

October 2, 2011  
Matthew 21:33-46

Proper 22A (Pentecost 16)  
Discipleship: Taking Care of the Vineyard

*Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Look at the Calendar and it clearly says October. I can't really believe my eyes! The summer season has gone by quickly. The first month of the fall season is over and now the newspapers are telling us all about the Harvest Dinners at churches across the area. The time is at hand for the harvest. It has even been going on for several weeks now as I have noticed driving through the country side, the fields that once were full of plants are now just vast fields of soil after the harvest. So what a timely text we come to today. A parable told by Jesus about a master, his vineyard, his tenants, his servants, and his son. A parable about the time when the fruit is ready to harvest. Today I am going to begin a series of sermons based upon our role as disciples. Disciples of our Savior Jesus and what that fully entails.

Today we are going to see how taking care of the vineyard is all about discipleship. But first from Miriam-Webster free online dictionary defines disciple as: one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of others. And from Eerdmans Bible Dictionary: a follower, pupil, or adherent of a teacher or religious leader.

The question that needs to be answered first is: Where are we at? Why does Jesus give us this parable of the tenants at this point? In Matthew 21, we begin the first Holy Week Jesus has already ridden into Jerusalem, he has cleansed the temple and cursed the fig tree, last week you heard in the gospel lesson how Jesus' authority is challenged and also the parable of the two sons who were asked to work in the vineyard. Now our text for today, Jesus continues with another parable. One that builds off the first. Let me read it to you again:

*Read Matthew 21:33-46*

Jesus is keeping control of the situation he is controlling the agenda with the Pharisees and the other Teachers of the Law. Jesus speaks to them this parable which could be said is a pictorial history of Israel. In the time when Jesus spoke this parable it was a common place for there to be vineyards that were owned by owners who were not present. These owners were typically very wealthy and they would lease the vineyard to tenants.

So this brief history of Israel just think about it for a moment with me. The vineyard is Israel the master is God the Father, the tenants are the unbelieving religious leaders of the time, and the servants would be all the prophets that Jesus had sent to them. And finally the son in the story is the Son.

And really this parable can be about us too. Let's dive into this parable all the more. You see God has placed us in his vineyard. He has given us everything that we have.

For nothing that we have belongs to us and God asks us to take care of it. The master of the vineyard had placed tenants to take care of His land, to cultivate it, and then when the harvest time came The Master sent His servants to get His fruit. But these greedy tenants thought they owned the vineyard it's what they desired; they wanted all the fruit for themselves.

How often are we like that towards our Master? It seems like more often than not. We don't like being told we are wrong. Which if we say that this is a history of Israel even such prophets as Isaiah in our Old Testament text to tell them to repent or the wrath of God will be upon them. And yet these prophets these servants of God were beaten, killed and stoned. It's what Israel and the unbelieving leaders did to them.

Again we don't like being told that we are wrong. We don't like being told how to live our lives. We don't like feeling convicted. We don't like being told that all we have is God's. That is God's gifts of to us of our time, talents, and our treasure. We don't like being told that those things all belong to God and that we should what he has given to us to advance His kingdom.

But rather we would like to attack the messenger, whoever the Servant is that God places in our lives whether it be our pastors, Sunday School teachers, Bible Study leaders, parents or even other Servants that tell us what God's Word shares with us. We don't like how in Scripture that we are told to live our lives to him, fully 24/7 to give up our idols to make time in our week for him. We don't like to be told to Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy which means that we should gladly hear the Word of God preached to us. Or perhaps that we don't like being told that we should not tell lies about or neighbor, betray him, slander him or hurt his reputation.

But yet God sends His Servants to us to tell us these things. Our God stays persistence with us even when we don't listen to His Servants. He decides to send his son saying, "They will respect my son." But yet when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, "This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance." And they took him and threw out of the city and killed him. They Will respect my Son. No they did not and frankly neither do we. In the parable it was a common place during the time that if there was no heir the tenants would inherit the vineyard. And that's what they tried to do take matters into their own hands.

Even us how often do we send out our Father's Son outside of the city walls. There are many times that we don't respect Jesus. We don't respect him for who he is. But this Father, this Son is how come we can have life and have it abundantly. For what Father after his servants are killed off one by one would send his Son to suffer the same thing. Well it sure sounds like the Father of the Prodigal Son who looked onto the Horizon every day to see if His son was coming back and when he did ran to meet him and welcomed back as a son. It sounds like father, the shepherd who leaves the 99 sheep to look for the one who was lost and in danger. It sounds like the father of all ages. The one who first send his prophets to proclaim the Word of the Lord and

ultimately would send his Son to be humbled and to be thrown outside the city walls and be killed. For the cross is no accident the cross was supposed to happen ever since the fall of man.

Jesus Christ is the perfect Son really the one who gives us our inheritance. He is the one that frees us from sin. He is the one that keeps the Church of God in motion. He is also the one that asks the Pharisees in our text: *What then will he do to the tenants?* The Pharisees answered: *He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.* The Pharisees Condemned themselves. And you know the Jewish rejection of Jesus will and has hastened the Gentile production.

For those that reject what Jesus is teaching them, or rejects the Servants of God the Kingdom of God, the Vineyard will be taken from them and given to people that produce the fruit.

Frankly that's what discipleship is all about produce fruit for the kingdom of God using our all to advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When we adhere to and assist in the spreading of the God's Holy Word, only then are we disciples of Christ. God has called each of us as tenants in His vineyard to produce and by the grace of God we can fulfill our duties. We can fulfill our vocations as our Lord's disciples. Disciples of the Savior who was cast out of the city wall by evil tenants but by being cast out he has given us life and life abundantly.

In Jesus Name. Amen.

*Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.*