

**Homily Helps October 8, 2023**  
**Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**Two weeks until World Mission Sunday**

Most people love both giving and receiving gifts. Yet, an essential quality must be present for something to be a gift: it must be freely given and freely received. The readings from Isaiah and St Luke's Gospel speak of the Lord's desire to provide the gift of himself with the offer for humanity to enter into a deep relationship with him. The Lord offered this relationship to the Jewish people first with the special covenant made with them. Then, the offer of salvation was extended to all of humanity with the coming of Christ and the salvific acts of his life, death, and resurrection.

But like with all gifts that we humans give to and receive from one another, even the gift of salvation from and through Christ must be freely given and accepted. Indeed, the Lord offers the gift of himself freely and without condition. Yet the question always remains as to whether we will accept this gift in a meaningful way. Take, for example, Isaiah's description of the Lord's generous and lavish care of Ancient Israel through the metaphor of a carefully tended vineyard. For their part, the Jewish people sometimes did not accept God's gifts to them in their failure to faithfully treat one another with mercy, justice, and peace. Whereas good had planted choice grapes, bitter fruit was reaped instead.

As for the Gospel, this theme continues with Jesus' telling of this parable of a gift freely offered by the Lord but not truly accepted by those with whom he wishes to enter into a deep and saving relationship. The groups of slaves represent the Hebrew prophets of old and new voices, such as John the Baptist calling the people to repentance (to keep the vineyard fruitful). When the people fail to listen to these warnings, as a last resort, the owner of the vineyard sends his son (Jesus), but he, too, is rejected and then killed. When those who should accept the Lord's many gifts by their own generous and faithful response fail at this, the parable tells us that the Lord will offer others this gift of salvation and a relationship with himself. By this, we see that now the gift of salvation moves beyond just the Jewish people but is now extended to all the peoples of the earth.

As we move closer to World Mission Sunday on October 22, these two scripture readings the Church offers us today speak powerfully of Christ's universal mission to provide the gift of salvation to all people. And it also reminds us that we, the baptized, who have accepted this gift have a critical role to play. As we endeavor to say yes to Christ in all aspects of our lives, our acceptance of him is only genuine if we live our lives rooted in the teachings of his Gospel and the teachings of the Church. And a constitutive part of our saying yes is to play an active role supporting the announcement of Christ and his kingdom to all the people, especially those who have yet to hear of him. The Lord has cultivated a beautiful vineyard for all the world to live in.

May we do our part to extend his invitation to all people throughout the world.



The Society for the  
Propagation of the Faith  
*a Pontifical Mission Society*

[www.sfarch.org/MissionsSF](http://www.sfarch.org/MissionsSF)

