

Introductory

This parable is in Mark (12:1-12) and Luke (20:9-19). The three accounts are similar. None are appointed to be read in the TLH one-year lectionary. In the LW three-year lectionary, the Matthew text (33-43) is appointed to be read on Pentecost 20A, and the Luke text on Lent 5C. In LSB, the Luke text is likewise appointed for Lent 5C.

Here Jesus continues to speak in parables, and yet there is a notable shift in His use of them. This parable is a continuation of His sermon from last week, which was prompted by the challenge to His authority. At some point the challengers become listeners, and at the end of the day the religious leaders understood that this parable is about them (v. 45).

At the beginning of the chapter on this parable in his book *The Waiting Father, Sermons on the Parables of Jesus*, Helmut Thielicke notes that,

If we were to survey all the parables of Jesus we would note something that is very remarkable. All the parables that deal with nature – the lilies of the field, the birds of the air, the shepherd and his sheep – breathe something of peace and safety and order. But wherever man occupies the center – not matter whether it be the unmerciful servant, the unjust steward, the rich man, or whomever it may be – there is always the element of dramatic tension, conflict, doom, and downfall. And so it is in this parable of the wicked vinedressers.

Actually, the parable is about the householder, not the vinedressers, Jesus says.

Back in chapter thirteen, when Jesus began to speak in parables, He explained that He speaks in that literary genre so as to help believers to better understand the Kingdom. He also explains that parables will have the opposite effect on unbelievers, that they will be utterly unable to understand, and they will be further blinded in their blindness.

He then tells several parables about “The Kingdom of Heaven,” introducing them with the words, “The Kingdom of Heaven is like...” He does not introduce this parable with those words. The focus of those parables about the Kingdom has been on God, and they have been very Gospel-centered. The focus in this parable is still on God.

But these religious leaders are prominent in it. These parables are very Law-centered, words of condemnation, and they understand them, and they understand these parables to be about them. Their response to having been whacked up-side the head like this is to want to arrest Jesus. That’s how unbelief responds to Jesus then, and now.

As has been mentioned before, not understanding the Gospel, the unbeliever cannot hope to comprehend a Gospel-centered parable. But as has also been noted, the one who understands the Law – and these men understood the Law – can well comprehend a Law-centered parable like this one. Go ahead and review that concept here and maybe later.

Not that there is no Gospel in this parable. The Gospel, the good news, comes at the end, when Jesus talks about the Kingdom of God being taken from them and given to us. It was a point last week, and it's a point this week, that we Gentiles are the beneficiaries of the Jews rejection of the Christ. The cautionary tale is not to let that happen to us.

The story that Jesus tells includes a great deal of violence. Several people are beaten, and several others are killed, and that's serious business. As is the case when talking about hookers to an audience ranging in age from infant to elderly and all in-between, we ought to choose our words carefully when describing violence. But we can't ignore it, can we?

Several summers ago, a local person went on a bloody rampage that ended with the deaths of eight people. The victims ranged in age from a two-year old child to a ninety-three year old man, and no guns or knives were used. He beat his victims to death. Sometimes he used a weapon, and other times he beat his victim to death with fists.

I feel a variety of bad feelings and emotions caused by the sheer violence of one man's violence to others, and we hear about and see similar things all the time. The tendency is probably to downplay the severity and utter violence of beatings and killings so that the hearers almost don't notice. We should probably make them notice more than they do.

I would not talk to a two-year-old about that murderous rampage, nor will I describe in a very graphic manner the violence visited upon servants and a son by evil and violent tenants. But I will try to move the hearer to some kind of pathos when talking about exactly what sort of violence happened to the innocent victims of those men of violence.

A good way to do that may be to humanize or even personalize the essentially faceless servants and especially the son. Maybe ask if the men who did not come home had families. Maybe talk about the love of a father for his son, or even of an employer for his employee. How would you feel if one of your employees was killed working for you?

We do not know if there were weapons involved in this violence. We know that weapons were in existence, but the story does not speak of weapons, either because there were no weapons involved, or because there obviously were weapons involved. Weapons have more often than not been in possession of man since the fall, including the time of Jesus.

Do I picture Jesus and the disciples packing as they are going about from small town to small town? Yes, I do, and it would not even have been noticed, no more than it would

have been noticed in those kinds of places in America until recently. Peter had a sword at Gethsemane, and he used it to try to lop off the head of Malchus, then Jesus stopped him.

Textual Notes

33. On the heels of the Parable of the Two Sons, Jesus invites His hearers, “Ἀλλήν παραβολὴν ἀκούσατε. Ἄνθρωπος ἦν οἰκοδεσπότης ὅστις ἐφύτευσεν ἀμπελῶνα – listen to another parable; there was a man, a householder, who planted a vineyard.” KJV translate the word as “householder.” It’s not a word we use a lot, and just what does it mean?

Other translations go mostly with “landowner” and “master of a house,” and we’re getting closer. If we go back to feudal Europe, the man in this story would look a lot like the Lord of the Manor. He lived in the Manor House, he oversaw the ag operations on his property, and he rented out parcels of land to tenants, who owed him part of the crop.

Whenever I asked my daughter The Captain (USAF Reserves) what she does in her job, she would say “I tell other people what to do.” One time I asked a farmer what he likes about farming. He said, “I tell people what to do, and people don’t tell me what to do.” That’s the οἰκοδεσπότης in this parable; he was a man who told other people what to do.

The picture painted is one of a man starts from nothing and sets up a winery. We note that the more some things change, the more others stay the same. The basic elements of the winery that the man in the story set up then are the same basic elements of a winery today. You plant the vineyard, secure the perimeter, build a press, and good to go!

Actually, there are vineyards going up all over the place around here, and I don’t see many fences around or towers above them. Livestock rustling is still a thing, but grape rustling not so much. In the time of Jesus, sans the Sheriff, you were on your own to protect your property, sort of like people who live in rural Mercer County, IL.

If you watched *Oz and James's Big Wine Adventure*, a short BBKA series which featured *Top Gear*’s James May and wine expert Oz Clarke, who were traveling through the vineyards of France (Series 1) and California (Series 2) a few years ago then you know that the operation of a winery is no simple task. Not all wine is the same.

A lot goes into choosing the right location, taking into account soil, climate and other things, and the right kind of grapes. The man plants grape plants that grow into vines that produce grapes; a field commonly called a “vineyard.” The man puts a hedge around the vineyard to protect it from creatures that eat grapes and the leaves of the vines.

Why a hedge? Made of thorn bushes like hedge, Barclay says that it was “designed to keep out both the wild boars who might ravage the vineyard, and thieves who might steal the grapes.” I don’t know about your dog, but my dog will eat grapes. The Internet has several animals eating grapes, including the raccoon, the opossum, and the fox.

The need for a winepress is not as self-evident as it may seem. Americans go to the grocery store and buy grapes, bring them home, put them in the refrigerator, then put them in lunches, and maybe pick at them themselves. That sort of ongoing relationship with the grape, one that lasts for days or even for weeks, is a historical anomaly.

Grapes left to themselves will quickly go bad in our Midwestern homes, and how much more in the heat of the Middle East. Things like grape juice and even grape jelly are modern inventions. For most of human history grapes have been almost exclusively used to turn into wine, and a winepress on site was, and is, an essential part of the operation.

Barclay thinks that, “the tower served a double purpose. It served as a watch-tower, from which to watch for thieves when the grapes were ripening; and it served as a lodging for those who were working in the vineyard.” Gundry agrees that, “the fence protected the vineyard against wild beasts and other intruders” and cites Psalm 80:13-14 as a reference.

He continues, “The tower served as a shelter for watchmen,” citing 2 Chr 26:10 and Is 1:8, and he references Jeremias *Parables*, available for between five and ten dollars at Amazon. As is often the case, so here the householder “ἐξέδετο – leased out” his land to tenants, one of three methods of payment used in that day. Edersheim says,

Such leases were given by the year or for life: sometimes the lease was even hereditary, passing from father to son. There can scarcely be a doubt that it was (this) kind of a lease which is referred to in the Parable, the lessees being bound to give the owner a certain amount of fruits in their season.” (Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, II, 421, Oxford 1886, MacDonald Publishing, McLean, VA).

That verb describing this sort of arrangement – we would call it a lease – is the aorist middle indicative form of ἐκδίδωμι, a word commonly used in speaking of leasing land, hiring workers, or giving a daughter in marriage. The middle voice clearly indicates “in one’s own interest,” and the word itself has connotations of a contractual arrangement.

This is a simple business deal, and one that is commonly made these days with farmland and other capital, as it was in those days. Having completed this business arrangement, the man “ἄπεδήμησεν – went away.” The verb occurs only six times in the NT, and it means that the person went far away from that place, and hard to keep an eye on things.

Around here, there are small and large farms owned by individuals, there are some owned by corporations made up of members of the same family and actually farmed by a few family members, and there are a lot of farms owned by, in the local parlance, “doctors and lawyers from Chicago,” who are probably similar to the householder in the story.

The doctors and lawyers don’t really know much about actual farming, so they leave that to the experts. Likewise, when the householder goes off on an unspecified journey, he

leaves the winery to be worked by “γεωργοῖς – vinedressers,” the people who actually know about earth and vines and grapes and wine, like Francis Duflo did in *A Good Year*.

When Jesus chooses to tell an “earthly story,” He chooses earthly things that are familiar – not unfamiliar – to His hearer in the story. In preaching this text, I will likely talk about the operation of a winery – with which not many of my hearers are familiar – and I will also likely speak in terms of a large grain operation – with which they are all familiar.

Many of the people in the pews at Immanuel, Grand Mound, Iowa are farmers. Many more who don’t farm are only one or maybe two generations removed from the farm, and maybe help out at harvest. More still are in some way involved in ag; farm services, buying and selling commodities, bankers for farmers, teachers of farmers children.

I would compare the man in this story to the large farmer around here, where many of the farms look a lot like a grain elevator would have looked 30 years ago. They have invested in larger bins, a leg or two with a pit, dryers, large machine sheds, and eighteen-wheelers. If you are a rural Pastor and don’t know what those things mean, you should.

34. Like now in Eastern Iowa “ὅτε δὲ ἤγγισεν ὁ καιρὸς τῶν καρπῶν – when the season of the fruits drew near.” The noun is “καιρός - season” not “χρόνος – time” like with a clock or calendar. That’s the thing about the harvest, whether you’re talking about corn or beans or chestnuts or tomatoes; you know about when they come, but not exactly.

The word “καρπῶν – fruits” occurs sixty-six times in the NT, and is a very common metaphor for results gotten from things that preceded. Those grapes don’t just grow by themselves. First, they have to be planted. Every spring the vines have to be pruned, and the soil has to be worked, bugs have to be dealt with, et al for there to be a good harvest.

In fact, according to the Internet, depending on where you are, dealing with bugs and weeds are very much a part of grape farming all over the world. Mites seem to like Tuscany grapes, and <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/selectnewpest.grapes.html> talks about all the evils that may befall California grape growers, and there are bugs in Iowa.

The man who owned it all sent his “δούλους – slaves or servants” to the vinedressers. The word makes no distinction; it indicates workers who either were paid a wage or owned by the man. That concept that is problematic in our time when slavery is roundly condemned, though still fairly common worldwide. Why don’t we talk about that?

They are “ἀπέστειλεν – sent out” by the owner, “λαβεῖν τοὺς καρποὺς αὐτοῦ – to receive his fruit.” The first verb, ἀποστέλλω, is the word used when Jesus sends the Apostles in the tenth chapter of Matthew, and the word “Apostle” comes from it. When speaking of the harvest to be received, Jesus makes it clear that the harvest belongs to the owner.

He very clearly calls it “his” harvest. If the harvest is people, who are nursed into fruition by the vintner – new vocabulary word – then that’s the role of the Church, mostly

through her Pastors; people come into the Church, we nurse them along, using skills learned at Seminary and other places, and those people belong to God, not to us.

Once, I started out a sermon by saying, “The Kingdom of heaven is like a farmer...” and then talked about that farmer planting and harvesting corn. On the way out of church, in the shaking line, several people from the rural congregation commented on the “contemporary” nature of the sermon. When the shaking was finished, one lady came up to me and put it like this; “you used terms that we understand and that are familiar to us.”

The lady, a farmer’s daughter, would have passed many corn fields on the way to church, some of which are being harvested even as we speak, and parked in the church parking lot that borders a corn field. She, and they, know about corn and about the corn harvest – don’t forget the beans – and many have been involved working in it over the years.

They also know about other crops and gardening, but probably not a lot about grapes. There is a new winery just a few miles from the church, and I initially thought of using that as a modern example of an ancient winery. But even if they know that it’s there, not many of the people in the church are familiar with the workings of it.

At least not as familiar as they are with the corn harvest. As the years go by – old person talk alert - I am moving away from explaining that “this is the way that things were in Jesus’ time,” explaining the workings of the winery, and towards doing what Jesus does; using concepts already familiar to the hearer that don’t need to be explained.

Had the hearers in Jesus’ day been shaking His hand on the way out of the Temple courtyard, they would have thanked Him for His “contemporary” message. He constantly uses metaphors and other figures that would have been familiar to His hearer, and perhaps we ought to strive to follow His lead in that matter. But now I’m preaching.

The practice described here by Jesus; the owner sending servants to settle with the vinedressers, would have been common and routine, and it looks a lot like the way that landowners and the people who actually farm the land do business today. My wife’s aunt owns farmland, but she’s getting up in years, so another person actually farms the land.

These days, around here, often the person doing the actual farming will pay rent to the person who owns the land. The landowners and the person who does the actual farming will also often go halves. At some point the crop would be sold and the owner of the land would collect “his crop,” and give the person doing the farming his cut, like here.

35. I don’t know if we can know if what happens next in the story was a common occurrence or not. Barclay thinks it is. In the story that Jesus tells, it would be like the

person who does the farming harvested the crop, and took it to the grain elevator, sold it, and cashed the check, but did not give the cut owed to the owner of the land.

It would be like the landowner then sending employees to collect his share of the crop or the money owed to him for “his crop,” and the renters killed them. I haven’t read or heard of that happening around here lately, and these transactions are generally pretty routine and peaceful. The difference between then and now is laws and law enforcement.

Actually, they had laws, but enforcement was more sketchy. Still, the idea that the person who tended the crops and essentially stole them would kill the owner’s son would not have been a common occurrence. It would have been as unthinkable then as now, and we note that those who perpetrated this unthinkable act are punished severely (41).

The renters take prisoner all of the servants who had been sent by the land-owner, and “ὃν μὲν ἔδειραν, ὃν δὲ ἀπέκτειναν, ὃν δὲ ἐλιθοβόλησαν – one they beat, one they killed, and one they stoned.” The verb “ἔδρω,” translated “to beat” is actually much worse than that. When we think of “beat,” we think of the guy who got beat up in a bar fight

Maybe he got a fat lip, a black eye, perhaps a chipped tooth. We don’t think of somebody being whipped and scourged with a whip – the kind with the weighted tips – because civilized people don’t do that kind of stuff anymore, but that’s what a beating meant in that day, and such a beating may well have resulted in death.

The verb used to describe the fate of the second man is “ἀποκτείνω.” It simply means to kill or destroy, probably quickly, and there are a lot of ways to do that. The action against the third man is said to be “λιθοβολέω,” literally “throw stones,” and I know of no stoning that does not end in death, and it can’t be a pleasant sort of death.

And yet, such wanton disregard for human life was the norm for the pre-Christian world, a world where human life is something to be toyed with by sadistic and out of control psychopaths. As a matter of fact, when it came to matters of law and order that time more resembled movies like that than our relatively orderly American society.

Christianity has been good for the West.

The Commentators see the prophets here. Ellicott is typical,

The language paints the general treatment of the prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, being the most conspicuous instances. The language of our Lord in [Matthew 23:30](#); [Matthew 23:34](#), not less than that of [Hebrews 11:37](#), implies that the prophets, as a class, had no light or easy task, and were called upon, one by one, to suffer persecution for the faithful exercise of their office.

36. The man sent other men “πλείονας τῶν πρώτων – more than the first.” The word “πλείονας” can mean either a comparative of quantity or of quality; either he sent a

greater number or a higher rank of men. Common sense tells us that a show of force would be called for here, but what follows would indicate that a higher rank was sent.

The response of the renters was “ὡσαύτως – the same.” In the case of both groups sent and the one about to take place, you have to think that the men sent were armed. That would have been the norm of the day, and in fact has been the norm historically, and with the way of things in our world – a lot of people are buying guns these days.

Prior to the emergence of the sheriff, police departments and other such agencies, the law was enforced by people who used force to enforce it. In many cases the person who brought the most force enforced what he wanted. In this case, it is clear that an appeal to reason or to what is just and right is not going to work with these outlaw vine-dressers.

37. Then “ὕστερον δὲ ἀπέστειλεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ – after that, he sent to them his son,” going with the rationale that “Ἐντραπήσονται τὸν υἱόν μου – they will have to respect my son.” That verb (respect) occurs only nine times in the NT, perhaps most notably in the eighteenth chapter of Luke, where it is used of a bad judge.

The judge does not seem to give a rip what anybody thinks or thinks of him (18:2, 4). These men – this same story is placed in chapter twenty by Luke – are much like that judge, and like him they do not respect the son. The wicked men are in full rebellion against the authority of the owner, and drastic and forceful action is needed.

38. The renters are not respectful of, the son. In fact, they see his coming as an opportunity to advance their economic circumstances, “εἶπον ἐν ἑαυτοῖς Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ κληρονόμος· δεῦτε ἀποκτείνωμεν αὐτὸν καὶ σχῶμεν τὴν κληρονομίαν αὐτοῦ – they say among themselves ‘this is the heir, come, let’s kill him and let’s get his inheritance.’”

Last week, the men “discussed” the answer to the question put to them by Jesus. Here, they talked “among themselves” and how long did it take for them to come to the conclusion that they should do what they were about to do; We should kill the son, the legal heir, and take his inheritance, and when you put it that way, it makes sense.

If the legal principle “possession is nine points of the law” still applies today, and it often does, then how much more in that time. The wicked renegades already had physical possession of the vineyard. Now, they thought, they were going to make it legal, and they would not have been the first ones to have pulled off that one.

www.USLegal.com writes that,

The saying ‘possession is nine points of the law’ is an old common law precept that means one who has physical control or possession over the property is clearly at an advantage or is in a better possession than a person who has no possession over the property. Even if a person is the rightful owner of the property but has no possession over it, the person who is in possession will be in a better position should the property ever

be subject to challenge. This is especially true with adverse possession. However mere possession alone does not grant the possessor rights in the property superior to those of the actual owner. This adage ‘possession is nine tenths of the law’ is not a law but a logical rule of force that has been recognized across ages.

When you put it that way, it makes sense, but let’s see how this thing plays out. Going back to Barclay, who portrays this as a somewhat common occurrence, perhaps it was. Whether or not it was gotten away with is another matter altogether. Would a land-owner, even one who was far away, allow men like this to do this to his family?

39. They then carried out their plan, “λαβόντες αὐτὸν ἐξέβαλον ἔξω τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος καὶ ἀπέκτειναν – they seized him and cast him out from the vineyard and killed him.” They threw him off of the property that one day would rightfully have been his. Then, outside of that very property, they killed the owner’s son. Why not inside the property?

Ellicott again,

The minor touches of a parable are not always to be pressed in our interpretation of it; but we can hardly help seeing here a latent reference to the facts (1) that our Lord was delivered over to the judgment of the Gentiles; and (2) that He was crucified outside the Holy City, ([John 19:20](#); [Hebrews 13:12](#)), which was, in a special sense, as the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts.

Pulpit Commentary,

This is prophecy, and alludes to a particular circumstance attending the death of Christ, viz. that he suffered without the city Jerusalem, Calvary being outside the walls (see [John 19:17](#), and the parallel passages in the other evangelists, and especially [Hebrews 13:11, 12](#), where it is significantly noted that Jesus "suffered without the gate"). The words may also contain a reference to the fact that he was excommunicated and given over to the heathen to be judged and condemned, thus suffering not actually at the hands of "the husbandmen" (comp. [Acts 2:23](#); [Acts 4:27](#)). Christ, in his Divine prescience, speaks of his Passion and death as already accomplished.

40. Now the rhetorical question, engaging minds of hearers, whose passions were already inflamed, “ὅταν οὖν ἔλθῃ ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος, τί ποιήσει τοῖς γεωργοῖς ἐκεῖνοις – When the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?” There is no subjunctive “if” (uncertainty), but the conjunction “when” assumes he will come.

By its very nature, a rhetorical question does not need to be answered, the answer being obvious. Would a land-owner, even one who was far away, allow men like this to do this

to his family? Of course, he would never do that! Even if somebody took your house, or your car, or just lifted your TV, would you just stand by and let him get away with it?

41. In this case, the listeners of the story have been so agitated by this story about these men that they blurt out the answer, rightly saying, “Κακούς κακῶς ἀπολέσει αὐτούς – He will badly kill those wicked (men).” The phrase “κακούς κακῶς,” is essentially the same word in different parts of speech, an adjective and an adverb for “bad” or “evil.”

He will then, the hearers say, “ἀμπελῶνα ἐκδώσεται ἄλλοις γεωργοῖς – lease out the vineyard to other renters” who will give him his due in due season. The land-owner does not need the renters; he can get other renters any time. In the same way, God does not need us to work in His vineyard; He can get other workers any time, and He does.

This is an important point. American Christians seem to think that God needs them and that God ought to be just pickled pink that “I am here to worship you,” for example, or that “I just want to serve God,” for another. Along those lines, I’ve always thought the Church should play more hard-to-get than she does. We don’t need them, they need us.

By “us,” I mean the Church and what the Church has to offer; Word and Sacrament, the means by which God works and retains faith in the person. I never thank somebody for coming to church today, and I’m sure not going to send them a plant with a note encouraging them to “come and grow with us,” the equivalent of...

42. As He often does, Jesus explains a parable He has told, and this week the explanation is very clear and very pointed. He quotes scripture. It must have been galling on some level for these mento hear this outsider, this usurper, quoting to *them* from the Holy Scriptures. They were the ones who should be quoting Bible to Him, not Him to them.

On another level it must have been downright insulting to them that He was putting it in terms of “Οὐδέποτε ἀνέγνωτε ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς – haven’t you ever read in Scripture...” And especially He should not be quoting the Bible to them and making the application of that verse that He does. Or so they likely would have thought.

Switching metaphors from the vineyard to a stone that is rejected by the builders, another familiar concept to His hearers, Jesus in fact quotes from the OT. The whole concept of the rejection of a stone would be more familiar to the Europeans, who more often build buildings, including their houses, out of stone, than to Americans, who don’t.

We build them out of wood, siding, and drywall, often on a slab, and some of our houses actually have actual wheels for foundations. Houses and public buildings – including churches – are more or less disposable. We expect a house to last maybe a hundred years, and then we’ll tear it down and build new, and likewise with a lot of buildings.

The thing about the cornerstone is that it is the stone that the mason will work from in building the rest of the structure. If the cornerstone is not perfectly square, not placed in

the exact correct spot, or not strong, then the entire structure will be off and maybe even in danger of collapse. The quote is from Psalm 118:22, 23.

The first step in understanding why Jesus chose to quote these verses, and what He meant in quoting them, is to look up Psalm 118: 22, 23 in the OT. The series of six Psalms, 113-118 make up the OT “Hallel,” which Psalms were chanted by Jews on festivals and other occasions. Jesus makes clear that these OT words from Psalm 118 apply to Him.

The author of Psalm 118 is not known, and OT Bible Scholars suggest several different contexts of rejection to which vv. 22 and 23 refer. If you are a rectilinear guy, then such talk will be to you silly and a waste of precious pixels on the screen or ink on the paper and you won’t want to access the Bible Scholars. If not, then not so much.

43. He makes application to His hearers: “ἀρθήσεται ἀφ’ ὑμῶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ - the Kingdom of God will be taken from you,” future tense, plural you, and it doesn’t get any more clear than that. It would not be inappropriate to talk about the first servants who were sent to the wicked vinedressers as OT prophets, like Ellicott et al did above.

You might want to talk about the second group as John the Baptizer and the Apostles – since that group is plural – and of course to then talk about Jesus as the Son who the vinedressers killed. Various commentators allegorize things like the tower and the fence being this or that, but to do that clutters the parable and distracts from the main point.

Having taken the Kingdom from them, “καὶ δοθήσεται ἔθνει ποιοῦντι τοὺς καρποὺς αὐτῆς – and it will be given to a people doing the fruits of it.” We note here the use of the familiar – and to many of the first century Hebrews repugnant – term “ἔθνει.” In their world, they were heaven-bound, and the rest were going to the other place.

Here and in other places, Jesus clearly and forcefully informs them of the turning of that table. Speaking of race, I’m with Samuel L, who says that what we need to do about race is to stop talking about it. But sometimes I talk about it, and tell people that racism is just one more thing common to the Natural Man, and Christianity did away with it.

The main point of the Parable is that the Jews, God’s workers in the Vineyard, were unfaithful and murdered His Son, which they were in fact about to do. Stephan was the first of many to point that out to his fellow Jews and look what it got him. It’s always awkward, post-Holocaust, to talk about how the Jews were culpable for Jesus’ death.

In the 1953 film *The Robe*, starring Richard Burton and Jean Simmons, it is explicitly Pontius Pilate and the Romans who both plan for and carry out the execution of Jesus. The Jews are portrayed as mostly observers to the whole thing. To be sure, it’s a movie, a work of fiction – WIK calls it a “fictional Biblical epic film” – so there’s that.

Seth McFarlane, producer of *Family Guy*, who goes out of his way to offend every single group, nevertheless portrays that same inaccurate scenario. In the 2007 episode *Believe It or Not, Joe's Walking on Air*, it is Pontius Pilate, not the Jews, who want to get rid of Jesus. The man who offends all apparently does not want to offend Jewish people.

When talking about how Jesus was rejected by His own people, I start out by pointing out that Jesus, whom we worship, was a Jewish man, and that all of the writers of the Bible were Jewish. One would hope that this would help to alleviate any anxieties about the writers of the Bible and the early Christians being somehow anti-Semitic, and it does.

But in a limited manner. Past Christian anti-Semitism, alleged and real, doesn't help. Often both are exaggerated, and often wildly by people with axes to grind. When all is said and done, the faithful pastor must faithfully proclaim the truth of the Bible and expect that not everybody is going to like it, sort of like what Jesus is going through here.

It is notable that the rejection spoken of in the Psalm is said by the same psalmist to be both the Lord's doing and a cause for rejoicing, "It is marvelous in our eyes." That's exactly the way that Christians look at Good Friday, when Jesus is rejected not only by His own religious leaders, but He was rejected by His own Father.

44. Verse 44 is rightly left out of the translation (RSV) that I'm looking at, and rightly so. The textual evidence suggests that it is a later addition. So that's done.

45. When we last noted, Jesus was interacting with the "Chief Priests and Elders." Now "οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι – the Chief Priest and the Pharisees" have heard "τὰς παραβολὰς – the Parables" plural. We have spoken before about the overlap in groups like this among the Jewish leadership in NT times, and these were likely the same people.

We may also conclude that many religious leaders were interested in at least hearing what Jesus had to say. When they heard "τὰς παραβολὰς – the parables," especially last week's about the Two Sons and this week's about the Wicked Tenants, they knew (ἐγνώσαν) that He was talking about them. They are correct. He is talking about them.

As is often the case, they wanted to arrest Him, and were only prevented by their fear of the crowds, many of whom considered Jesus to be a "prophet" like John and the others. It must also be said – because the Lutherans like to paint Jesus as a very unpopular man – that Jesus was a very popular man. The men would soon overcome their fear of crowds.

It might be fun to talk about these men suffering from a fear of crowds. "Enochlophobia refers to a **fear of crowds**. It's closely related to agoraphobia (a **fear of places or situations**) and ochlophobia (a **fear of mob-like crowds**)." It will show people that you are hip and trendy in your use of words and concepts, and they will learn new words.

46. In response to these words of Jesus, the recipients do not seem to take them to heart, much less to do something about it. Instead, "ζητοῦντες αὐτὸν κρατῆσαι ἐφοβήθησαν

τοὺς ὄχλους – seeking to grab Him, they feared the crowds.” The verb “to seek” means that they were trying to figure out a way to do what they wanted to do, but they could not.

They feared the crowd, “ἐπεὶ εἰς προφήτην αὐτὸν εἶχον – because they were holding Him as a prophet.” The verb is in the imperfect tense, and it means to hold on to something very tightly, as you would a precious object. The thing they refused to let go of, no matter how many times their leaders told them, was the idea that Jesus is from God.

Law/Gospel

Rejection/Acceptance – Jesus is rejected by His own pastors and leaders, and even by His own Father, and will be killed by them. We find full and complete acceptance on account of that sacrificial, righteous death.

Gentile/Gentile – The Gentiles (non-Jews) were always considered unclean and unworthy to share with the Jews in the gifts of God. We Gentiles have been called “true Jews” by Jesus, Paul, et al, and are indeed clean and worthy because of Jesus.

Death/Life – The fate of the OT prophets, Apostles, and martyrs has been death at the hands of violent men, at which point they have all entered into eternal life in heaven.

Sermon Titles

Wicked Tenants

Murder, Beatings, Murder

The Vineyard Has Been Given To...

They Did What?

Hymns

Lord, ‘Tis Not that I Did Choose You – LSB 573

Onward Christian Soldiers – LSB 662

Oh, Little Flock, Fear Not the Foe – LSB 666

The Pentecost Season is a great time to sing those great interchangeable hymns from *Morning*, *Opening of Service*, *Closing of Service*, *Redeemer*, and *Justification* sections of the hymnal. Remember the rubric; only one hard hymn per week.

Rev. Steven L. Anderson
Pastor, Immanuel Lutheran Church
Grand Mound, IA

Resources

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