

“The One Rejected Is the One We Welcome” (St. Matthew 21:33-43)

For Your Life in Christ the Week of the 16th Sunday after Pentecost

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Saint Paul’s Lutheran Church of Irvine, CA (LC-MS)

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Introduction: Definition of “Parable”

- A. Literally means “putting things side-by-side.”
- B. It is an extended simile. When we say, “*This* thing is LIKE *that* thing.” And then go on to elaborate.
- C. It is presented in story form and things in the world (physical things) represent spiritual realities. Spiritual things are “put along side of” physical things.
- D. What is conveyed in a biblical parable is TRUTH and an actual state of affairs.
- E. Jesus used parables constantly during His earthly ministry; He was the master teacher! Why did He use parables?

St. Luke 8:10: *“To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.”*

- F. Jesus Himself taught that parables contain “secrets” or “mysteries,” in the sense of something higher than us, or beyond our own ability and reason; things that teach us about ultimate realities (about ourselves and about God).
- G. What challenges folks though is that the words in Luke 8:10 seem to indicate that Jesus does not give these beneficial mysteries to all people. Some people will see, but not see; some will hear, but not understand. Why?
- H. NOT because Christ does not love all people. He does! The difference, however, is that some people continue to REJECT Christ. Jesus once described the difference between people:

St. Matthew 9:12-13: *“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”*

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- I. But those who believe themselves to be “righteous” apart from God do not need Christ, and therefore reject Him. Thus some who “heard” the parables of Jesus, did not understand a word. They did not see their meaning, but were spiritually blind.
- J. Let us now delve into the “secrets” of today’s parable:

Part I: The Parable of the Tenants

- A. This is a very important parable presented three times in Scripture, in Matthew 21, Mark 12, and Luke 20!
- B. The imagery of the parable:
 1. The “vineyard” = the nation of Israel, God’s people.
 2. The “landowner” = God.
 3. The “wall” = the Word of God that protects God’s people.
 4. The “winepress” = sacrifice of atonement, blood.
 5. The “tower” = the watchmen, the prophets of God.

Part II: This Parable Applies to Our Lives Today!

- A. The Church is like the Vineyard today. We are His people. Notice that in the New Testament this imagery is maintained:

Jesus said in **John 15:5:** *“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”*

- B. We know the location of the vine and branches = in the **vineyard**; this describes the mystical union of Christ and His people which is precisely the Church, the Body of Christ. Jesus is here with us in His vineyard!
- C. The **landowner** is still and always the Lord. He is our head and He leads us through life! Think of the hymn “The Church’s One Foundation.”
- D. The **wall** is still the Word of God that surrounds us and protects us. Think of the hymn “Thy Strong Word.” Think of the “surrounding” description we find in Deuteronomy:

Deuteronomy 6:6-9: *“And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”*

- E. The **winepress** is perhaps most evident in the Church today! The winepress where the wine flows is the Holy and Blessed Sacrament of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is where the blood of Christ is continually poured out for the forgiveness of sins!
- F. And finally, the **watchtower** is still held by servants who watch over God’s people through the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. One term for them is “overseer,” but today we typically call them “pastors.”

Part III: The Parable Reveals a Big Problem Though

- A. People in the vineyard sinfully reject these gifts from God!
- B. Even we who are in the vineyard are capable of turning against God. In fact, this is still our sinful tendency.
- C. See what can happen in the Church:

2nd Timothy 4:3-4: *“For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.”*

- D. According to the Lord’s parable this is what the people of Israel did. They turned away from the truth of God’s Word and rejected the faithful prophets, and then among His own people the very Son of God was rejected and crucified.
- E. This is a wake-up call for us. We claim to be Christians. Are we aware of how according to our sinful nature we reject the Word and our Savior? We must be put on alert and humbled by what the Word says:

John 1:11: *“He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.”*

- F. Christ comes to you, His own. Do you receive Him? This is not a question about your track record. It is a question for *today*. Embrace your place in the vineyard, confess your landowner, rejoice in the wall of your protection, come to the winepress and drink your forgiveness, and heed the word proclaimed from the watchtower!

Conclusion: We must repent and hold to the One rejected

- A. He allowed Himself to be rejected, so that His life, death and resurrection would restore the vineyard to God. You are restored in Christ.
- B. He allowed Himself to be rejected, so that God would once again become your landowner and claim you as His own. He claims you as His own and you are engraved on the palms of the hands of the Lord!

Isaiah 49:16: *“Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me.”*

- C. He allowed Himself to be rejected, so that He would rise and have power through His Word to keep us in Himself. The wall of His Word protects us at this moment and keeps us in Christ!
- D. He allowed Himself to be rejected so that we would receive His blood poured out to keep us in the forgiveness of our sins. Ignatius of Antioch (first-century bishop) described Holy Communion this way: *“the medicine of immortality, the antidote against death, and everlasting life in Jesus Christ (Jaroslav Pelikan, The Christian Tradition, Vol 1, pg. 169).”* This is Communion, the Winepress!
- E. He allowed Himself to be rejected so that through His glorious resurrection He would live and work through His servants of the Word and through this ministry **He would live and work through YOU!**
- F. We therefore WELCOME the rejected One our Savior & Lord!