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“They will respect my son” (Matt 21:37).

Gen 37:3-4, 23-23a, 17b-28a; Matt 21:33-43, 45-46

This week has been dominated by growing concerns over public health and government preparedness, so it will not be lost on people that today is Friday the 13th. Yet, even this coincidence is another chance to separate science from myth, cause and effect from bad luck.

It may be too early to talk of anything good coming from all the bad news, but today's two readings are powerful stories about the mysterious hand of Providence. Joseph is sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, but then uses his position in Egypt to save them and Israel during a famine. The jealous tenants abuse the owner's messengers and kill his son to seize the vineyard, but the parable is really about salvation because of the death of Jesus.

It is unwise to try to outguess God by interpreting history with simple optimism in the face of disaster—a temptation for preachers and politicians—but both scripture narratives are about trusting in God and giving hope the upper hand in the long view of history. God can bring good out of evil. Tragedy has its lessons, and suffering is a great teacher of humility and compassion for others. But we must choose this path.

It should not take a pandemic to remind people how dependent we are on one another, or that there is only one human family. Since a pandemic is what we have, there are lessons to be learned and opportunities to examine the way we have been living in our fragile world and how one person's normal can be another person's suffering. An interrupted global economy exposes enormous disparities, exploitation, environmental destruction and over consumption of shared resources. Addressing basic inequalities must be part of the solution if the planet, our common home, is to survive.

Jesus' many parables were pleas for wisdom and justice as enlightened self-interest. The vineyard tenants were greedy for an inheritance the owner was preparing to share with them. Jesus was sent to save a world that rejected and murdered him. God's abundant mercy is offered to sinners. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

What emerged from the bad news of the cross was the Good News of salvation. Crisis holds the opportunity to become the community we have said we were or

want to be. God's grace holds the upper hand, but waits for us to use it to make a different world.

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