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ORDINARY 27A

4th October 2026

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Prayers

Find a comfortable place to sit and close your eyes. Rest your hands on your lap and allow your fingers to settle in place. Take a deep breath in through your nose, and slowly let it out through your mouth

Lock your fingers together.

Think of the people you share your life with...the connections you have...the networks you are a part of...your loved ones, friends, family, colleagues.

Allow your clasped fingers to tense slightly, then relax them.

Consider the way our relationships can sometimes feel strained, uncomfortable and tense.

Hold all of your relationships in your heart and offer them to God.

Cup your hands in front of you.

Think of all the precious gifts you have received from God: the strength to face difficult situations, friends and family, an everlasting relationship with Jesus rooted in a love beyond all understanding.

Hold out your hands palms-up in front of you.

Allow God to challenge you, to open your eyes and your heart, through this time of worship, may you hear God's voice, and feel called to serve, to love radically, give generously and stand for justice.

Relax your hands, and rest a moment in the silence.

Amen.

You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

Reading: Matthew 21:33-46 – [Click for reading](#)

Responding to the reading

Today's gospel reading is a difficult parable, often called the Parable of the Wicked Tenants, and on the surface it seems to be a straightforward story of rejection, violence and judgement. A landowner plants a vineyard, entrusts it to tenants, and expects them to share its fruit. Instead, they become increasingly violent towards those who come to collect what is owed, eventually killing the landowner's son.

Jesus' listeners quickly understand the accusation. The religious leaders recognise themselves in the story. They are the ones entrusted with something precious, but who have begun to behave as though it belongs to them. Perhaps that is where the parable becomes uncomfortable, and useful, for us.

Because the question is not simply, "Who are the wicked people?" Rather, it is: What have we been entrusted with, and have we started to mistake stewardship for ownership?

Faith is something we receive, not something we possess. Churches are entrusted with communities, buildings, traditions, stories, resources and, most importantly, people. Leaders are entrusted with influence. We are entrusted with relationships, opportunities, gifts, time and the fragile lives of those around us. But there is always a temptation to turn "this has been entrusted to me" into "this belongs to me."

And once we believe something belongs to us, we can become remarkably protective of it. We can guard the church we know rather than make room for the people who have not yet found a home within it. We can defend our traditions rather than listen for what the Spirit might be saying now. We can become more concerned with being right than with bearing fruit.

The vineyard, after all, was never really the tenants' vineyard, they were supposed to be caretakers. Perhaps discipleship is partly about remembering that we are caretakers too. The fruit the landowner seeks is not religious success or institutional survival. Throughout Jesus' ministry, the fruit that matters looks much more like compassion, justice, mercy, generosity and love.

There is another challenging thread here. The story describes servants being rejected and abused, and finally the son being killed. Matthew's Gospel connects this with Jesus himself, and Christian tradition has often read it as a prediction of the cross. But we should be careful not to turn the violence of the story into a picture of God as a violent ruler demanding blood.

The God Jesus reveals is not most clearly seen in the violence done to the son, but in the love that refuses to give up on the vineyard — and in the life, death and resurrection of Christ that follows. The stone rejected by the builders becomes the cornerstone.

In other words, what we dismiss may turn out to be what God is building upon. That is a powerful warning for people of faith. Who have we written off? Whose voice have we decided doesn't matter? Who doesn't fit comfortably into our understanding of what a Christian, a church member, a leader, or a "good" person is supposed to look like? And what if the person we are tempted to reject is carrying something of God that we desperately need to hear?

The challenge of this parable is therefore not simply to identify the wicked tenants out there, it is to look honestly at ourselves. Where have I confused stewardship with ownership? Where have I become defensive when I should have been listening? What fruit is my life producing? And who might I need to make room for?

The good news is that Jesus tells this story to people who are still capable of changing. The vineyard remains, but the possibility of fruit remains. God's purposes are not defeated by our failure. Perhaps that is the invitation for us this week: to stop guarding what we think is ours, and start tending what has been entrusted to us.

To make room, to listen, to share the fruit, and to trust that God's vineyard is always bigger than our particular patch of it.

Where am I holding too tightly to something I have really only been entrusted with?

What kind of fruit is my discipleship producing?

Whose voice might I need to hear, especially if it challenges my assumptions?

Where could I make more room for God's love to grow?

May we have the humility to remember that we are caretakers, not owners; the courage to listen when we are challenged; and the generosity to share whatever fruit our lives have grown.

And may the Christ whom others rejected teach us to recognise God's image in the people we are most tempted to reject. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Hymn / Song

152 STF – This is the day, this is the day – [YouTube](#)

Blessing

May you go out into a world seeking renewal, and listen for the life-giving Spirit of God.
May you go out into a world craving justice and discover the inclusive Christ everywhere.
May you go out into a world looking for love, and share the unconditional love of the Creator with all whom you meet.

Go in peace, the Spirit of God goes with you.

Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers For This Week

Monday 5th October

- Today is World Teachers Day. Why not use this prayer time to call to mind the teachers known to you, or remember those who have taught you valuable lessons along the way.
- Call their names in prayer and, if it is appropriate, you might like to message someone who you pray for to let them know they have been in your prayers today.

Tuesday 6th October

- Hold a moment of stillness at some point during the day.
You might like to spend a moment noticing the pain you carry – emotional, physical, spiritual...
In the stillness, invite God to come close, to comfort your pains, not particularly because you expect them to disappear, but because it is reassuring to have someone holding our hand when we suffer.
- Be near me, Lord Jesus, this and every day, Amen.

Wednesday 7th October

- Come, Holy Spirit,
Into this town, this village, this community,
Into my home, my relationships, my life.
- Come, bring light in the darkness, I pray. Amen.

Thursday 8th October

- What injustices make you angry in the world? Consider the ways you see God as a God of justice and pray that God will work through those injustices.

Friday 9th October

- You might like to make a cup of tea or coffee, or something else to drink. As you drink it, imagine all the places and people that are responsible for making it, from source to your lips. Thank God for them, the source of all life.

Saturday 10th October

- Today is World Mental Health Day.
- You might like to pray for all those impacted by the challenges of mental ill health, which is basically all of us at different times of life and in different relationships.
- Today, you might like to pray for calm, for peace, for clarity, for hope, for happiness.
- Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.