

Dear friends in Christ,

Matthew 21.33-46

What do you have that you treasure? You may think of your home and all that is in it; your garden, your savings, and smaller things which are dear possessions. You may think of the talents and skills that you use in your work and play. Maybe what you treasure most are the people in your life: family and friends. It could also be your faith in God, your relationship with him and your religious practices.

I invite you to think of these treasures as the vineyard that Jesus describes in this gospel story. The Landowner planted it with care and put in it all that was needed. Then he leased it out to you. All that you treasure, you do not own. Everything you have is leased out to you and you hold it in trust.

At harvest time the owner sends his servants for the produce. To his surprise, they are met with resistance and violence; the servants are beaten up and some of them are killed. He only asked for the produce; it should not be so difficult to give that up.

Yet we know from our own experience, how hard this can be. What a fuss we may create if we have to give up our favourite television programme on a particular night! We are not asked to give up the television set, or to give up the programme for ever, yet we may put up a great fight before we surrender the programme for that one night. It may be the same if we have to give up a night out with our friends, or have to part with some of our money.

Sometimes it costs us dearly to give up the more precious produce of our lives. When children grow up their parents must let them go. Workers reach retirement age and have to give up their life-long occupation and their salary. In old age many must give up their independence and sometimes their familiar surroundings as they move to nursing homes. Death may take from us our nearest and dearest. It is no wonder that we resist so vehemently when we are asked to give up the produce.

The remarkable thing is that people do give up what they treasure. Generous people give their time, energy and money in the service of their families and of others in their local communities and beyond. Parents let their children go. People accept the loss of health and youthfulness and independence, and the loss of those they love.

When Job lost everything, he remembered that he was a tenant and not the owner of all that God had entrusted to him, so he could peacefully pray: 'The Lord gave, the Lord has taken back. Blessed be the name of the Lord.' How much better our world be if everyone saw themselves not as owners of what they have, but as tenants, and were ready to share the produce when they were asked to do so.

### **Prayer**

God, our Father,  
open our eyes to see your hand at work

in the splendour of creation,

in the beauty of human life.

Touched by your hand our world is holy.

Help us to cherish the gifts that surround us,

to share your blessings with our sisters and brothers,

and to experience the joy of life in your presence.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord.