



Catechist Background

At this point in the Gospel Jesus is in Jerusalem, where he will suffer and die. After being acclaimed by the people on his entry to Jerusalem, Jesus then cast out extortionate traders from the Temple. Consequently, the religious leaders were anxious and they challenged him with hostile questions that Jesus answered with parables. Last week we heard the first parable, today we hear the second and next week the third. In each parable the leaders recognised themselves, and not in a positive way.

Absentee landlords were an everyday part of life in Jesus' world, large areas of which were owned by people who lived elsewhere. The owner might only have visited once a year or sent their trusted servants to collect the rent, (often quite high). We might therefore sympathise with the frustrated tenant farmers who toiled hard but never owned their land nor were able to keep much of their earnings. However, if the landowner died heir-less, the land ownership transferred to the tenants.

Each element of this parable has an allegorical counterpart. God, the landowner, throughout history sent prophets to proclaim his message to his chosen people. One by one the prophets were rejected. So God sent his Son, who, we know, was rejected and killed. We are not represented in the parable, for we are called to be the people who heed his words and produce the fruit of God's Kingdom.

Setting the Scene

If you have the 'vine' from the Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, then you could re-use it this week. You will also need paper 'grape bunches' for each child to decorate (see the copyright-free printable images below), and colouring pencils/pens, and blutack to attach the bunches to the vine.

We Say Sorry

Leader: Lord Jesus, you act with fairness and justice, Lord have mercy.

All: **Lord, have mercy.**

Leader: You reach out to the strong and the weak, Christ have mercy.

All: **Christ, have mercy.**

Leader: You will lead us to God's Kingdom, Lord have mercy.

All: **Lord, have mercy.**

Gloria

We Pray (1)

God, your love for us is more than we can imagine. Give us the strength to live in your truth. Amen.

Gospel Intro

You might need to explain what a 'tenant farmer' is: someone who lives and works on a farm owned by someone else. They eat, use or sell what the farm produces but must also pay rent to the owner.

Acclamation

Gospel: Matthew 21:33-43

Reflecting on the Gospel reading with Children

Ask: In this parable the characters represented others who were alive in Jesus' time:

- Who does the landowner represent in this parable? *[God];*

- Who are the tenants? *[the Jewish leaders and priests in Jesus' time who thought they were better than God at being in charge];*
- Who are the servants of the landowner? *[The prophets such as Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, John];*
- Who is the landowner's son? *[God's Son: Jesus].*

Ask:

- In this parable, what did the tenants do to the landowner's servants? *[rejected/ignored them];*
- Why did the landowner send his son to the tenants *[he thought they would listen to his son];*
- What did the tenants do to the landowner's son? *[they killed him]*
- Why did they do that? *[because they wanted the vineyard for themselves, not for the owner];*
- Was that a good thing to do? *[No, it was greedy and wrong];*
- What should they have done? *[listen to the servants and son and pay their rent to them].*
- So, if the landowner represents God, his son represents Jesus and the tenants the Jewish leaders, what should the tenants have done? *[Listen to God's messengers and treat them well];*
- Did the Jewish leaders in Jesus' time do that to Jesus? *[No, they arranged for him to be killed].*
- We hear God's teachings today and what Jesus said and did. What should we do as a response? *[listen to them and do what they tell us to do].*

Response

Explain:

- the landowner was not unkind to the tenants. He was asking for what was rightfully his - it was the tenants who were being greedy and selfish.
- In the same way, the people Jesus told the story to were not willing to serve God. They wanted instead to make themselves look good, not God.

Ask:

- What things has God "given to us" that still belong to God? *[natural resources, our talents...]*
- If God has given someone a singing talent, should that person use it to sing unkind songs *[No!]*
- Or if a person is great at maths, should that person say 'I am a genius! You are all stupid' *[No!]*
- Or if the person is really strong, should they use their strength to beat people up? *[No!]*
- What could we do with these God-given talents instead? *[use them well to help others]*
- What grows in a vineyard? *[Grapes, so I am going to give you a picture of a bunch of grapes.]*

Encourage each child to:

- colour their grape bunch;
- write/draw something on their bunch about what they will try to do to please God this week.

Attach the decorated 'bunches' on the 'vine' and display the vine and grapes ideally in the church.

We Believe

Relate the Creed to what you have shared with the children by asking these questions and inviting them to reply: 'I do':

- Do you believe in God the Father who has made the world full of good things for us to enjoy?
- Do you believe in Jesus, God's Son, who came to call us back to God?
- Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit, who gives us the strength to work in God's vineyard?

We Pray (2)

Again, relate the Prayer of the Faithful to the Gospel reading by saying 'God, we know you are with us and so we now pray...'

Leader: We pray for the Church all over the world, especially those who share God's Word in dangerous circumstances. Lord in your mercy,

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for leaders everywhere, that they use their power responsibly. Lord in your mercy,
All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for our parish family. Lord in your mercy,
All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for anyone who is lonely, ill, or missing someone they love. Lord in your mercy,
All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: Lord, we know you hear our prayers. Help us to share your love with the world. We make our prayers through Christ our Lord.
All: **Amen.**



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