

God's Parable of Wisdom for Us

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Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church

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Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

We all turn to different people from time to time. If you're sick or don't feel well, you might see a doctor. You might see a dentist for your teeth. Or if you're having trouble seeing, you might see an optometrist. People seek advice for all sorts of reasons, and yet, you might simply trust in your own thoughts and feelings. But then again, if we do that too often, we might forget about God's wisdom.

Jesus, Himself is the cornerstone of our life, faith, and the church because His wisdom surpasses the wisdom of this world, as well as the advice that we receive from others. And so, this Sunday as well as the last couple of Sundays, during this Lenten – season of repentance – we heard Jesus share another parable. Or, as we heard last week – an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

It was Tuesday of Holy Week and Jesus was teaching and preaching the Good News of God to the people in the Temple of Jerusalem. The chief priests and the scribes had become agitated toward Jesus. They didn't want Him there, so they began to question His authority. But Jesus refused to give in and leave. And so, drawing on the imagery of a vineyard, He shared the parable of the wicked tenants.

While this imagery of a vineyard is found in various places throughout scripture, it might be most familiar to you from Isaiah 5 – where God sings about His beloved vineyard that He planted on a fertile hill with choice vines. It had a

watchtower and a wine vat, but the vineyard only yielded wild grapes. Grapes that couldn't be used, so the owner destroyed it all.

And so, as Jesus shared, ***“A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time.”***(v. 9) This must've been a common practice of the day. The landowner provided work for those who needed it. He rented out his property and went away. Yet, he looks forward to the day when his vineyard would produce fruit. And ***“at harvest time, he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard.”*** (v. 10a) It was most likely a fair and agreed upon arrangement where a certain portion of the crop would go to the landowner and the rest to the tenant. ***“But the tenants beat [the landowner's servant] and sent him away empty-handed.”*** (v. 10b)

So the landowner ***“sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed.”*** (v. 11) They treated the second one worse than the first. ***“He sent a third, and they wounded him and threw him out.”*** (v.12) The tenants made a mockery of the owner. They didn't care what the landowner said, and didn't care about the agreement that they made with him either.

Today, people look for advice from all kinds of different experts, but when it comes to the Word of God, it's not always valued or consulted. They think that God's Word is too outdated and doesn't have any relevance. And like the tenants in the parable, many don't have any time or use for the Word of God in their lives. But even though they might reject God's Word, it can't change the wisdom and truth that Scripture provides to anyone that reads it.

So, after hearing that those tenants beat up three of his servants, the landowner seemed to be at his wit's end

because He does something that few of us would do. He sends His beloved son, thinking that they might respect him. But when the tenants saw the son, they might've thought that the owner had died. Either way, as our parable tells us, ***“they said to themselves, This is the heir. Let us kill him, so that the inheritance may be ours. So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.”***(v. 14) That the vineyard might be theirs forever...

People reject the Good News of God and yet, it's purely out of God's grace that He brings all believers into His Kingdom. When people are lost, what that really means is they've rejected God somewhere along the way. That has been the case with many prophets of God throughout history who were sent to share His Word. If you recall, people grumbled against Moses and he was almost stoned to death. Elijah was threatened with death. Isaiah, according to tradition, was sawn in two. Jeremiah was imprisoned and threatened with death. And yet, Jesus, the very Son of God, was standing in the Temple sharing this parable, and the chief priests and the scribes who were listening with the people wanted to throw Him out and kill Him.

Jesus then asks, ***“What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them?”*** (v.15b) And He goes on to answer, ***“He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others...”*** (v.16a) And they reacted by saying, ***“May this never be!”*** (v.16b) And while Jesus knew that they would reject and kill Him too, it would be their rejection that would be the Father's acceptance and manifest Him as the Messiah who has come so that the stewardship, of what is God's to begin with, would be given to His disciples and apostles and the kingdom would expand under a new kind of stewardship that we call Christianity.

Playing off two Hebrew words – “Ben” which means Son, and “Aben” which means Stone, Jesus quoted Psalm 118, saying **“Then what is the meaning of that which is written, ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.’”** Because it’s the stone or son that is rejected which is the cornerstone of which everything is built upon. And **“Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.”** And that cornerstone had begun to take effect. The chief priests and the scribes sought to arrest Him that very hour, but they didn’t because they were afraid of the people.

While we too can listen to all kinds of advice from different people, it’s in this Lenten season of repentance, that God calls us back to His Word so that we might be good stewards of that which is His. To be sure, God’s law points out our sins and can crush us because of our sins.

But we’re also reminded that we should put our trust in God. He knows what’s best. For while Jesus was thrown out of Jerusalem, He died on the cross for us so that we might be forgiven for all the times that we trusted in ourselves or others, rather than in God. For the only true expert has been and will always be is our Lord Jesus Christ. He’s the Cornerstone of His church, who in His infinite wisdom, provides life and forgiveness to all who believe.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.