



Invite All to Christ

Matthew 22:1-14

"For many are called, but few are chosen."

October 12, 2014

Thought For The Week

Scriptures: Isaiah 5: 1-7, Philippians 4: 6-9, Matthew 21: 33-43

It's obvious to most folks today who follow everyday events, on line, on television or in print, that there is an immense amount of competition throughout the world. Microsoft worries that Apple may soon overtake it. Steve Jobs, CEO at Apple, is a genius at inventing new appliances that thousands of people suddenly realize that they cannot live without. Hey, it's all about production, big time.

College and NFL football is in full swing. In the months preceding the opening of the season, coaches scoured the country for just the right quarterback, tight end or lineman that would make the difference in capturing a national title. But unless that young man shows that he can produce, he will soon be out of a job.

Companies in the business and investment world battle each other every day attempting to prove to potential venture capitalist groups that their business is the most competent and dependable organization to handle the venture group's money. Competition is fierce and bloody. If you do not produce, you're left behind!

In the field of education, parents often begin preparing their children for acceptance in the most prestigious college when they are still in grade school. It's a tough and expensive world out there if you are thinking about getting an education.

Oddly enough, there is even a certain amount of competition among churches: which church, for instance, has the most lively youth group; where can one find a worship service that is both sacred and lively? Folks will drive across town to find just the right church. If the pastor and staff cannot "produce," the collection & attendance may soon begin to dwindle.

Obviously, the common denominator in all of these examples is simply success or the ability to produce whatever it is that people may want. It may sound a bit harsh, but that's the way it is in contemporary life.

One area of life that seems to have escaped this battle for superiority is the Christian life. I do not know of any Christian who feels that he or she is in competition for the most devout form of holiness. The sense among most Christians is that our personal Christian life is our own business. Generally speaking, we have little concern about the quality of another's spirituality or their ways of expressing the holy. There seems to be a common consensus that one's religious life is a private matter.

Unfortunately, however, this attitude of "God and me" has been a common misconception among Christians for many years. It has become necessary to constantly remind most Christians that they are members of the body of Christ, the people of God. In other words Christians need to be reminded that they are responsible for one another. Our responsibility is to "produce," that is, to build up the Body of Christ. Christianity is not a matter of "God and me," but "God and us," the mystical body of Christ.

We are reminded of all this in two lovely poetic scripture readings. Jewish literature and particularly Jesus' own stories often find their source in the life of people who till the earth, in this instance, workers in the vineyard. In the first reading from the prophet Ezekiel, the author reminds his flock, the people of Israel, that they are "the vineyard of the Lord." And what does one expect from a vineyard? Production! Unless it (the people of God) produce the good works of justice and charity, God will let that vineyard die of drought and become a field of thorns and briars.

The gospel tells a similar story of vineyard workers who themselves benefited from the grape harvest but refused to reimburse the owner for the harvest what was rightfully his.

Both stories use agricultural metaphors to remind the people that they are responsible to God for the production of holiness and good works.

It is an interesting metaphor if you compare it to the ways Christians often view the Church (the vineyard of the Lord) today. The common phrase is: "We're going to church." It doesn't often occur to us that, more correctly, Church is Christians, the people of God, who gather at the common table of the Eucharist. Like a growing vineyard, it is living reality for which we are all responsible. The pastor, the congregational directors, or the many other workers are not by themselves Church; they are simply servants of the Body of Christ; all are responsible for the continued life of that Body. The Church that does not produce good work fades and dies.

Finally, it occurs to me that poetry or common agricultural metaphors, as we have read today, often convey more wisdom to us about who we are than all the theological or "churchy" lessons taken together. We are Church; let's be the Church we are all capable of being

Happy Birthday Olivia

Prayer For The Week

O God of peace, come into the brokenness of our lives and our lands with your healing love. Help us be willing to bow before you in true repentance, and to bow to one another in real forgiveness.

By the fire of the Holy Spirit melt our hard hearts, and consume the pride and prejudice, which separate us. Fill us, O Lord, with your perfect love, which casts out fear, and binds us together in unity with you.

We pray for all attempts to bring together people of different traditions and customs. Help us to see the good in all people especially as we remember the people of Portugal, and pray your blessing on them.

We thank you and praise you for love that sustains us, for wisdom that directs us, and for desire that beckons us toward peace in this world. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

Stewardship Thought For The Week

I want to list some things that may not be commonly associated with personal stewardship: Washing/Waxing your car, cutting your lawn, painting trim on your home, vacuuming your carpet, cleaning/polishing floors, cleaning & sanitizing your bathrooms, washing and properly storing your clothing, brushing your teeth, combing your hair, making your bed, washing dishes/utensils, maintaining your household utilities/equipment such as the furnace (changing filters), purchasing environmentally friendly appliances whenever possible . . . the list goes on.

Your personal hygiene, the cleanliness of all that you own is all part of your personal stewardship.

Not all of us can do all these jobs by ourselves. Nonetheless, the work has to be done.

My point: stewardship starts at home. Be true to yourself and others at all times. You walk in the stead of Christ.