

TWENTY SEVEN SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR
A, OCTOBER 4, 2020

The Consequences of Ignoring the Will of Our Heavenly Father

Dear brothers and sisters,

Through the parable of the two sons in which one son said "No" to his father's request to work in the vineyard, but afterwards repented and went to work, the Lord showed how dear he holds a repentant sinner. This is also seen in the parable of the prodigal son. The Lord's heart is always open to welcome someone who has turned away from frivolous and sinful ways. However, there are unpalatable and everlasting consequences when one refuses to repent and dies in such a state.

God constantly offers innumerable means of salvation. God offers us opportunities and graces to grow and become better persons. What happens when we ignore the voice of God summoning us to eternal salvation? What happens when we ignore the beauty, truth and goodness that is beyond our imaginations? Tragic consequences happen.

We see this in two parables, one from Isaiah and another from the gospel of Matthew. The first parable features a well spaded and cultivated vineyard which yielded sour and poisonous grapes. Yahweh did not mince words about the sad consequences that would follow. "Now, I will let you know what I am going to do to my vineyard: Take away its hedge, give it to grazing, break through its wall, let it be trampled! Yes, I will make

it a ruin: it shall not be pruned or hoed, but will be overgrown with thorns and briars; I will command the clouds not to rain upon it"(Isaiah 5:1-7). It hardly needed to be said that the reason why God was unhappy is that the well cultivated vineyard yielded rotten grapes instead of the wholesome grapes it was supposed to yield.

The second parable is about the wicked tenants who maltreated and killed the king's messengers and son. The chief priests and the elders accurately captured the consequences that awaited those murderers: "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" (Matthew 21:41). Ignoring the will of God has consequences.

It is important to remember that these parables refer to people and how they use or fail to use the opportunity for salvation the Lord puts at their beck and call. The first reading clearly said, "The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel" (Isaiah 5:7). The tenants refer to leaders of the people - the chief priests and elders. Does that mean that we stand acquitted? No, not at all. We are all implicated. The Bible describes the iniquities of eight century B.C, the time of Isaiah as a time of dishonesty and arrogance: "Those who call evil good, and good evil, who change darkness to light, and light into darkness, who change bitter to sweet, and sweet into bitter! Those who are wise in their own eyes, prudent in their own view!" (Isaiah 5: 20-21).

Sounding very much like our own time, the sinners of that period included: "Those who enact unjust statutes, who

write oppressive decrees, Depriving the needy of judgment, robbing my people's poor of justice, Making widows their plunder, and orphans their prey!" (Isaiah 10:1-2). The tragedy is that the people who were guilty of the sins listed above were supposed to be the shepherds and overseers of the people. They were supposed to show good examples by lives of integrity but the contrary was the case. The consequences were devastating: "The cities are desolate, without inhabitants. Houses, without people, and the land is a desolate waste. Until the LORD sends the people far away, and great is the desolation in the midst of the land. If there remains a tenth part in it, then this in turn shall be laid waste (Isaiah 6:11-13). The supreme consequences of remaining adamant in sin is eternal death and alienation from God.

Before the coming of the Lord Jesus in human flesh, these same people persecuted and killed many prophets of God including Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. When Jesus came, they killed not only John the Baptist, his precursor, they also killed the Lord himself outside the city in the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew, Golgotha (John 19:17). The Letter to the Hebrews notes "Jesus also suffered outside the gate, to consecrate the people by his own blood" (Hebrews 13:12). In the year 70 A.D the punishment our Lord predicted came upon those who killed the prophets and the Lord of glory. The Romans destroyed the temple of the Lord and razed Jerusalem to the ground.

How can we retrace our steps back from ignoring the will of God before it is too late? "The Lord tells us,

"Come now, let us set things right, ``says the LORD: Though your sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow; Though they be red like crimson, they may become white as wool. If you are willing, and obey, you shall eat the good things of the land" (Isaiah 1:18-19).

Please ask this important question, "Is there any opportunity to ascend higher on the ladder of holiness and likeness to Christ that I am overlooking? Through St Paul, the Lord shows us the way forward, "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things"(Philippians 4:8).