



OCTOBER 8, 2023 | 2<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## HOLY FAMILY PARISH

312 Tazewell Avenue, Tazewell, VA 24651

(276) 988-4626 | [parishoffice@holyfamilyswva.org](mailto:parishoffice@holyfamilyswva.org) | facebook: search Holy Family SWVA

### ST. THERESA'S

312 Tazewell Ave.  
Tazewell, VA 24651

### ST. ELIZABETH'S

160 Merrick Lane  
Pocahontas, VA 24635

### ST. MARY'S

1122 Farmer Street  
Richlands, VA 24641

### ST. JOSEPH'S

1007 Independence Rd.  
Grundy, VA 24614



## Gospel Reflection: Matthew 21: 33-43



*Fr. Renier Supranes*

**T**HE GOSPEL for the 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time is very beautiful. On the Gospel, we can see ourselves, we can know more about God, and we can understand deeply what Jesus did for us.

What can we see about ourselves? We are also like the tenants in the Gospel parable. They are called to work. They are given responsibility for service. But there is no difficulty in working. Why? The tenants have everything. The vineyard is well-maintained. They are well-provided. There are already the hedges, the wine press, and the tower. Thus, everything is already well taken care of. The tenants are privileged workers. Like the tenants in the parable, God is also giving us works to do. We are all stewards of God's creation. But God gives us all the means to accomplish our works like what He did for the tenants. God gives us loads to carry, but He also equips us with the necessary ways to carry our burdens. We are truly privileged workers. Yet, there will be a day of reckoning. We are all answerable to God. If much is given to us, then much is also expected from us. We must produce for God. God should harvest from us. At the end of our lives, we will stand before God to report and offer Him the fruits of our labors.

What can we know about God? The landowner stands for God. He places great trust in His tenants. He leaves everything to their care and responsibility. He was not there to supervise. He does not remain to police and to check everything. He believes in the capability and the trustworthiness of the tenants. Likewise, God believes in our potentials. He does not interfere or intervene with us. He waits for us to deliver, to produce and to bear fruit. God is also a very patient God. As God sends "servants after servants", He is also giving us chance after chance. He does not immediately punish us. He does not swiftly retaliate. God bears with us and waits for us to repent.

What can we realize about Jesus? The son of the landowner in the parable points to Jesus. The tenants, out of envy and jealousy, killed the Son. This tells us of the supreme sacrifice of Jesus. Jesus died for our sins. He laid down His life for us. Jesus offered His own life for our salvation. He redeemed us by His blood.

May Jesus' death constantly remind us that He wants us to repent and return to the Father.

Amen.

### Matthew 21:33–43

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people:  
"Hear another parable.

There was a landowner who planted a vineyard,  
put a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a tower.  
Then he leased it to tenants and went on a journey.

When vintage time drew near,  
he sent his servants to the tenants to obtain his produce.

But the tenants seized the servants and one they beat,  
another they killed, and a third they stoned.

Again he sent other servants, more numerous than the first ones,  
but they treated them in the same way.

Finally, he sent his son to them, thinking,

'They will respect my son.'

But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another,

'This is the heir.

Come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance.'

They seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes?"

They answered him,

"He will put those wretched men to a wretched death  
and lease his vineyard to other tenants

who will give him the produce at the proper times."

Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures:

The stone that the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone;

by the Lord has this been done,

and it is wonderful in our eyes?

Therefore, I say to you,

the kingdom of God will be taken away from you

and given to a people that will produce its fruit."

### PRIEST ADMINISTRATOR

Fr. Renier Supranes

[rsupranes@richmonddiocese.org](mailto:rsupranes@richmonddiocese.org)

(276) 385-7312

### OFFICE MANAGER/ BOOKKEEPER

Lydia St. Peter

### OFFICE HOURS

Mon–Fri 9:30AM – 2:30PM

Please call the parish office  
to make arrangements for  
the **Sacraments of Baptism,**  
**Anointing of the Sick** or  
**Holy Matrimony** as well as  
funerals. **Reconciliation** is  
available from 30 minutes  
before a scheduled Mass.

### MASS TIMES

#### SATURDAY

4PM – St. Joseph's

6PM – St. Mary's

#### SUNDAY

9AM – St. Elizabeth's

11:30AM – St. Theresa's

#### TUESDAY & FRIDAY

10AM – St. Theresa's

Cover image:

After Sir John Everett

Millais, *Parable of the Wicked*

*Husbandmen*, 1864 (Engraving

by Dalziel Brothers)

# The God-Opposed World Bears No Fruit

*By Dr. Matthew Petrusek, wordonfire.org*

The Church and the world have always had a complex relationship. The tension is evident throughout Scripture. For example, when “the world” refers to that which God freely willed into existence, including human beings, in and through the Logos of Christ (John 1:1), then “the world” is good, and it is right and just to promote its flourishing. If, on the other hand, “the world” refers to human artifices that run contrary to God’s purposes—think, paradigmatically, of the Tower of Babel and Sodom and Gomorrah—then it is to be opposed at all costs (cf. Rom. 12:2). So how, then, can we discern the difference between the two? How do we know if we are inhabiting the dark world that hates Christ and his disciples (John 15:18) or the luminous world that abides in God’s salvific mercy (John 3:17)?

Part of the challenge in marking the distinction is that sin has so corrupted our minds and hearts that we consistently mistake one world for the other. It is perennially tempting, for example, to conflate the side of the angels with what’s most popular. However, Scripture consistently warns that popularity has no intrinsic relationship with God’s will; indeed, the popular will is frequently the vehicle of madness and destruction—just call to mind Jesus’ public “trial” before his Passion and Crucifixion. Moreover, despite the Prosperity Gospel’s siren songs, the Cross of Christ also definitely repels the idea that truth and goodness necessarily inhabit the same place as wealth and comfort.

An equally dangerous temptation is believing that following God’s will is tantamount to declaring oneself to be on the side of Christ. Jesus specifically warns against this form of self-righteousness in Matthew 7:21: “Not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.” It’s not so simple, however, to know exactly what constitutes “doing the will of the Father.” It certainly

means abiding by the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, for example, which includes a blessing for those who are peacemakers (Matt. 5:9); however, the same Lord also declares that following him will inexorably lead to conflict and division (Matt. 10:34–36). Doing the will of the Father also entails caring for the poor, as we see in Matthew 26:40: “Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” However, we can never assume that performing charitable works guarantees one’s good moral standing before God, a fact we see not only in Christ’s condemnation of those who give to the poor for the wrong reasons (Matt. 6:2), but also in Christ’s chastisement of his disciples for insisting that it would have been better to sell the oil used to anoint him and donate the proceeds to the poor (Matt. 26:6–13).

So if neither popularity, nor declarations of fidelity, nor even performing charitable works are sure signs of being on “God’s side” in the world, where can we turn—what signs can we look for—to have any assurance?

One biblical answer is fruitfulness. The metaphor captures not only growth but sustained growth over time—both in numerical expansion and inter-generational reproduction. As Bishop Barron has often remarked, the Bible is acutely concerned with numbers, which we see, for example, in the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 (Matt. 14:13), the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:1), and the frequent new-convert headcounts St. Luke provides in Acts of the Apostles (e.g., Acts 4:4). A sign of being aligned with God’s will is thus belonging and contributing to a community that is bearing fruit: people are joining, staying, creating new life, and raising their children to do the same. Conversely, a reliable sign that one is inhabiting a false world—residing in a religious or secular society that is opposed to God’s will—is that the community is dying both in space (it’s getting smaller) and intergenerationally (it’s not reproducing).



It's crucial to note that a moribund community's demise can be difficult to detect in the short term; such societies often possess prodigious wealth and wield great power. In addition to employing fear, they incentivize submission by offering access to physical and psychological pleasures. Likewise, a growing community that abides in God's favor can also be hard to spot. Jesus employs the parable of the mustard seed (Matt. 13:31) to emphasize this point: like children in the womb, the tree that gives life starts small and is thus easy to miss. Yet unlike its worldly counterparts, Christ assures that it will grow larger than all others because it has put down robust roots in good soil (Matt. 13:3-9)

Where, then, do we see new and durable growth in our world? Where do we see a desire to give, sustain, and nurture new life, especially when it entails individual and communal sacrifice? Alternatively, where do we see desiccation and obsolescence, even if affluence and technology are concealing the decay? Where are the parishes flourishing even amidst economic hardship and persecution? Where are they dwindling even amidst material plenty? Where, regionally, is the Church growing? And where is it contracting? Politically, which societies live for the future, and which live only for the present?

Scripture teaches that the answers to these questions not only have sociological significance. They are revelatory of a theological and moral reality: the world that is opposed to God is parasitic. Feeding off the fruit of the good, it can expand for a time, even a long time. But because it is morally and ontologically futile, it ultimately cannot reproduce. It eventually depletes what it has colonized from the garden of life and either dramatically collapses or slowly dies of starvation. This is true in both the Church and the world: movements that contradict God's will are always on borrowed (or, better put, stolen) time. They rise and die out. The good, on the other hand, is inexhaustibly productive because it is grounded in the infinitely self-giving God. As such, its nature is to grow, expanding by both attraction and propagation. It will perdure and, when necessary, regenerate.

So where is God in the world today? Be on the lookout for where people are not only saying the right things and doing the right things, but where there is also a palpable sense of growth, or the possibility of regrowth, even (or especially) in the face of opposition. There, you will find the Spirit building and rebuilding the true kingdom in the world amidst and atop the sterile ruins of human conceit.

mass intentions

Date Intention

10/7 SATURDAY

4PM RAM participants & volunteers

6PM Bob & Nona Nassif ☩

10/8 SUNDAY

9AM Marunich ☩ & Zaborsky ☩ family members

11:30AM Glenn Harrison, Sr. ☩

stewardship of treasure

Donations Received as of October 1 (Week 14)

CHURCH	ATTENDANCE	OFFERINGS
St. Joseph's	14	\$345
St. Elizabeth's	17	\$988
St. Mary's	17	\$201
St. Theresa's	64	\$1,385
Total	112	\$2,919
Outside Donations		
Year to Date Received		\$44,654
Goal		\$39,578
Ahead/Behind Goal		+ \$5,076

OTHER DONATIONS:

Retired Priests: \$25

please pray for

Louise Serreno\*  
Gerry Hankins  
Clarence Moore  
Lexi Cox  
Sarah Wall  
Tammy Bennett  
Margaret Wasilewski  
Nic Ulate  
Frannie & Rayburn Minton  
Sue Bailey  
Christian Lambert  
Shane Neal  
Pete Belcher  
Lucas Boyd  
Ralph Heldreth  
Chris Jessie  
Leo Brown  
Carolina Ferrare  
Junior Aiken  
Jeanne Hash  
Lara Marshall  
Carol & Jim Shumate  
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Alice Godin  
Bryan Gunter  
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Natalie Dodge  
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Dreama Ritter  
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Mary Muncy

Cindy Lambert  
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Clinard Coleman  
Joan Harrison  
Joe & Yvonne Blevins  
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Sarah Walters  
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Maurice Law  
Zac Carter  
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Annette Pike  
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Karen Hart  
The Dalton family  
Allen & Melody James  
Betty Tabor  
Joseph Romeo  
Denise Campbell

council members

PARISH COUNCIL:

Tonya Hylton, Frannie Minton, Ralph Shawver, Barbara Jones, Donna Lambert, Maria Farris, Zach Hash

FINANCE COUNCIL:

Kathy & Bob Buchanan, Randy Bolling, Doug Vance, Anne Danko, Jim Talbert, Jackie Shawver, Lydia St. Peter



### PARISH NOTES:

This Fall's HFP picnic will be held on October 22 at the Appalachian Arts Center, 112 River Road, Cedar Bluff. **Please sign up** on the sheets located at each church. Please also indicate how many children and their ages!



A special thank you to Will Langley and the Appalachian Twinning Ministries of St. Michael's in Glen Allen! Will delivered a huge donation of hoodies and school supplies for our community. These items will be divided among our four churches' outreach committees for distribution. Thank you!

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### birthdays & anniversaries:

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**OCTOBER 9:** Joe St. Clair, Brenda Pierallini, Ben Culpepper | **10:** Mackenzie Bolling  
**11:** Cindy Froy, Rolando & Ellen Guanlao (anniversary) | **14:** Cathy St. Clair

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“I have chosen you from the world, says the Lord,  
to go and bear fruit that will remain.”

-Jn 15:16

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## Appalachian Family Care LLC



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