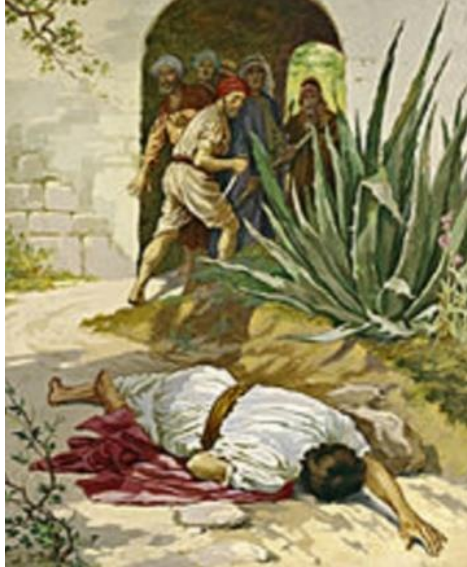


**Christ the King—St. Stephen
Scripture Reflection
27th Sunday of Ordinary Time
2026—A Cycle**



What do I see?

In this weekend's gospel (Matthew 31: 23ff), Jesus describes the horror of greed running amuck in a person's life. "When the farmhands saw the [landowner's] son arrive, they rubbed their hands in greed. 'This is the heir! Let's kill him and have it all for ourselves.' They grabbed him, threw him out, and killed him." Though it may not be fun, let's do a personal examen on this theme.

When have I caught myself acting mostly out of personal interest or pride, to the detriment of another person?

It certainly wouldn't have ended in multiple murders like this weekend's gospel reading, but it might have damaged someone's self-esteem and quality of life.

Image: [The Bible in Pictures for Little Eyes](#) by [Kenneth N. Taylor](#).

Opening Prayer

Inspired by the Laborers in the Vineyard Parable (Matthew 20)

Heavenly Father,

I count it as a privilege to serve you...

so help me always to be content in my service.

I know that I do not deserve all that you give me...

especially the joy that will come my way in eternity.

Help me not to compare or be envious of the wages of others.
I easily forget you are always fair and generous.
I cannot see what others experience as they serve you.
I cannot see their inner conflicts or struggles.
Nor can they see mine.
In the end... I need to trust you...
and know that all that I have from you is grace.
Keep me ever mindful of your goodness and love.
Amen

Source: Prayer found on [David Kosobucki's](#) website

Scripture Readings

Isaiah 5: 1-7 “When I expected good grapes, why did I get bitter grapes?”

Psalms 80: 9, 12-16, 19-20 “God, God-of-the-Angel-Armies, come back! Smile your blessing smile.”

Philippians 4: 6-9 “Don’t fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray.”

Matthew 21: 33-43 “There was once a man, a wealthy farmer, who planted a vineyard.”

Introduction to the 27th Sunday of Ordinary Time

This weekend’s Scriptures center around a consistent pattern over the past few weekends—*vineyard* themes and images. The liturgists who designed the order of scripture readings might have had in mind that September is harvest time in the northern hemisphere. Let’s follow this “vineyard thread.”

In our first reading, the Prophet Isaiah spoke in the voice of a woman in love... “I’ll sing a ballad to the one I love, a love ballad about his vineyard. ‘The one I love had a vineyard, a fine, well-placed vineyard.’” No matter how hard her loved one worked to till his soil and plant his vineyard, the grapes soured on the vine. Isaiah compares this story to the Israelites, nurtured by Yahweh’s love but failing to persevere in their love for Yahweh.

We’ve spent the last few liturgical weekends reflecting, one after another, on Matthew’s telling of Jesus’ vineyard stories. Those of us who live in the vicinity of wine-growing regions probably have images of vineyards and the men and women who own and work in them. This week, Jesus tells a personal story that starts in joy but ends in murder. Let’s take his message to heart as a cautionary tale for ourselves.

Reading from the Book of Isaiah (5: 1-7)

“I’ll sing a ballad to the one I love, a love ballad about his vineyard: ‘The one I love had a vineyard, a fine, well-placed vineyard. He hoed the soil and pulled the

weeds and planted the very best vines. He built a lookout and built a winepress. Yes, a vineyard to be proud of. He looked for a vintage yield of grapes, but for all his pains he got garbage grapes.'

"Now listen to what I'm telling you, you who live in Jerusalem and Judah. What do you think is going on between me and my vineyard? Can you think of anything I could have done to my vineyard that I didn't do? When I expected good grapes, why did I get bitter grapes?

"Well now, let me tell you what I'll do to my vineyard. I'll tear down its fence and let it go to ruin. I'll knock down the gate and let it be trampled. I'll turn it into a patch of weeds, untended, uncared for—thistles and thorns will take over. I'll give these orders to the clouds. 'Don't rain on that vineyard, ever!'

"Do you get it? The vineyard of God-of-the-Angel-Armies is the country of Israel. All the men and women of Judah are the garden he was so proud of. He looked for a crop of justice and saw them murdering each other. He looked for a harvest of righteousness and heard only the moans of victims."

Personal Reflection

Graphically describing a failed vineyard crop, Isaiah actually charted Israel's fall from grace. He took aim at the royal family, who failed to carry out their responsibilities, thereby dragging the people down with them.

Through the (original) prophet Isaiah, Yahweh vocalized a poignant love song expressing the tender story of Yahweh's creative love for the people of Israel. It is also a song of tender lament about unrequited love caused by Israel's recurring cycles of fidelity and sin. Isaiah knew this well. He encountered Yahweh's both tender and terrifying love.

— *What "song" do I hear in my heart today about someone I dearly love? Is it one of deep affection or bitter dissatisfaction with the way his or her life is going? Or perhaps both?*

Psalm 80 (9, 12-16, 19-20)

A plea for the return of God's favor. Composed by singer and musician [Asaph](#), a [Levite](#) appointed by David when he brought the [Ark of the Covenant](#) into Jerusalem.

The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

Your vine ranged west to the Sea, east to the River.

So why do you no longer protect your vine?

Trespassers pick its grapes at will;

Wild pigs crash through and crush it,

and the mice nibble away at what's left.

The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

God-of-the-Angel-Armies, turn our way!
Take a good look at what's happened
and attend to this vine.
Care for what you once tenderly planted—
the vine you raised from a shoot.
The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

And those who dared to set it on fire—
give them a look that will kill!
God, God-of-the-Angel-Armies, come back!
Smile your blessing smile:
that will be our salvation.
The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

Personal Reflection

Here we have yet another vineyard parable describing an abundance of grapes gone sour or destroyed by misuse. The post-exilic psalmist sang/prayed that Yahweh would forgive the nation and save the Chosen People—*again*.

The geography of this psalm shifted to the new [Northern Kingdom of Israel](#), where the axe fell first. The Assyrian army overran Samaria in 721 BC/BCE. A mixed population of idolatrous immigrants, considered by Jews as so many weeds in the garden of Yahweh, colonized their land by force. How could Yahweh allow this? All they had to do was look into the mirror of their souls to find the truth.

— *Where would I look for inspiration, if I had to rebuild my life, my family—
my parish community?*

From St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians (4: 6-9)

"Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.

"Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse. Put into practice what you learned from me, what you heard and saw and realized. Do that, and God, who makes everything work together, will work you into his most excellent harmonies."

Personal Reflection

In this letter, we read, "Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray." Paul was a master at understanding human psychology. We need to control what gets into our

thoughts that lead to action... and what must stay out. Paul offered his own formula for overcoming the anxiety of daily decision making. It wasn't enough just to avoid the negative... what was forbidden. He invited us to discover the free and open attitude of a believer who knew that God spoke to him every day in many ways.

Let's accept what is good, wherever we find it. The truth is we have no idea how much Jesus loves us. So, let us just... enjoy it.

— *What troubles my life today? How can I relate my source(s) of anxiety to Paul's words today? What "takeaway" do I find in the Apostle's words? How helpful do I find his advice?*

The Gospel According to Matthew (21: 33-43)

"Here's another story. Listen closely. There was once a man, a wealthy farmer, who planted a vineyard. He fenced it, dug a winepress, put up a watchtower, then turned it over to the farmhands and went off on a trip. When it was time to harvest the grapes, he sent his servants back to collect his profits.

"The farmhands grabbed the first servant and beat him up. The next one they murdered. They threw stones at the third, but he got away. The owner tried again, sending more servants. They got the same treatment. The owner was at the end of his rope. He decided to send his son. 'Surely,' he thought, 'they will respect my son.'

"But when the farmhands saw the son arrive, they rubbed their hands in greed. 'This is the heir! Let's kill him and have it all for ourselves.' They grabbed him, threw him out, and killed him.

"Now,

"'He'll kill them—a rotten bunch, and good riddance,' they answered. 'Then he'll assign the vineyard to farmhands who will hand over the profits when it's time.'

"Jesus said, 'Right—and you can read it for yourselves in your Bibles, *The stone the masons discarded as flawed is now the capstone! This is God's work* [Psalm 118: 22]!'"

Personal Reflection

After sharing the parable of the wicked tenants, Jesus asked his listeners, "When the owner of the vineyard arrives home from his trip, what do you think he will do to the farmhands?" The listeners seemed not to have gotten that *they themselves* were the "tenants" he referred to. They answered (*in blind self-condemnation*), "He'll bring them to an evil end!"

— *If I can recall a point in my life when I was unable to recognize and face my own sins, what was going on inside me at that time? When did I finally accept the need for my own conversion (even if I had been a lifelong Christian)? What did that realization lead me to?*

For Inspirational Listening and Watching

Listen

Let composers [Jill Jackson-Miller](#) and [Sy Miller](#) inspire you with their song/prayer, "[Let There be Peace on Earth.](#)"

Watch

[What is Yom Kippur and how is it celebrated?](#) (2.5 min.) — American Jewish Committee

Gospel Video - [St. Matthew 21: 33-43, 45-46](#)

Reflection on [this weekend's gospel](#) by [John Michael Talbot](#) (2 min.)

Read

[The Secret Chord](#) by [Geraldine Brooks](#)

The lives of Kings David and Solomon. I read this beautifully written novel in 2020 and gave it my highest grade (10+). The book offers a spiritually rewarding opportunity for those seeking deeper understanding of that pivotal period of our spiritual ancestors' history (ca. 1000-900 BC/BCE).

Preview of Next Weekend's Scriptures

Readings for the 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 25: 6-10 "Here on this mountain, God-of-the-Angel-Armies will throw a feast for all the people of the world."

Psalms 23: 1-6 "I'm not afraid when you walk at my side."

Philippians 4: 12-14, 19-20 "I've learned by now to be quite content whatever my circumstances."

Matthew 22: 1-14 "God's kingdom," Jesus said, "is like a king who threw a wedding banquet for his son."

Closing Prayer

(edited, abridged, and adapted for use here)

Prayer to St. Joseph the Worker

Saint Joseph,

model of all those devoted to labor...

obtain for me the grace to work conscientiously...

putting the call of duty above my natural inclinations.

Show me how to work with thankfulness and joy...

considering it an honor to develop... by means of labor...

the gifts received from God.

Teach me to work with order... peace... moderation... and patience...

never shrinking from weariness and trials;

to work above all... with purity of intention...

and detachment from self.
All for Jesus... all through Mary...
and all according to your example, O Saint Joseph.
Amen.

Written by [Pope St. Pius X](#)

Source: [Prayers to St. Joseph](#), [Year of St. Joseph](#) website

Unless otherwise indicated, the Sunday readings are from *The Message* Bible
translated by Rev. Dr. Eugene H. Peterson (Catholic Edition)

Peterson's translation of the Bible is a highly interpretive paraphrase,
celebrated for its readability.

Questions and Commentaries © 2026 by Alfred J. Garrotto
(algarrotto@comcast.net)