

## Year A - 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday

Evil is hard to see. It lies hidden under the surface of our world around us. Most of the time we are able to ignore the ugliness that evil causes in our world. Evil might happen someplace around the world, and we are either uniformed about it or decide that it is either too far away for us to do something about it, or have a direct effect upon us.

Last Sunday, in Las Vegas, evil showed us, and the world, that it can cause great harm, destruction and yes, even death. More than 50 were killed and over 500 wounded by the evil perpetrated by one individual. We have seen the images across our newspapers, television screens and our smart devices. This time it is not something we can ignore, but how can anyone make sense of what seems like madness.

Killing has been part of human society almost since it beginning. In the Book of Genesis the murder of Abel by his own brother, Cain, is recounted. Since that time countless others have been killed in wars and random acts of hatred. Those doing the killing always try to justify what they are doing by appealing to some high

purpose, but always the killing has to do with obtaining or maintaining power over others.

There is a good amount of killing that is described in the parable that Jesus tells in today's Gospel. In the Old Testament Israel has frequently been described as a vineyard that God has planted. The parable shows that the vineyard owner, God, has taken great pains to assure that the vineyard is given everything that it needs for the tenants, the people of Israel, to produce a bountiful harvest. What happens when the vineyard owner sends his servants to collect the harvest that is due to him? The servants are mistreated and many are killed. Finally, a son is sent and even he is not respected, and killed.

In looking back over 2,000 years of reflection on the parable the characters have been linked to the salvation history of Israel and us. The tenants who were responsible for the harvest of the vineyard were the religious authorities in the history of Israel. The harvest they were to produce was love and worship for God. They failed to be true to the God who trusted them with his people. The servants were the prophets who would call back the religious authorities, and the people, to worship God and not rely only upon themselves. Finally, the son is Jesus, who was rejected by the authorities and killed. At the end of the parable the chief priests and elders call down destruction on the wicked tenants, themselves.

We might agree that God has every right to act with vengeance against the chief priests. Beyond not obeying God's laws they would be responsible for the killing of Jesus, God's only son. Doesn't the Old Testament even call for "an eye for an eye?"

We know that the death of Jesus on the cross was not the last word of God. God, in his justice, could have reacted with a great judgment against those who killed his son. Instead, God shows his great mercy and compassion, and raises Jesus from the grave for our salvation from the sin and evil in the world.

We all know that the killing and injury experienced in Las Vegas will not be the last. Every day, somewhere in our country, and around the world, evil is on display in its many forms. In Jesus' death and resurrection God has had the final word that evil would not defeat his mercy and compassion. God has done a great deal to assure that our salvation can be attained. How this can happen with the evil that exists in the world remains for us a mystery, but God will prevail. Are we willing to put our trusting faith in the God who loves us unconditionally, and extend the mercy that we receive from God to those we encounter in our daily lives?