

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
20th Sunday after Pentecost (series A.)
Matthew 21:33-43
The Parable of the Tenants



³³ “Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. ³⁴ When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. ³⁵ “The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. ³⁶ Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. ³⁷ Last of all, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said. ³⁸ “But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and take his inheritance.’ ³⁹ So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. ⁴⁰ “Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” ⁴¹ “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,” they replied, “and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.” ⁴² Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: “‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? ⁴³ “Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.”

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

Have you seen the video? A small ranch style home is very obviously on fire! The thick blinding choking grey smoke is curling out the door way and if you listen carefully you can hear the sound of very small explosions. Things popping as the flames begin to consume them. Someone is filming the whole thing with their smart phone. Somebody asks, “Is everybody out?” Somebody else screams – “No! There’s a man trapped inside!” Then you see this kind of pudgy man walk very calmly towards the flames. In just a few moments you see him come running back out of the house –

carrying over his shoulder a very tall man – a grandpa – 72 years old – helpless from inside the home. All they keep saying over and over again is – who is this mysterious man – wearing a LA Dodgers’ baseball cap? Nobody seems to know – who is this guy? And even more fascinating – why would this apparently complete stranger – run into a building engulfed in flames – to save somebody he didn’t even know?! Don’t you wonder? Jesus died to save you and me. Jesus died to rescue us from the horrible flames of unquenchable hell-fire! That’s how much Jesus loves us! Today again – we are gathered in God’s House to hear God’s Word. We are here – when we could be almost anywhere else – because Jesus loves us and forgives us. We are never tired of hearing that good news – that Jesus’ forgiving love never fails. Today we will hear law and gospel in light of the parable of the tenants – the renters. Today we will:

Learn From God’s Grape Harvest!

II. Receive God’s Son

III. Remember God’s judgment!

For weeks now we have been listening to the Lord Jesus as he teaches us – using parables – earthly stories with Heavenly meanings! The Gospel of Matthew is full of parables – especially at the end of Jesus’ brief 3 year public ministry. These parables made law and gospel memorable to the disciples – and at the same time – utterly frustrated Jesus’ bitterest enemies! Last Sunday – and last week in *Meditations* – Jesus told the parable of the two sons. When the Father told the first one – “Go, work in my vineyard!” The first son said, “I will not!” But afterward he did. The Father told the second son, “Go, work in my vineyard!” He said he would – but he didn’t! Who did what he was supposed to do? The first son did! Jesus told them – the tax collectors – and people who sold “hugs and kisses” heard God’s Word – by the grace of God – repented of their sins – and by the grace of God – were saved. The self-righteous and self-important Pharisees, Elders, Temple Workers and people who hand copied the Scriptures – refused to humble themselves and repent – and therefore remained in their sins!

Today we hear Jesus teach the parable of the tenants. God’s Word says, ³³ **“Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. ³⁴When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.”** Again it is tempting to try and take

every single aspect of this parable – and try to guess what it might represent. But again – it is best – good *hermeneutics* – to look for the tertium – the point of comparison – the essential point Jesus is making! The owner of the vineyard – we know from the whole parable – is our Heavenly Father. Everything belongs to our Heavenly Father. That’s easy to forget. We like to think lots of things are mine! I have told you before we have an apple tree in our backyard – a Braeburn apple tree. It is kind of short and pudgy. This year I did not fertilize it. I did not water it. I did not spray it. I did not prune it. This year it is literally weighed down to the ground – with the most dark red crisp juicy apples. The branches are literally touching the ground – weighed down with apples. And there are not bugs on or in the apples. It is very tempting to call them my apples from my apple orchard – from my apple tree. But they aren’t! There are Jesus’ apples. I heard on the radio that after last Summer’s 2013 heat and drought – and after this very harsh winter – and short rainy Spring – and kind of funny Summer – this year is the best year ever for beautiful leaves – and for really wonderful apples! Why? Because God is good! Jesus is so wonderful – he takes all our sins away – forgives all our guilt – takes away all our shame. And then – just because he is so very *very* kind and good he decided I will give you so many apples you won’t know what to do with them all. Yes, I do know! I will give them away! I will give away lots of apples – because they aren’t really mine! They are Jesus’ apples. And as I have said very often in Jesus’ Library – “Jesus is very big on sharing!” And He is!

³⁴ When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. ³⁵ “The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. ³⁶ Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. The LORD – our Heavenly Father – the owner of the vineyard sends His servants. Who are these servants? It’s pretty clear Jesus is talking to the people listening to him that Holy Week Tuesday – these are the Old Testament Prophets. How did the Children of Israel treat the servants of the LORD? Not well! It is sad to read how again and again the Children of Israel didn’t just ignore the messengers the LORD sent – again and again they put them to death! Perhaps one of the most egregious examples of this has to be Doeg the Edomite? Do you know Doeg the Edomite? It’s a little bit complicated – paranoid, violent, murderous raging King Saul was bent

on murdering David. David – in a time of spiritual weakness kind of panicked and ran to a place called Nob – where he sought help from Ahimelech the Priest – telling Ahimelech he was on a secret mission for King Saul. David and his men were in desperate need of food. Ahimelech didn't have any common bread – just the holy bread – the bread set apart and dedicated to the LORD – but under these desperate circumstances – the Priest gave this bread to David and his men – and then they went on their way. A witness to all this was Doeg – the Edomite – the head herdsman – the chief shepherd for King Saul. When Saul found out that Ahimelech had helped David Saul said **to the guard who stood about him, "Turn and kill the priests of the LORD, because their hand also is with David..."** And when the guards refused Saul said to Doeg, **"You turn and strike the priests."** And Doeg the Edomite turned and struck down the priests, and he killed on that day **85 persons who wore the linen ephod. And Nob, the city of the priests, he put to the sword; both man and woman, child and infant, ox, donkey and sheep, he put to the sword.** 1 Samuel 22:17f ESV It is almost impossible to imagine how one man could – without some kind of help – put to death 85 servants of the LORD. It's almost impossible to imagine how one man could go into a city like Watertown – where the families of called workers lived – and one man kills men and women, little children, little babies and toddlers – and in a blind and mindless rage – also kills cows and donkeys and sheep – too! You cannot overestimate the depths of the wickedness to which the human mind and ♥ can plunge! Jesus died on the \dagger for such painful hurtful evil it is a shame to even talk about it. For every wicked evil Jesus paid with his blood!

³⁶ Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. ³⁷ Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. ³⁸ "But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' ³⁹ So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. The Son of the Owner of the vineyard is Jesus. God sent His One and Only Son and this world rejected Him. When He was an infant – King Herod thought Him a threat to his puny earthly throne – and tried to use the wise men to kill Him. When Jesus preached at the synagogue in Nazareth where He grew up – His neighbors wanted to literally push Him off a cliff. Again and again Jesus' enemies plotted His

death. Remember when Jesus told His disciples I am the Good Shepherd? Jesus said, “No one takes my life from Me. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.” At just the right time – when we were still powerless – Jesus sacrificed His innocent life to redeem us. God’s Son died for the sins of the 7 billion people alive today – plus the estimate 101 billion who lived and died before! Jesus could tell you exactly how many people ever lived on earth – because He died for all of them. Jesus died for everyone. Jesus died for you and Jesus died for me! Jesus died for all – that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again!

⁴⁰ **“Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”** This is unique. Jesus asks His hearers what’s the point? ⁴¹ **“He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,”** they replied, **“and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.”** How do we treat the Gospel as it is preached and taught among us? How do we treat the Lord Jesus – and the Gospel of grace alone, faith alone and Scripture alone? This Reformation time – do we remember the first three commandments and what does this mean? *We should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and his Word but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it!* Where are we on Sunday mornings? We have opportunity to come to Jesus’ Father’s House of Prayer – to pray, praise and give thanks! We have opportunity all week long to come to Bible Class – to search the Scriptures – to make applications---to ask questions – to encourage one another. We have opportunity all the time – to read our Bible! To read the Gospel of John – to work on memorizing the whole book of Romans – to pray without ceasing! As we prepare to celebrate Christmas – think about going to Northwestern Publishing House – to buy Christmas presents – books and pictures about the Gospel! What more blessed gift could you give to celebrate the birth of the Savior – than something that points to Jesus’ forgiving love?

⁴³ **“Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.”** Jesus does not force his forgiving love on anyone. If people want to refuse and reject the sweet Gospel – so be it! Martin Luther understood this. He famously said, *“Beloved Germans, buy while the market is close at hand! Gather while the sun is shining and while there is good weather! Make use of God’s grace and Word while it is here! For you should know this: God’s Word and grace is a passing*

downpour, which does not return to where it has already been." Again and again people have grown complacent – failing to treasure the Gospel. Jesus said again and again, "**Blessed are they who hear the God and keep it!**" As we see the continued attacks of the devil on faith, attacks on marriage and the family – attacks on our church and the preaching and teaching of the Gospel – it becomes even more essential if possible – for us to build our marriages – our family – our congregation our community and our nation on Christ crucified and risen! May Jesus make us all faithful workers in His vine-yard. Amen!

To God alone all glory!

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light blue background. The signature reads "Rev. Anthony P. Schutt" in a cursive script.