

The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Mt.21:33-42

Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? (KJV)

The Beheading of St. John the Baptist

Mark 6:14-30

And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee; And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist. And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother. And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb. And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. (KJV)

St. Mathew's Gospel for this Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost describes the killing of the owner of the vineyard's servants and his son. St. Mark's Gospel describes the gruesome beheading of St. John the Baptist.

Both Gospels for today speak of violence. Violence has been a part of the world down through the centuries. Good people have often been victims of violence.

When violence occurs, turn to the Church for comfort, healing and to put violence into perspective. Believers across this nation turned to churches for healing, comfort and answers when America was attacked twenty-one years ago.

Priests in New York became a healing presence when the Twin Towers in New York were destroyed. Services were held in churches throughout the country for believers to attend. People looked to God for direction and understanding.

In both of today's Gospels, the murder victims were innocent human beings. In the September 11 attacks twenty-one years ago, innocent victims lost their lives.

The Church is a place of peace, fosters and facilitates peace. The Lord Jesus Christ embodies peace. The Lord Jesus Christ was an innocent victim experiencing death on the Cross.

Jesus spoke these words not long before His death. He said: "**Peace** I leave with you, **my peace** I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (Jn.14:27)

Believers are challenged in this world to find peace in the Lord Jesus Christ. Violence has become an everyday occurrence in the news. Too often reports are heard of mass shootings and deaths.

Churches themselves have been places of violence. It is only in Christ who turned death into victory can believers find peace that is lasting unto eternal life. Resolute faith is required for peace in Christ.

Christ is ever present for believers to reach out to in faith, love and in prayer. Christ is constantly within our midst. Christ's love is all embracing and all healing. Christ takes away our sins and leads us to the Heavenly Kingdom.

John the Baptist whose beheading we remember today was an innocent crime victim. The people that died in the Twin Towers in New York and in Somerset County, Pennsylvania in the September 11 plane crash were innocent victims.

Jesus was the most innocent victim going to His death voluntarily. Jesus triumphed over death and rose from the grave. The Lord proved He was stronger than death. Jesus rose from the tomb.

Christ's victory over death brings everlasting joy. Christ's Church offers the path to everlasting joy. Seekers of peace and joy find it in God's Holy Church. Today is the day to embrace the way of the Crucified and Risen Christ.

Remember today all the innocent victims having lost their lives on September 11 and throughout the centuries. Emulate the commitment of St. John the Baptist to the Lord Jesus Christ. Love the Lord and seek Him at all times.