

Sunday, October 4, 2026

Proper 22A; 19th Sunday after Pentecost

Matthew 21:33-46

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

My friends,

Seven hundred years

before Jesus' birth,

God sent the prophet Isaiah

to His people

with a parable:

"Let me sing

for my beloved

my love song

concerning His vineyard..." (Isaiah 5:1a)

It is the story of God's people.

And today,

Jesus retells this ancient story.

But it is not merely old history.

Jesus is telling **our** story.

The stakes are high.

The end is near.

Jesus speaks this parable

during Holy Week.

In a few days,

He will hang dead

upon a cross.

And in about forty years,

the Romans will destroy Jerusalem,

the priests, and the temple.

As we draw near

to the end of the Church Year,

we will hear Jesus speak the Law

and warn of judgment.

But we must not mishear Him.

He is not being mean

or harsh.

Jesus speaks these words in love.

*“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...
how often I have longed
to gather your children together,
as a hen gathers her chicks
under her wings,
but you were not willing.”* (Matthew 23:37)

Jesus reveals sin

for one purpose:
that it may be confessed
and forgiven,
that we may live
and not die.

So let us not be unwilling.

“Hear another parable.” [v. 33]
Listen with me again.
Let us see what God has done
to create and sustain us.

I. GOD’S VINEYARD

My friends,

*“There was a master
of a house
who planted a vineyard.”* (v.33)
The Lord deliberately prepared
His vineyard for each vine.
Tenderly, He planted them.
Then He fenced around it.

Just so,

the Lord’s teaching surrounds us.
His good Word protects us
from the wilderness.

“And [the Master] dug a winepress.”
The vineyard has purpose.
He wants His prized people
to enjoy the joyful wine of His goodness.

“And [the Master] built a tower.”

*“The name of the Lord is a strong tower;
the righteous man runs
into it and is safe.”* (Proverbs 18:10)

Standing upon God’s Word,
the watchman sees the big picture
and warns of danger.

God did everything
to make His vineyard fruitful.

*“What more
could have been done
for my vineyard
than I have done for it?”* (Isaiah 5:4a)

But what happens
when He comes for the harvest?

*“When I looked
for good grapes,
why did it yield only bad?”* (Isaiah 5:4)

In the Old Testament,
God *“looked for justice,
but saw bloodshed;
for righteousness,
but heard cries of distress.”* (Isaiah 5:7b)

And so Babylon came
and broke down the wall.

The vineyard was trampled down.

He sent the former prophets
and the latter prophets.

But they would not listen.

Jeremiah,

they beat and imprisoned.

Isaiah,

they sawed in half.

Zechariah was stoned to death
in the Temple courtyard.

*“But in these last days
 He has spoken to us
 by His Son,
 whom He appointed heir
 of all things,
 and through whom
 He made the universe.”* (Hebrews 1:2)

II. GOD’S PURPOSE FOR HIS VINEYARD

My Friends,
 God had a purpose
 for His vineyard.
 In a world of bloodshed and outcry,
 His people were to be a refuge.
 Their fruit would be justice
 and righteousness.
*“He has told you,
 O man,
 what is good;
 and what does the Lord require
 of you
 but to do justice,
 and to love kindness,
 and to walk humbly
 with your God?”* (Micah 6:8)

The prophet John the Forerunner
 came teaching a Baptism of repentance.
 He told the people,
*“Bear fruit in keeping
 with repentance.”* (Matthew 3:8)
 But the chief priests
 and the Pharisees
 did not heed him.

And now,
here is the Son,
looking for good fruit.
But the tenants won't let Him have it.
They won't let Him have His people.
They stand between Him
and those who listened
to John.
Those who repented
at the prophetic Word.
Who would walk humbly
in faith.
The chief priests
and the Pharisees
want the pride of ownership.
The tenants scheme
to take
what was only entrusted to them
as their own.
They conspire
to make themselves the master,
to self-deify!

But before we shake our heads at them,
we should consider.
Could Jesus be describing us?
Are we ever zealous
to protect "our" turf?
Do we ever greedily cling
to the things entrusted to us?
Has God ever come to us looking
for the fruit of mercy—
and found only anger
and bitterness?
Has God ever come to us
expecting humility—
and found pride?

Has God ever come to us
 expecting to find kindness—
 and found us putting our wants first?

Has God ever come to us
 expecting to find generosity—
 and found an outcry of
 “mine, mine, mine!”

That’s my time!

My money!

My talents!

My body!

My life!

My living!

My ease!

Has God ever come to us
 expecting to find righteousness—
 only to find us explaining away His law—
 as if we knew
 so much more now?

Has our outcry
 and fighting
 ever stood between
 those who would see Jesus?

James 1:17 reminds us:

*“Every good gift and every perfect gift
 is from above,
 coming down
 from the Father.”*

And St. Paul asks:

*“What do you have
 that you did not receive?”* (1 Corinthians 4:7)

Time and time again,
 we do not use God’s gifts
 as He desires.

We close our ears
 to His “collectors.”

If they take leave of us “beaten,”
 well,
 “who do they think they are
 to ask for what’s mine?”

The Lord lavishes us
 with a harvest of goodness.
 Will we repay Him
 with the sour grapes of grumbling?
 Can we live so selfishly?
 Let us receive God’s gifts,
 and stop “stealing His harvest!”

III. GOD’S SON GIVEN FOR THE VINEYARD

My friends,
 What do we do
 when we find ourselves
 withholding God’s harvest?
 What do we do
 when the law tramples us down?
 What do we do
 when our sin has made us a waste?

The Psalmist cries:
*“Turn again, O God of hosts!
 Look down from heaven,
 and see;
 have regard for this vine,
 the stock that Your right hand planted,
 and for the son
 whom you made strong
 for Yourself.”* (Psalm 80:14–15)
*“Restore us,
 O Lord God of hosts!
 Let Your face shine,
 that we may be saved!”* (Psalm 80:19)

God sent us His Son.

Jesus is God's Forever King.

The Son God has made strong for Himself.

The one who gives His life
for the vineyard.

"Have regard for this vine...

and for the son

whom You made strong for Yourself."

In the parable,

the Master's actions seem absurd.

The tenants had beaten
and killed His servants.

And so

*"Finally he sent his son to them,
saying,*

'They will respect my son. '" (Matthew 21:37)

It doesn't make sense.

That absurdity highlights
the 'absurd' degree
of God's love for His people.

He gives His Son
for His vineyard.

God dying
for His sinful creatures
is absurd!

But that is the truth
and scandal
of the Holy Gospel!

*"But when the tenants saw the son,
they said to themselves,*

'This is the heir.

Come,

let us kill him

and have his inheritance. '" (Matthew 21:38)

Jesus told this parable
on Tuesday of Holy Week.
Three days later,
on Friday,
His hearers took Jesus,
threw Him out of Jerusalem,
and killed Him.
But that's not the end.
There are another three days.
On the third day, God's Son rises.
*"The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord's doing,
and it is marvellous
in our eyes"* (Matthew 21:42)

They thought
that they were killing Jesus.
But the truth is,
Jesus was dying for them.
Jesus was dying
for everyone.
For me.
For you.
And death could not hold Him.

His death was the ironic payment
for our rebellion.
He took up the miserable death
us wretches deserved.
And He rose again
as the cornerstone of the kingdom.
He is the new vine
of the kingdom,
and we are His branches.
In His death and resurrection,
Jesus bore fruit for God.
He opened heaven,
and the Holy Spirit rains down upon us.

*“The kingdom of God will be...given
to a people producing its fruits.”* (Matthew 21:43)

Having received His grace,
we produce the kingdom’s fruits.
By the Holy Spirit,
Christ’s blood bears fruit in us.
We are united in His death
and resurrection.
*“And those who belong
to Christ Jesus
have crucified the flesh
with its passions and desires.”* (Galatians 5:24)
We are raised anew,
keeping step with the Holy Spirit.
*“The fruit of the Spirit is love,
joy, peace, patience, kindness,
goodness, faithfulness, gentleness,
& self-control.”* (Galatians 5:22–23)

But we do not bear fruit
to earn the vineyard.
Good fruit is what branches
on the True Vine
naturally do.
*“For by grace
you have been saved
through faith.
And this is not your own doing;
it is the gift of God,
not a result of works,
so that no one may boast.
For we are His workmanship,
created in Christ Jesus
for good works,
which God prepared beforehand,
that we should walk
in them.”* (Ephesians 2:8–10)

The vineyard was taken from
 the chief priests and the Pharisees.
 Yet Scripture tells us
 that there were priests and Pharisees
 who joined the Church.
 The God who rules over all
 has chosen us,
 His New Israel
 of both Jew and Gentile,
 to be His blessing
 to all people.
 Our sin, too, crucified Jesus.
 Yet the Son has risen
 to life again!
 Will you and I welcome Him?
 Will we share His fruit?

*

My friends,
 Now is the time
 to “produce the fruits”
 of God’s vineyard.
 Now is the time
 to walk in the good works
 we were created
 in Jesus to do.
 Use it or lose it!

Now,
 we ourselves
 can’t produce a single grape.
 But we can sink roots
 deep into Jesus’ love for us.
 We abide in the Vine.

For Jesus took the place
 of us miserable “*wretches*.”
 Jesus Himself died the “*miserable death*.”
 And He comes to us now
 with forgiveness.
 He pours down our throats
 the fruit of the vine
 —His own blood—
 His forgiveness
 as the resurrected Son.
 He intends for you
 to drink **deeply**.
 Be **filled**
 with the Holy Spirit.
 Be **abundantly** alive
 with the **joy** of divine wine.
 Let us have no more sour grapes,
 for Jesus has readied you
 for God’s harvest day.

God smiles on you.
 For when He looks
 at His vineyard,
 He regards the Son
 He has made strong for Himself.
 “*Restore us,*
O Lord God of hosts!
Let your face shine,
that we may be saved!” (Psalm 80:19)

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord, amen.