

The Stone Rejected . . .

27th Sunday of Ordinary Time - Year A

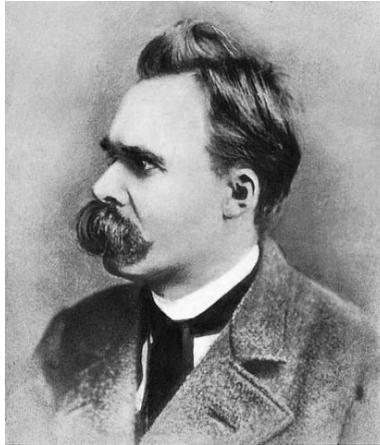
Isaiah 5:1-7
Psalm 80:9, 12, 13-14, 15-16, 19-20

Philippians 4:6-9
Matthew 21:33-43

A favorite quote by Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) declares, "God is dead"; not referring to a divine being who once lived and has now ceased to live, but rather, in Nietzsche's more subtle, atheistic view, that the development of modern science, and increasing secularization of society had effectively "killed" the Christian God as a viable source of absolute morality in the modern world. The French writer, Emile Zola (1840-1902), stated his view more eloquently: "Civilization will not attain to its perfection until the last stone from the last church falls on the last priest." Clearly, in a world saved and sanctified by Christ, the idea of God, Christianity and faith have found great hostility from an increasingly secular zeitgeist.

Oddly enough, God, and the faith professed by an enduring Church, have outlived both of these men, if not also their ideas, and continue to be a driving force, if not a thorn in the side of the modern world that these and other modern writers and philosophers helped to de-fine.

Throughout the history of Christianity, there have been examples in which the Church, the message of the Gospel, even the very idea of faith itself has clashed with the popular notions of the era. In the early years of Christianity, the Christian movement itself clashed with the

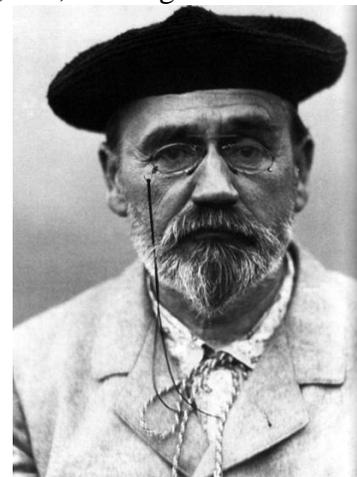


ancient, pagan, Greco-Roman society to the point of persecution. St. Francis of Assisi and the example lived by the Franciscan order clashed with the popular materialism and militarism of the time. Even Mother Theresa faced the culture of the Hindu caste system as she ministered to the poorest of the poor in one of the most crowded cities of India, and challenged the rest

of the world by the way she answered her call to serve the rejected of society.

Jesus, who faced the same opposition in His ministry, told a parable of how a group of rebellious workers sought to sabotage the vineyard by rejecting every representative sent to them by the landowner, even to the point of killing the landowner's son. Yet, in the end, as nothing would hinder the landowner in his plans for the vineyard, so, too, nothing would hinder Christ in His carrying out His mission for the destiny of all creation.

How often has the Church, and the Gospel message it preaches, with all its standards and mor-



The Parable of the Tenants in the Vineyard

als, faced mass ridicule from mainstream society because its message is politically incorrect, unpopular, or out of line with majority opinion? How many, even within the Church, seek to hinder its efforts to preach the Gospel to all people, to sabotage the vineyard of the Church and its message throughout the world?

Nothing will hinder the work Christ continues in and through His Church, with all of its values, teachings, standards and principles. God's plan will be carried out, either with us, or in spite of us. Like in the vineyard, we can either be those rebellious workers who seek to sabotage the will of the owner, only to have the vineyard taken from us, or we can be the instruments, who, by

our participation, assist and enhance the ultimate purpose God has for his vineyard and its work in and through the Church.

Emile Zola was also fond of remarking: "The truth is on the march and nothing will stop it." Just so, Let us resolve to be those faithful workers in the vineyard with whom the landowner will be pleased, so that God's plan, His truth and His will for His Church in

particular, and the world in general, will move forward because of our fidelity, rather than in spite of a vain rebellion.

Rev. William Nicholas
September 30, 2011

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