

SERMON
On the Gospel Reading of the 13th Sunday of Matthew (Mt. 21:33-42)
(30 August 2026)

Today, my beloved brothers and sisters, we hear one of the most profound parables of the Holy Gospel: the well-known *Parable of the Wicked Tenants*.

A wealthy landowner plants a new vineyard. He surrounds it with a fence, builds a winepress, and erects a tower to watch over it. Then he entrusts the vineyard to tenants to cultivate it. At harvest time, he sends his servants to collect the fruit, but the wicked tenants treat them violently and drive them away. The owner sends other servants, and the same thing happens again. Finally, he sends his own son, hoping that they will respect him and hand over the harvest. Instead, matters become even worse. The wicked tenants not only refuse to honour the owner's son but kill him, intending to seize the inheritance for themselves, since he was the rightful heir.

In this parable, the Lord unfolds the entire mystery of God's plan of salvation. God chose the people of Israel as the nation through whom He would reveal Himself. Yet, despite His countless blessings, they proved hard-hearted, ungrateful, and wandered away from the path of God's righteousness. Throughout sacred history, God repeatedly sent righteous men and prophets to preach repentance and call Israel back to the right way. Finally, God did something wondrous: He sent His Only-begotten Son and Eternal Word to save His people, who had once again lost sight of their true calling. Yet the people of Israel not only refused to repent, but rejected the Lord, condemned Him, and ultimately led Him to the Cross.

But the vineyard remained. It still awaited faithful workers. For the Lord does not regret His gifts, nor does He revoke His covenant. Instead, He called the nations, the new spiritual Israel, and established His Church. The Church—all of us, the new spiritual Israel—has been called by the Lord to labour in His vineyard, which is His Holy Church, and to produce sweet and abundant grapes—that is, works of faith and virtue. It is not enough simply to inherit the vineyard; we must cultivate it. It is not enough that we were once baptised and entered the Church. We must labour within it: uprooting the weeds of our passions and sinful habits, planting the good seed of virtue, watering it with the tears of repentance, pruning it with the knife of discernment, and finally gathering the ripe fruit of patience and faithful labour.

Ancient Israel tragically fell into the error of believing that the vineyard belonged to them, that it was their own possession rather than God's, and therefore that they owed Him nothing. We Christians often fall into the same temptation. We imagine that we are a privileged class, entitled to belong to the Church, and that God somehow owes us something. We must not repeat the very mistake that ancient Israel made, for the Lord can call other labourers to take our place. We must always remember that we are not the owners of the vineyard. We are only workers whom the Lord has graciously invited. He alone chooses whom He will call, and our task is simply to labour faithfully and produce good works.

What the Lord seeks from us, my brothers and sisters, is not merely that we boast of having been born into the Church. Our lives themselves must bear witness that we are truly disciples of Christ. Let us never forget God's great gift: He has entrusted His vineyard to us and calls us to be faithful servants who produce the fruits of repentance and love. Amen. So may it be!