

SERMON FOR APRIL 3, 2022

TEXT: LUKE 20: 9-20

THEME: A STORY THAT HITS CLOSE TO HOME

9 And he began to tell the people this parable: “A man planted a vineyard and let it out to tenants and went into another country for a long while. **10** When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, so that they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. **11** And he sent another servant. But they also beat and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. **12** And he sent yet a third. This one also they wounded and cast out. **13** Then the owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.’ **14** But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Let us kill him, so that the inheritance may be ours.’ **15** And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? **16** He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.” When they heard this, they said, “Surely not!” **17** But he looked directly at them and said, “What then is this that is written: “‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone’? **18** Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.” **19** The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him at that very hour, for they perceived that he had told this parable against them, but they feared the people. **20** So they watched him and sent spies, who pretended to be sincere, that they might catch him in something he said, so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor.

In the name of Jesus:

In the Gospel lesson for today Jesus shares a parable. A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. When Jesus speaks in a parable, He does so to make a point, and what a point He makes! The story He told hit

too close to home among many who heard it. That is why Luke records” They perceived that Jesus told this parable against them.” It hit too close to home.

So what was Jesus talking about? It is a disturbing story of an owner of a vineyard who hires workers then goes away for a long time, leaving the workers in charge to work the vineyard. When it came time for the harvest, the owner sent a servant to check on the produce. But the workers in the vineyard didn't take kindly to this servant, so they beat him and sent him away empty handed.

The owner must have thought that they made a mistake, kind of a case of mistaken identity. So he sends another servant, and that servant too is beaten and also treated shamefully. So he sends yet another servant, the third time, and this one is physically attacked, wounded, and thrown out of the vineyard. The owner is perplexed. He wants to check on his vineyard, after all, it is his vineyard and he has a right to not only the property but also the product that is produced. Now he has an idea, he will send his son, his beloved son, now the workers will respect the son and do what is right and proper.

But the workers threw the son out of the vineyard and killed him. A horrible story with a shameful ending. So why in the world would the hearers

get so upset about this story and think that Jesus was speaking about their lives? Because Jesus was telling the truth in story form, and the story hit too close to home.

God is the owner of the vineyard. The vineyard is His Church in the Old Testament. God called Abraham, a wandering nomad, to follow Him, and Abraham believed and God counted Him righteous. As the family of God grew, the twelve tribes of Israel were taken into Egypt, to be provided for during a famine. God provided for His people but soon there was a new king of Egypt and this Pharaoh saw the growing number of people of Israel to be a threat. He made them slaves and Hebrews remained slaves for 400 years.

God heard the cry of His people to give them freedom so God sent Moses, and God used Moses to lead them out of Egypt to the Promised Land. There they became a great nation, and they had a great king, one who loved God with his whole being. His name was David and Israel was blessed by God. Israel was a nation that gave glory to God.

But soon other kings followed David and they forgot about God and the love God had for them. So God sent prophets, servants to speak His word. Time and again God sent prophets to call the people to repentance. But these prophets were treated rejected, much like the servants sent by the owner of

the vineyard in the parable. You might have heard of some of these prophets: Isaiah, he was put to death and sawn in two. There is Jeremiah who was thrown into a cistern and forgotten about.

Eventually God says, "I know what I will do, I will send My Son, my beloved Son, Jesus. They will listen to Him. But you know the story don't you? It is the story we will hear about next week during Holy Week, where Jesus was rejected by His Church and His nation, and was crucified on Calvary's cross. Why? Because God so loved the world that He gave His One and only Son, so that whoever believes in Him will have everlasting life.

So what is the end of the story? God brings judgment upon those who rejected His prophets and His Son, and God begins something new, so much so that on Pentecost the Holy Spirit is poured out upon Jews, and then later Gentiles, so that all who believe in the name of the Lord Jesus are saved!

This story hit too close to home. That is why Luke records that those who heard it began to plot how to do away with Jesus, replete with appointing spies to try to find something to pin on Jesus to crucify Him.

That is why Jesus concludes the parable with this quote from the Old Testament: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the

cornerstone'? **18** Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him." Little did they know that in spite of the rejection of not only God's prophets but also His Son, God's will was going to be done!

You might not have realized it coming to church today but this story is about all of us, of how God the Father loves each of you with an everlasting love. He pours out His Spirit in love to create a people called the Church who will believe in Jesus and serve Him all the days of their lives.

That is why you are here. You are baptized! You belong to Jesus! He comes today in love forgiving you and empowering you to live your life to His glory, bearing fruit for the Father, which is the whole point of the vineyard. Vines are meant to bear fruit. And you are meant to bear fruit for Him ,giving glory to God in all you do.

You might not have realized it, but this story hits close to home for each of us. "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **9** not a result of works, so that no one may boast. **10** For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." To the glory of God and in Jesus' name. Amen