

October 8, 2023: Nineteenth Sunday After Pentecost

Main Idea: God doesn't stop at calling us to be good stewards. God also equips us with the things and the opportunities we will need to be good stewards.

Try to imagine yourself as one of the tenants in this parable from Matthew, Chapter 21. What would cause you to turn so violent? Why, after this landowner shows trust in you, provides you with a way to make a living and charges you with the stewardship of his vineyard, would you kill his servants and then his son? The answer is simple and twofold: to maintain a structure of power that centers you, and to build more wealth for yourself.

The point of this text is that judgment is coming for people who would operate this way, especially at the expense of others. But here is the promise that accompanies that judgment: God will never stop providing us with the things we, as the supposed tenants of this vineyard, need to eradicate oppression and to share wealth. The landowner didn't shut down the vineyard. He opened leadership up to collaboration because he had an instinct that including others could lead to something greater than he could accomplish on his own.

This is one of the least cryptic and most searing parables in all of scripture. Jesus is making so clear the fact that he is comparing the chief priests and the Pharisees to the bad tenants that the chief priests and the Pharisees figure it out on the spot. We, as modern day readers, might start to wonder where this allegory resonates in our own lives. We might be able to think of an area or two in which this judgment feels too close to home—where we could be doing more out of a spirit of stewardship rather than pure self-interest.

Our good news is that God will not call us to something without preparing us for it along the way. If we aim to be better tenants, God will give us what we need to be better tenants. And if we mess things up—if we sabotage the place and metaphorically kill that first round of messengers who come our way—God will give us another chance. God will send other messengers and even God's own son to help us repent and reconfigure.

God's kingdom is precious, and meant to be shared by all so that it may nourish and replenish all. That's why Jesus says it will be given to people who produce the fruits of the kingdom.

Scripture Summary

The Pharisees were pressing Jesus but not hearing him. Perhaps they will see themselves in Jesus' parable about wicked tenants who killed for their own gain—even the landowner's own son!



There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower.



GOD'S WORD for Today

October 8, 2023
Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

First Reading: Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20

20 Then God spoke all these words: ²I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; ³you shall have no other gods before me. ⁴You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁷You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. ⁸Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your work. ¹²Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. ¹³You shall not murder. ¹⁴You shall not commit adultery. ¹⁵You shall not steal. ¹⁶You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. ¹⁷You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. ¹⁸When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they were afraid and trembled and stood at a distance, ¹⁹and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die." ²⁰Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come only to test you and to put the fear of him upon you so that you do not sin."

Psalm: Psalm 19

Second Reading: Philippians 3:4b-14

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. ⁷Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. ⁸More than that, I

regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. ¹⁰I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, ¹¹if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. ¹²Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

Gospel: Matthew 21:33-46

³³Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. ³⁴When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. ³⁵But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. ³⁷Finally he sent his son to them, saying, "They will respect my son." ³⁸But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance." ³⁹So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. ⁴⁰Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" ⁴¹They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time." ⁴²Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes?'" ⁴³Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. ⁴⁴The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls." ⁴⁵When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.