saying to you through this passage? Page 4

Gospel Reading – Matthew 21:33-43 – Roman Missal

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."

Spiritual Reading – Office of Readings

From the Pastoral Guide by Saint Gregory the Great, pope

Let the pastor be discreetly silent, and to the point when he speaks

A spiritual guide should be silent when discretion requires and speak when words are of service. Otherwise he may say what he should not or be silent when he should speak. Indiscreet speech may lead men into error and an imprudent silence may leave in error those who could have been taught. Pastors who lack foresight hesitate to say openly what is right because they fear losing the favor of men. As the voice of truth tells us, such leaders are not zealous pastors who protect their flocks, rather they are like mercenaries who flee by taking refuge in silence when the wolf appears. The Lord reproaches them through the prophet: *They are dumb dogs that cannot bark.* On another occasion he complains: *You did not advance against the foe or set up a wall in front of the house of Israel, so that you might stand fast in battle on the day of the Lord.* To advance against the foe involves a bold resistance to the powers of this world in defense of the flock. To stand fast in battle on

the day of the Lord means to oppose the wicked enemy out of love for what is right. When a pastor has been afraid to assert what is right, has he not turned his back and fled by remaining silent? Whereas if he intervenes on behalf of the flock, he sets up a wall against the enemy in front of the house of Israel. Therefore, the Lord again says to his unfaithful people: *Your prophets saw false and foolish visions and did not point out your wickedness, that you might repent of your sins.* The name of the prophet is sometimes given in the sacred writings to teachers who both declare the present to be fleeting and reveal what is to come. The word of God accuses them of seeing false visions because they are afraid to reproach men for their faults and thereby lull the evildoer with an empty promise of safety. Because they fear reproach, they keep silent and fail to point out the sinner's wrongdoing. The word of reproach is a key that unlocks a door, because reproach reveals a fault of which the evildoer is himself often unaware. That is why Paul says of the bishop: *He must be able to encourage men in sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.* For the same reason God tells us through Malachi: *The lips of the priest are to preserve knowledge, and men shall look to him for the law, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.* Finally, that is also the reason why the Lord warns us through Isaiah: *Cry out and be not still; raise your voice in a trumpet call.* Anyone ordained a priest undertakes the task of preaching, so that with a loud cry he may go on ahead of the terrible judge who follows. If, then, a priest does not know how to preach, what kind of cry can such a dumb herald utter? It was to bring this home that the Holy Spirit descended in the form of tongues on the first pastors, for he causes those whom he has filled, to speak out spontaneously.

The Vineyard – Lesson and Discussion

“There was a landowner who planted a vineyard”

What is the vineyard? The vineyard is Israel, the promise land given by God to His chosen people. The vineyard is also a symbol of the Church today. The vineyard has been handed over by God to the Church who believes in the Son who was crucified, died, and rose from the dead. “The Church is a cultivated field, the tillage of God... That land, like a choice vineyard, has been planted by the heavenly cultivator. Yet the true vine is Christ who gives life and fruitfulness to the branches, that is, to us, who through the Church remain in Christ, without whom we can do nothing.”[1]

Why a Vineyard? “Palestine was a land of vineyards. The prophets of the Old Testament returned again and again to this popular image of the chosen people. Israel is the vineyard of God, the work of the Lord, the joy of his heart.”[2]

As we see in this Sunday's readings the image of a vineyard is throughout the scriptures Old Testament and New.

Genesis 9:20 – “Now Noah, a man of the soil, was the first to plant a vineyard”.

Deuteronomy 22:9 – You shall not sow your vineyard with two different kinds of seed; if you do, its produce shall become forfeit, both the crop you have sown and the yield of the vineyard.”

1 Kings 21:1 – “Some time after this, as Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel next to the palace of Ahab, king of Samaria.” (**It is recommended to read this whole story 1Kgs 21:1-29 because it tells the whole story of what happens when Ahab takes the vineyard by killing Naboth.*)

Proverbs 31:16 – “She picks out a field to purchase; out of her earning she plants a vineyard.”

Song of Songs 1:6 – “Do not stare at me because I am swarthy, because the sun has burned me. My brothers have been angry with me; they charged me with the care of the vineyards: my own vineyard I have not cared for.” (*swarthy* means tanned by the sun for working hard in the vineyard. The vineyard is Israel and the the Lord is the Lover.)

Isaiah 5:1 – “Let me now sing of a my friend, my friend's song concerning his vineyard. My friend had a vineyard on a fertile hillside;” (*from the First Reading. May be good to read the 1st reading again.*)

Isaiah 27:2 – “On that day- The pleasant vineyard, sing about it!”

Matthew 21:33 – “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.” (*Part of the Gospel Reading today. If you did not read the Gospel Reading before this lesson, we encourage you to read it again before continuing.*)

1 Corinthians 9:7 – “Who ever serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating its produce? Or who shepherds a flock without using some of the milk from the flock?”

Who is the householder? The householder is God the Father. He is the creator of all things. Here, Jesus uses the parable to show that the Father has prepared a place for His people to live, work, and rest.

Who are the tenants? The tenants are the Israelites namely, the priests, scribes and elders. “The owner's absence makes it clear that God really did entrust Israel to its leaders; hence their responsibility and the account he demands of them.”[3]

Who are the servants? The servants were the prophets whom God sends from time to time. We see the persecution of the prophets. Jesus speaks of how the Israelites welcomed the servants by beating, killing, and stoning.

Who is the son? The son is clearly Jesus. Jesus is the beloved son of the Father who was sent to bring back the good fruit. The servants expected to gain power and be masters of the vineyard by killing the son. They wanted the son's inheritance. This sin is utter stupidity for by rejecting and killing the son they lose everything. Jesus foretells his passion and death in this parable when he says, “And they took him and cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him.” (Mat. 21:29) The Israelites took Jesus out of Jerusalem and crucified Him on Golgotha.

What is the hedge represent? Saint Ambrose says, “The hedge is meant to represent divine protection for the vineyard against spiritual predators...”[4] God has put great care in preparing this vineyard, His Church and wishes to protect us from the evils of the world, the flesh, and the devil. All those who try to attack will be hindered. This is also why the parable speaks of there being a watchtower as well. All are called to keep watch against any attack on the Church.