

Accountability Eighth Week In Ordinary Time Monday, May 30, 2016 8:15 AM 2
Pt 1:2-17; **Mk 12:1-12 Memorial Day** (God creates human beings and then covenants with them in various ways, in various times, but always requiring accountability. We are indebted to those who served, and now we have to live lives worthy of their sacrifice.)

“Jesus began to speak to the chief priest, the scribes, and the elders in parables.”

Well, parables are exaggerations; they make little literal sense. No one could be as foolish as the owner of this vineyard in this story. Nobody could be so foolish as to believe that after servants had been treated shamefully and killed that these people would respect his son; no one would believe that. But **Jesus says these absurd things to trigger an awareness that God isn't the way we imagine.**

Of course God knows and God has always known what is in the hearts of people. And he knows that there is no room for him in the minds and hearts of the violent. It has always been true. In fact, one of the optional prayers for this Mass is about that; I didn't happen to use it, but **there is no room for God in the hearts and minds of the violent.** But—and here is the point of the parable—**God sends his Son anyway.** God sends his Son anyway, even though he knows that he is putting him in harm's way, because there is in spite of all the danger also **the opportunity of many to come, to listen, and to accept the gift.** So God in a way is foolish from a human viewpoint, just like the Good Shepherd is foolish from a human viewpoint, leaving ninety-nine untended sheep to get one that's strayed—that's foolish. Here this is foolish. Foolishness, St. Paul talks about **“the foolishness of God is greater than the wisdom of mankind.”** So we are dealing with something that we cannot ever grasp. **We cannot put God into any category** or any sort of little idea or concept in our minds. God is going to break out of all that.

But this parable also suggests something else: that **we are put on earth for a purpose and yes, sooner or later we have to be accountable for that purpose.** God does demand produce from those he has created to work in his vineyard. And ultimately the results of those who reject this accountability, those who want to live for themselves, those who want to take over the vineyard and possess it, when in fact it isn't theirs, those who want to live by violence, eventually are held accountable, eventually.

Now what “eventually” means, again, we don't even know that. But then we are held accountable for the vocation, the mission, the purpose, the reason why we have been put on

earth—that is clear. And this is something we have to keep in mind every day because we live in **a society where accountability for oneself seems to be dying.** There are all kinds of writers who talk about how wonderful the world is becoming because of communication and because of computers and because of our new abilities and technologies, all of which is true to a point. But while all these wonderful things are happening and new opportunities are opening up for communication and relating throughout the world and while that's all happening on one level, on another level there is something disintegrating. And we can't be blind to that either; we have to see.

The whole fundamental notion of covenant is based on a sense of obligation. We are obligated to respond to the God who has called us. That's the idea of covenant. The idea of covenant is not limited to the Hebrew people or to the Christian people. There were covenants in the Old Testament, with Noah for example. The whole idea of covenant is more or less basic to the biblical understanding of creation; that **God creates human beings and then covenants with them in various ways, in various times, but always requiring accountability.** There were times when this was more well-accepted in society, in culture—today not so much. **We need to restore that.** We need to restore it first to ourselves if it has slipped away, and then to our families if they are not getting it, and then as much as we can to those around us. Talking to various people, my sister included and various parishioners, especially those running businesses, I hear the worst problem is that young people often have no sense of a work ethic or any sense of accountability and they just don't show responsibility, which is a terrible burden if you are trying to hire people to run a business. And that's just one little aspect, but think of that multiplied in a whole society, what a problem we are dealing with. This is talking about that.

And of course today **we celebrate also those people who have been accountable for themselves and for their loved ones, for their country, taking up arms in defense of it.** We remember them too with gratitude, how they have honored us. But they now produce in a way a new debt for us. **We are indebted to them, and now we have to live lives worthy of their sacrifice.** We talk about freedom, but what does freedom mean? There's a good sense of freedom: freedom to live according to our conscience and do what God asks us to do and to be productive and to bring produce to God for our life on earth. And there's another way we use the word freedom: to indulge ourselves in whatever we want. I don't think any man or woman in the armed services in any war ever died so that we could be self-indulgent.