

Sunday 27A. 4.10.26

There was a monastery a few years ago riven with homosexual practices – homosexuality wasn't the issue but the practices were. One of the monks, himself a homosexual, kicked up about it but was told don't worry, feel free to follow your inclinations and eventually you won't even see it as a problem, you'll get used to it. He persevered for a while but eventually left – the dissonance between what he believed a monastery should be and what he found was too much: the place was in the hands of treacherous tenants no longer fulfilling their role as guardians of the vineyard, no longer bearing sound fruit. I've couched it this way without specifics just as Jesus tells this parable today of the vineyard leaving the rulers and the scribes and the Pharisees of the day to draw the parallels for themselves, the links to their own behaviour regarding the rule or care of their own people, but like those monks in the story above they fail to see through to the final consequences of their actions. They have indeed become so used to their abuse of power that they cannot let it go, it's gone too far, it's become part of them. It's essentially about living a lie to the point where the thinking becomes crazy, unreal, forgetful of their real status before God and one another, creatures gifted with a task and responsibility on behalf of another:

“ They will respect my son” he said. But when the tenants saw the son they said to each other “ This is the heir, come on, let us kill him and take over his inheritance.”

They recognise him as the heir without heeding the fact that an heir has a legal entitlement which they do not, has a father in heaven who has sent this son in the obvious hope that he will be respected. No, we'll take the land and the monastery and carry on as usual, we've got away with it so far so why worry. It's so short-sighted.

Where does that leave us in our own practice of Christianity, of taking care of this vineyard wherever that might be, of realising it's goodness as gift rather than a personal possession to do with as we like.

“if there's anything you need, pray for it” and

“fill your minds with everything that is true, everything that is noble,

everything that is good and pure, everything that we love and honour

and everything that can be thought virtuous or worthy of praise”

-in the words of St Paul to the Philippians.

Or in the words of Rowan Williams in this week's Tablet, from one of the WCCM series on the Future of Religion and the art of contemplation:.

“keep noticing what is there. You notice what is happening inside, you notice the little wobbles, the temptations, the seductions, the points at which you are likely to fail and trip up yet again. You notice the distractions, the pressures but instead of being oppressed and glued to them (or taken over by them) you are taught to say: “that’s not actually what matters., what does matter, and what I must bear witness to, is the faithfulness of God, always at work always present in the depths of every single moment and every single phenomenon within the world.”

Notice how it’s the attention to detail, “*the little wobbles*” that help us preserve the wider vision. This is attention to things as they really are and an antidote to any escapist fantasies that make us rulers of the universe. Its a recognition of powerlessness which is also a relief, we’re not in charge after all, it’s only God who can give us peace and the desire not to possess or dispossess others

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