



SUNDAY 8 OCTOBER 2023

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

The Parishes of: Bishop Auckland || Newton Aycliffe & Shildon || Willington
Crook, Tow Law & Wolsingham || Tudhoe || Coundon, Ferryhill & Windlestone

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

27th Sunday of the Year (A) : Matthew 21: 33-43

The man told me he'd got to the point where he'd sit watching rubbish on television well into the early hours, usually drinking and smoking. 'I was just filling in time. I was aimless. I didn't have any plans. I'd lost belief in myself and was unsure if I ever had any'.

Sitting in church one day, something he heard got through to him. The story of Jesus was challenging but it came across differently that morning. 'My life of apathy, failures and damage was real', he said, 'But I chanced to believe that Jesus met and ate with many people like me - and I was accepted. It gave me the motivation to start all over again'.

I've heard stories like this over the years and known people who've come to understand—and appreciate personally, because that's the difference—that God's power and welcome is seen most clearly in the middle of human failure. Once you've seen this, the words of Scripture we've heard before come alive in new ways. 'My grace is enough for you: my power is at its best in weakness' (*Corinthians 12:9*). 'What proves that God loves us is that Christ died for us while we were still sinners' (*Romans 5: 8-9*) and a range of other messages that have been there ages but begin to speak to the heart like never before.

Today's Gospel talks of people taking over and commandeering a vineyard as their own. They've stolen and kept the produce for themselves, killing rightful opposition. When Jesus told the story it had very pointed reference to the religious leaders of his time who instead of serving others, assumed a control that benefited themselves. This was a cruel travesty of God's intentions.

How may it help us today? The Lord came to set us free, to care for the earth and its peoples. Governments, multinational companies and even Church authorities can act as if God's creation belongs to them for their own benefit, seeing themselves as the lords and masters of ordinary people. Jesus teaches a very different lesson. We are to receive, welcome and spread God's love and mercy to everyone. No earthly outfit owns it or is the gatekeeper of God's largesse. 'It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit, fruit that will last', says Jesus (*John 15:8 and 16*). It's how we express being disciples.

The fruit we bear describes God working through us, doing what we can to love one another, to assert the inestimable worth of every living being. It's no one's right to curtail this. It's the joy of God to see everyone flourish. 'I have come so that you may have life and have it to the full'. (*John 10:10*). We all share in the harvest. Maybe raise a glass and start again?



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ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP

A fruitful exchange

Mutual assistance between countries proves enriching for each. A country that moves forward while remaining solidly grounded in its original cultural substratum is a treasure for the whole of humanity. We need to develop the awareness that nowadays we are either all saved together or no one is saved. Poverty, decadence and suffering in one part of the earth are a silent breeding ground for problems that will end up affecting the entire planet. If we are troubled by the extinction of certain species, we should be all the more troubled that in some parts of our world individuals or peoples are prevented from developing their potential and beauty by poverty or other structural limitations. In the end, this will impoverish us all.

Fratelli Tutti—para 137