



# WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



## 27<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, CYCLE A

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*The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; Matt 21:42*

This Sunday's Gospel parable can be understood on at least two levels. Most simply, and in its original form, Jesus is telling us a story that exemplifies the lengths to which people will go to get what they want. We must be ready to go to great lengths to participate in the Kingdom of God. Jesus is counseling us to do good and avoid anything wicked. In fact the moral of this parable is to cooperate with God's grace to claim a share in the Kingdom of God. We are being told that relentless determination characterizes the human condition, but it is ours to choose dark versus light, death of the soul versus life. This is not the only time Jesus uses an example of evil intent to show us the consequences of our choices.

On a second level, the parable is an indictment of those who refuse to believe and who continuously mistreat the messengers of God's will for the world. When read on this level, the story works to shock us by the evil intent that humans are capable of through misdirected free will. Jesus is telling a story that can elicit only one response from the chief priests and elders: *"He will put those wretched men to a wretched death."* The parable, when read in this way, vindicates all the rejected prophets throughout the Old Testament, as well as Jesus himself in His time on earth, by castigating those who refuse to accept and believe.

At the end of the parable, Jesus quotes from scripture Psalm 118:22: *"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; by the Lord has this been done."* This has a powerful prophetic context to the listening ears of the *chief priests and elders of the people*, and foreshadows what was soon to come.

When the first Temple of Jerusalem was built in Jerusalem in 957 B.C. by King Solomon the builders had stringent specifications on the mining of the corner stone. It was to be hewn from a virgin quarry never before mined, in this case taken from the valley of *Biq'at Beit Kerem*, located west of Jerusalem. Using expensive bronze tools, they dug into virgin soil and transported the whole stone for inspection. Less expensive iron tools were forbidden to be used, since iron rusts, representing blood, thus defiling the stone by merely touching it. If the builder-inspector noted even the tiniest iron scraping, the stone was rejected.

In reflection, consider Jesus' words in John 2:19 in light of the crucifixion, *"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."* Jesus is *"the stone that the builders rejected [that] has become the cornerstone."* Like the original cornerstone, Jesus was *"hewn"* of a virgin, undefiled until His Crucifixion. Jesus' body was *"lifted"* *"pierced"* and *"flawed"* by bloodied nails made of iron. Jesus, the new temple, was raised on the Cross by the defiled iron nails that *"lifted"* Him into the air above all. Rejected, yet through the providence of God the Father, broke through the veil of death to become the cornerstone of our Christian existence. *"By the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes."*

*"Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure,  
whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence  
and if there is anything worthy of praise, ponder these things." Phil 4:5*

**A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew**

*Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people:  
"Hear another parable.  
There was a landowner who planted a vineyard,  
put a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a tower.  
Then he leased it to tenants and went on a journey.  
When vintage time drew near,  
he sent his servants to the tenants to obtain his produce.  
But the tenants seized the servants and one they beat,  
another they killed, and a third they stoned.  
Again he sent other servants, more numerous than the first ones,  
but they treated them in the same way.  
Finally, he sent his son to them, thinking,  
'They will respect my son.'  
But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another,  
'This is the heir.  
Come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance.'  
They seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.  
What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes?"*

They answered him,  
"He will put those wretched men to a wretched death  
and lease his vineyard to other tenants  
who will give him the produce at the proper times."

Jesus said to them,  
*"Did you never read in the Scriptures:  
The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone;  
by the Lord has this been done,  
and it is wonderful in our eyes?  
Therefore, I say to you,  
the kingdom of God will be taken away from you  
and given to a people that will produce its fruit."*

***The Gospel of the Lord***

