Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5

Sunday Mass Study Notes for Lectionary 139: 10/04/2026



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes. This week, we reverse the usual order and begin with the second reading, examining Paul's Letter to the Philippians. Then we look at the first reading from Isaiah and close with the Gospel lesson from Matthew.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

In the New Testament reading, we find how obedient believers can have a clear conscience and live without worry. This reading continues our study of the Book of Philippians from past weeks. As a reminder, Paul was in prison for his faithfulness to God in preaching the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. In the previous verses, Paul admonishes two specific women in the church to resolve a certain unmentioned conflict. You can imagine that hearing of this conflict while he was in prison would have been discouraging to Paul. In the verse leading up to today's reading, Paul said, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4). Before you read

the text, ask yourself: what does it mean to rejoice in the Lord, especially given Paul's unpleasant conditions and his admonition to resolve interpersonal conflict?

Second Reading:

> *6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. 9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:6-9)*

In the reading, Paul made a commanding call to prayer, correct thinking, and right actions, which he said would bring peace to a believer's heart. As we saw in the context leading up to the reading, Paul said first to rejoice in the Lord. This means that, as believers, we can rest in the finished work of the Lord Jesus in securing our salvation and rejoice that, regardless of our circumstances, we can never be taken away from our relationship with the Lord (John 10:28-29). Paul said in the reading that we do not have to suffer anxiety if we turn our anxiety into a prayer request (v. 6). The word "supplication" is even stronger, as it connotes urgency, desperation, and humility. This is the attitude with which we can approach the throne of grace.

This is the same message that the Lord Jesus gave to his disciples in His great Sermon on the Mount. Jesus told them,
"And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name'" (Matthew 6:7-9).
In Jesus' model prayer, He instructed His disciples to first begin with adoration of God and thanksgiving. Jesus continued, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

(Matthew 6:10-12). After adoring God and thanking Him for His provisions, we should remember to confess our sins before we ask Him for the help we need. One of the things we can confess (which literally means "to say the same thing," which implies we agree with God) is our limited perspective, which is causing our anxiety in the first place. We can approach God with confidence (Hebrews 4:16), which should produce thankfulness in our hearts, no matter the circumstances we face. "And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (v. 7).

Finally, Paul called the believers in Philippi not only to pray when tempted to worry, but to think about the right things as a second way to combat worry. Paul told the believers to think about those things that were pure, lovely, of good repute, things of excellence and worthy of praise (v. 8) as well as the Scriptures that they had received from Paul (v. 9). Not only were they to concentrate their thoughts on the correct things, but they were also to practice the things which they had learned from Paul (v. 9). Many people have discovered that one way of forgetting their own troubles is to help others with their troubles. After they did all these things, the peace of God would be with them (v. 9c).

To summarize, Paul said that instead of worrying, we should pray, being thankful that God hears us and that we are not alone in our trials. He also directed believers to focus their thoughts on the right things, including a list of good things worthy of praise. In addition, we should practice what Paul taught: walking by faith in the truth of Scripture rather than by sight (or our feelings). Finally, we can only expect and look forward to experiencing God's peace after we do these things connected to living in the truth.

Introduction to the First Reading:

The Old Testament reading is from the Prophet Isaiah. He prophesied to Judah during the reigns of King Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (Isaiah 1:1). His prophetic view often extended far beyond Judah's immediate circumstances, even as it faced a threat from Babylon. Isaiah prophesied about a distant day when the Lord's temple and holy city of Jerusalem would be exalted, and the world would be at peace. The following biblical text provides a hopeful backdrop amid Judah's impending exile.

The events Isaiah spoke of were often "telescoped" together, so distant events were seen as happening alongside near-term ones. This is sometimes called the "mountain peaks of prophecy" or

"prophetic foreshortening." The "last days" Isaiah spoke of in verse two above is the time of Jacob's trouble (Jeremiah 30:7) that John chronicles in Revelation. At this time, the Lord Jesus will return to the earth to usher in His kingdom, reign over the world, and finally bring an era of peace (Revelation 19:11-16).

But before peace could come, Judah must face the consequences of her disregard for the relational covenant God made with her. Judah repeatedly rejected God's overtures of loving provision, and His desire for relational loyalty was continually met with spiritual adultery. As you read, listen to God's heart as He faced the disappointment of unmet relational expectations with His chosen people.

First Reading:

> *1 Let me sing now for my well-beloved a song of my beloved concerning His vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill. 2 He dug it all around, removed its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. And He built a tower in the middle of it and also hewed out a wine vat in it; Then He expected it to produce good grapes, but it produced only worthless ones. 3 "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge between Me and My vineyard. 4 What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce worthless ones? 5 So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard: I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground. 6 I will lay it waste; It will not be pruned or hoed, But briars and thorns will come up. I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it." 7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel And the men of Judah His delightful plant. Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; For righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress. (Isaiah 5:1-7)*

In today's reading, Isaiah sings a song about God, Isaiah's beloved. God planted a vineyard with a choice vine. Isaiah explained the vineyard metaphor as the house of Israel (v. 7). This metaphor of Israel as the vine appears throughout the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments. After tending it and building a tower to protect it, the vineyard produced "worthless" grapes (connoting wild or sour grapes). God had no other choice but to remove the hedge of protection that He placed around

Jerusalem and Judah and allow it to become a wasteland because of their rejection of the covenant relationship with God (v. 5). This prophecy of physical destruction was fulfilled through the invasion of the Babylonian forces in successive waves, with the last one in 586 BC resulting in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (2 Kings 25:1-10). The final destruction of Jerusalem will occur in the future, when God allows a person called the Antichrist to establish his kingdom rule in Jerusalem (Revelation 13). Later in the Gospel lesson, we will see that a second part of the destruction of Jerusalem was the spiritual element that came when the Messiah, Jesus, whom God sent, was rejected by the Jews.

This passage teaches about God's heart and the fallen human condition. God provided everything for his chosen people to thrive and be fruitful. The passage shows God's great care in establishing and tending His vineyard, the house of Israel (v. 7). "He dug it, removed its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine" (v. 2). This parallels the creation account of what He did for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It was part of the original design for humans to be God's image-bearers and to be fruitful on Earth (Genesis 1:27-28).

The consistent nature of human beings, as seen in Adam and Eve and in His people Israel, has been to break God's heart and to not live up to their noble identity as image-bearers. "Then I expected it to produce good grapes, but it produced only worthless ones" (v. 4). Isaiah repeats God's unmet expectation: "Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold a cry of distress" (v. 7). These verses reveal the systemic human condition of "fallenness" (or depravity). Even under the best conditions, humans show their tendency to reject God and choose self-reliance.

Therefore, God's response to these choices of autonomy and independence is not justified or necessary. It's almost as if God is saying, "What else can I do? They have rejected Me, so I will honor their choice." But their choice to live in autonomy from God has dire consequences. "I will remove its hedge, and it will be consumed . . ." (v. 5). Israel was free to live outside the covenant relationship God established, but she would also forfeit the benefits of this loving, protective relationship. They would reap the natural consequences of life apart from God. Rejecting God had dire consequences for the nation of Judah, as it continues to have for us today.

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

The Gospel lesson continues the theme of God's vineyard as Jesus teaches using a parable. Context

is extremely important this week to understand Jesus' intended meaning. Jesus' message was clearly addressed directly to the Jewish religious authorities. This group had just witnessed Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey (Matthew 21:7), something a king would do in that culture. As Jesus rode past the crowds, they cried out, "Hosanna to the Son of David; BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Hosanna in the highest!" (v. 9b). Immediately afterwards, Jesus escalated the tense situation even more as Matthew recorded that Jesus "entered the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of those who were selling doves" (v. 12). Next, while still in the temple He healed the blind and lame (v. 14). All of this inflamed the Jewish leaders and further exposed their hatred of Jesus. Matthew recorded what happened next. "But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He had done, and the children who were shouting in the temple, 'Hosanna to the Son of David,' they became indignant and said to Him, 'Do You hear what these children are saying?'" (vv. 15-16a). Jesus responded, "Yes; have you never read, 'OUT OF THE MOUTH OF INFANTS AND NURSING BABIES YOU HAVE PREPARED PRAISE FOR YOURSELF'" (v. 16b). The next day, Jesus returned to the temple (v. 23) after staying overnight in Bethany (v. 17). After cursing the fig tree in front of His disciples (v. 20), He was confronted by the chief priests and elders in the temple who questioned His authority (v. 23). Finally, in the verses leading up to today's reading He told the authorities in the temple the parable of the Sons in the Vineyard that we studied previously. That particular lesson, directed squarely at the hearts of the Jewish leaders, revealed that even though a person may outwardly act in a religious manner, they could be spiritually dead on the inside (Matthew 7:13). Jesus had taught the crowds earlier about this as recorded in Matthew:

> *21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.' (Matthew 7:21-23)*

The religious leaders were not pleased with what Jesus told them. Later in the chapter, Matthew recorded, "When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them. When they sought to seize Him, they feared the people, because they considered Him to be a prophet" (Matthew 21:45-46). How insightful of them; they were afraid to seize Him, at least then, because the people considered Him a prophet!

Now that we understand the context of the Gospel lesson, as you read the Gospel text, take special note of the identity of each character in the story. *Note: Verse 44 was included for context.*

Gospel Reading:

> *33 Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT AND DUG A WINE PRESS IN IT, AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. 34 When the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. 35 "The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. 36 Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. 37 But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 38 But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' 39 They took him, and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. 40 Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers? 41 They said to Him, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons." 42 Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone; THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES'? 43 Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it. 44 And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust." (Matthew 21:33-46)*

This parable shows God's goodness and the reasonable expectation that His people would respond to that goodness by being obedient workers on God's behalf and producing fruit in His vineyard.

The story starts with a landowner who planted a vineyard. The all-caps text in verse 33 references Isaiah 5:1, which we read in the first reading. It is also very similar to the wording that God said about Israel being a "choice vine" in Jeremiah 2:21. The vine growers rejected their role as laborers on behalf of the landowner by abusing and killing the landowner's servants who came to collect the

produce (v. 35). The escalation continued to the point that the vine growers killed the landowner's son (vv. 37-39). In this context, Jesus is clearly referring to Himself. Jesus then let the Jewish leaders dig their own graves, so to speak, by asking them what they would do in such a situation. They said, "He [would] bring those wretches to a wretched end, and [would] rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who [would] pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons" (v. 42). In other words, the landowner would entrust the vineyard to other people who **would** be trustworthy. Jesus then seized the opportunity to teach them from their own Holy Scriptures by quoting a verse from Psalm 118, which they would have known. Jesus was telling the Jewish leaders that He was the stone they (the builders) were about to reject. But their rejection of Him as Messiah did not deter God's plan, for Jesus would become the cornerstone of real faith for past and future generations.

Below is a summary of the characters and subjects along with their meaning in the story:

1. The landowner represents God the Father. The landowner made a huge investment in the vineyard and then entrusted it to the vine growers. In the same way, God invests in people and entrusts His ministry to them to bear fruit.

2. The vineyard represents Israel. It had a tower and walls, protective measures the landowner took to preserve his valuable investment in the vineyard.

3. The vine growers represent the Jewish religious leaders.

4. The slaves are the prophets that God sent to the Old Testament Jews to remind them of their covenantal relationship with God.

5. The landowner's son represents God's Son, Jesus Christ.

6. The "other tenants" are the future church, which would consist primarily of Gentiles, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecies.

Some insights about the parable are as follows. First, this parable provided a key insight into the hearts of the religious leaders. The priests and elders claimed to belong to God's kingdom but did not obey God the Father. Instead, they obeyed a different father: the devil (John 8:44).

Second, the implication of this parable is that the disobedience of the Jewish people throughout history up until that time was actually a **conspiracy** against God. In verse 38, Jesus said, "they said among themselves," meaning they conspired to kill the landowner's son. Conspiracy has always been regarded as a greater crime than manslaughter in the legal system. In modern times, each of the vine growers would have been charged with both murder **and** conspiracy to commit murder. Jesus knew that the Jewish leaders had murder in their hearts. We see later on in Matthew's Gospel that Jesus lamented over Jerusalem, who killed the prophets (Matthew 23:23), the greatest of whom was John the Baptist (Matthew 11:11), who had just been killed by King Herod (Matthew 14:10). This meant that a rejection of God's prophet John was a rejection of God Himself. In general, the prophets were frequently persecuted by their own people. Some were stoned (2 Chronicles 24:21), and some, like Jeremiah, were persecuted and killed in other ways (Jeremiah 26:7-11, 38:1-28).

Finally, the parable prophesies that the leaders of the Jewish community would reject Jesus. Jesus is the stone the builders rejected, but after His exaltation, He became the Chief Cornerstone of the church (v. 42). Jesus told them clearly about the penalty for their rejection: the loss of their kingdom. "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it." In the end, God gave the kingdom to the universal church, made up primarily of Gentiles. This mystery of God's grace wasn't revealed or understood until after it happened, though in hindsight God provided clues like this.

In His grace, God gave one final warning to the Jewish leaders in verse 44. "And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust," Jesus says that rejecting Him is fatal. Falling or stumbling upon the Rock will break those who reject the Messiah, for the 2nd advent of the Messiah will be that of a Judge who will pronounce everlasting judgment. Anyone who has ever dropped a dish onto a ceramic floor knows the peril of a hard surface. Jesus is the Rock over which the Jewish leaders stumbled. By application, we can see that anyone's rejection of Jesus is a fatal mistake that cannot be forgiven. Rejecting God's provision for the forgiveness of sin through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only unforgivable sin (Matthew 12:22-32).

Reflection Questions

1. What is your response to God's claim of ownership of your life? Would you describe yourself like the vine growers who rejected the Son who came to seek payment or would you describe yourself as one who has surrendered to God's rightful ownership of your life? How would others describe you, based on your words, your attitudes, your values, and your lifestyle?

2. In the last two readings, we saw God's reasonable expectation that His people bear fruit for Him. We also saw Paul modeling this fulfillment: though he was in very unpleasant circumstances, he pointed the way to peace with God by connecting with Him in prayer. In what ways is God calling you to be His image-bearer in the world, despite your less-than-ideal circumstances? How can depending on God through prayer be a lifeline that helps you fulfill your God-given purpose?