

MORNING MEDITATION

Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

**Silence, stillness and Serenity help us reach
the depths of truth, goodness and love.**

Isaiah 5:1-7

In this excerpt, we have Isaiah's "song of the vineyard" written in the form of a ballad. Isaiah, calling God his friend, portrays God in a loving and intimate relationship with his vineyard, the house of Israel. God is a gracious friend. His generosity is beyond comprehension. He has provided everything for his vineyard – cleared the ground, made a wall, built a watch tower, hewed out a winepress – all that is needed. But the vineyard, God's people, did not become fruitful. The song sings of the disappointment of the friend of the vineyard.

Be gracious as God is gracious!

Psalms 80

This Psalm begins with "Joseph" praying to the shepherd of Israel. "Joseph" here refers to the northern tribes, taken into exile by the Assyrians, of which Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh are mentioned in the second verse of the Psalm. So it is a group of poor exiles from the north who are represented in prayer in this Psalm. Remember, exile began about 721 years before Christ. Psalm 80:1-3 is their prayer to God whom they knew as the "Shepherd of Israel", just as David did (Psalm 23).

These exiles are making a bold, but trusting and prayerful response to their experience. Moving and powerful words are used by the Psalmist – Stir up thy might; Restore us; let your face shine!! Then they tell their Shepherd God how heartbroken they are: how long are you going to treat us this way, giving us tears, the scorn of neighbors and the laughter of the enemies for food and drink?!!! Restore us God, they prayed.

We are using only the second part of the Psalm in the Liturgy today (80:8-19). This is the parable of the Vineyard. It is a theological interpretation of the exile, in parable. The parable also alludes to the fact that what is described has happened again and again in history. This part of the Psalm begins with the remembrance of God's redemptive acts at Exodus as the basis of all other acts of God in behalf of His people. Great Prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea had described God as the Vinedresser and Israel as his favorite vineyard. Jesus spoke of himself as the vine and His father as the Vinedresser. The parable tells the story of the vine as it grew and developed. Then it describes the destruction of the vineyard by foreign armies (12-13) and prays for restoration.

This is a beautiful and inspiring Psalm, rich in meaning and carrying within it theology, salvation history and spirituality. Pray the whole Psalm when you have chance.

**A vine from Egypt you planted;
You drove away the nations and planted it.
It put forth its foliage to the Sea,
Its shoots as far as the river.**

Philippians 4:6-9

Paul encouraged the Philippian converts, "Rejoice in the Lord always!" and again, "Rejoice!" Because "The Lord is near"! Our belief in the nearness of our God should remove all fears and anxieties and bring us true and abiding peace. Paul was in prison and the Philippian converts were about to experience the pain of persecution. Paul exhorted them to rejoice and he exhorts us today to nurture authentic joy amid the pain of war, car-bombings, terrorist threats and attacks, poor leadership, clergy scandal, etc. Paul's reason for joy is "The Lord is near".

Faith in the nearness of God should not only make us rejoice, but should enable us to cope with anxiety. Paul encouraged his readers and us today not waste time fretting or worrying. Instead, channel all energies into prayer, with gratitude. Paul says that those who call upon God in grateful prayer, will be empowered to endure anxiety..... they will know God's peace, which surpasses all understanding.

Mathew 21:33-43

This Parable of the tenant farmers teaches us many things:

- that we are trusted stewards - reflect on being good, faithful and trusted stewards of God's gifts.
- that we are trusted to cultivate and tenderly care for God's gifts - reflect on how you have been appreciating, cultivating and tenderly caring for your gifts.
- that our God has Graciously gifted us with all that is necessary for our life and mission - reflect on the "Graciousness" of God; reflect on your own need to be gracious in your ways.
- that our God is patient and compassionate – reflect on being patient and compassionate in all your relationships.
- that abuse of our gifts and talents brings us disaster - reflect on what happens

when you abuse your gifts and talents and those of others.

Saint of the Day, October 4 - St. Francis of Assisi and 11 other saints are remembered this day.

Francis was born in Assisi, Italy in 1182. A man who loved pleasure, fine clothes and all that wealth could offer, renounced his wealth and became one of the most extraordinary saints of the Middle Ages. Francis listened to the voice that called and said, "repair my house, which is falling into ruin".

Francis ended up repairing (renewing) not a small chapel, but the "Church". Francis moved from the glory of wealth to the glory of poverty. He celebrated the unity of creation, "harmony" in the universe. The beauty of creation filled him with joy. Everything that God created was brother and sister to him. He treated everything with "reverence". He died on October 3, 1226 in Assisi, Italy and was canonized on July 16, 1228 by Pope Gregory IX.

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