

Luke 20:9-19

Today we have the opportunity to consider yet **another** one of the **parables** of Jesus. Jesus spoke **this** parable in **Jerusalem** on the Tuesday of **Holy Week** - just **three days** before His crucifixion. So, this parable is directly connected to the **passion** of Jesus - His **suffering** and **death** on the **cross**. We need to know what it was which **led** up to the death of God's Son, and today's parable **gives** us some of that information. We **also** need to know what **results** came from the death of Jesus, and our parable also shows **them** to us. At first glance this parable doesn't tell a very **happy** story, because it's filled with things like **murder** and **judgment**. But **ultimately**, Jesus used this parable to present a **beautiful** picture too - the picture of the marvelous **grace** of God - a God who overcame **evil**, and won for Himself a people who love and revere His **Son**. So today, let's get into **The Parable Of The Wicked Tenants** - a parable which points us to the events **leading up to** and **including** the suffering and death of Jesus - events which were **necessary** for our salvation.

In Jesus' parable we hear about a man who rented out his **vineyard** to some **tenant** farmers. As **renters**, their **obligation** was to pay the **owner** of the land a portion of the **fruit** which they would harvest. So, the owner waited until **harvest** time, and then he sent a **servant** to **collect** his rightful **portion** of the fruit. But the tenants acted as if **they owned** the vineyard, and they **beat** the servant, and sent him away **empty-handed**. They did basically the **same** thing to **two other** servants who were **also** sent by the owner. We would think that this would have brought a **swift** and **severe response** from the owner, but **incredibly**, we hear that he decided to send his **son** to deal with the tenants. His words were, "*Perhaps they will respect him.*" But of course they **didn't** respect him - and because they **recognized** him as the **heir** to the vineyard, they saw an opportunity to take **possession** of the land for **themselves**. All they had to **do** was get **rid** of the heir - so, they threw the owner's son **out**, and **killed** him.

Let's take a look at what Jesus was actually **saying** in this parable. The **vineyard** represents the people of **Israel** - people whom God had **chosen** as His own **special** people. God had made a two-sided **covenant** with them at Mt. Sinai, pledging to be their **God** - a God who would richly **bless** them, and who would provide them with a **Savior** from sin. The people of Israel on **their part**, were to live lives of **faith** and **obedience** as God's holy people - lives which would display **God's grace** to the entire **world**. So, in keeping with **His side** of the covenant, God sent them **spiritual leaders** - **prophets**, who proclaimed God's true **Word** to them,

and who helped lead them to bring to God the **fruits of faith** which He **desired** and **deserved**.

But Israel **failed** to uphold **their** side of the covenant. They **misused** and **abused** God's grace. They **refused** to bring to the LORD the **fruits** which He expected from them. Instead of being **devoted** to God, they were **disobedient**, **proud**, and **greedy**. Their religious **leaders** became more interested in keeping **their** positions of **authority** over the people, than they were in letting **God** rule them through His **Word**. So when God sent **prophets** to them, they **mistreated** them, and even **killed** many of them. But instead of responding to their wickedness by **destroying** Israel, God sent His **Son** to them. And just like in Jesus' **parable**, they didn't respect the **Son** either. On that Tuesday of Holy Week **God's Son** was standing right in **front** of them, teaching them the Word of Truth, but Israel's religious leaders were already looking for a way to **do away** with Him. In just a few short days, they would be shouting to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, "*Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!*" And in the end, their relentless **pressure** on Pilate would win the day, and Jesus would be led outside the city of Jerusalem to be **crucified**.

These were the events which **led up** to the suffering and death of Jesus - the **sin** of God's own people in **rejecting** God's grace, and **resenting** His **claim** on them as **His people**. But, it's important for us to see that the sin we see in **them** is the **same** sin which is found in **all** people. We have **also** received God's boundless **grace**, **love**, and **compassion**. Through Holy **Baptism** God brought **us** into His family. He called **us** out of the darkness of **sin** and **unbelief** into the marvelous light of **faith** in **Jesus**, our **Savior**. He surrounded us with **evidence** of His love, by giving us pastors and teachers, who would share His holy **Word** with us, offering us **comfort**, and **peace**, and **forgiveness**. The Holy Spirit **worked** through that Word to **consecrate** our hearts and lives to **God**, so with **thankful** hearts we would bring to Him the fruits of **faith** which He **deserves**.

But, just like the people of Israel in **Jesus'** day, we're guilty of **failing** to give God the **thanks** which He rightly **deserves** because of His **grace** toward us. We have also resisted His **claim** on us as His **children**. We're **selfish** and **self-centered** in the way we use our time, talents, and treasure. We drift toward the attitudes and thinking of the **world** instead of looking to **God** for our guidance and direction. We even neglect our duty to be God's **witnesses** - to proclaim the saving message of Jesus to the people around us. Our lives certainly fall **far short** of giving glory to **God** in **everything** we do.

But Jesus' parable also reminds us of something **else** which led Him to Calvary's cross - namely, the amazing **love of God**. In this parable, the vineyard owner sent his own **son** to deal with his wicked tenants, even though they had already **beaten** and even **killed** servants who had been sent earlier. And that's exactly what our **God** has done for **us**. Even though we were **wicked** and **sinful** - and even though God **knew** that His Son would be **tortured** and **killed** by wicked men - He sent Jesus into this world to **save us**. Jesus **willingly** took on Himself the **curse** and the **punishment** for the sins of the **world**. God's **love** led Jesus to the **cross**, and there He overcame **all evil**, and won **forgiveness** for our sins.

**The Parable Of The Wicked Tenants** shows the suffering and death of Jesus as an act of God's **grace** - His undeserved **love** for sinners. But, the parable **also** shows the grace of God which continued on **after** Jesus' suffering and death. When Jesus had finished telling His parable, which ended with the tenants **killing** the owner's Son, He **concluded** with the words, *"What will the owner of the vineyard **do** to them? He will come and **destroy** those tenant farmers and give the vineyard to **others**."* Jesus was **warning** the people of the **judgment** that would come to all those who **reject** God's Son. And this warning **still applies** to everyone who rejects the gracious love of God which He offered through His Son, **Jesus**. Everyone who closes their heart to God's Son, and treats His sacrifice on the cross with **disdain**, will face the judgment of eternal **damnation**.

But there's still **more** to look at in this parable. Jesus said that the owner of the vineyard would give the vineyard to **others**. God's **purpose** for sending His **Son** would not be **frustrated**. God's **vineyard** would be **taken away** from those who **rejected** Him, and it would be **passed on** to those who did **not** reject Him. The **full payment** for the sins of the **world** was made by **Jesus**, and when God **raised** Him from the dead, He **certified** that the payment had been **received** and **accepted**. Everyone who **welcomes** Jesus as their Savior receives the **benefit** of His sacrifice, and we strive to give God **fruits of faith** in order to bring Him **glory**. The Apostle Paul wrote to Titus, *"(Jesus) gave **himself** for us, to **redeem** us from all lawlessness and to **purify** for himself a people who are **his own** chosen people, **eager to do good works**."*

Through the Word of God, the Holy Spirit leads us to eagerly **serve Jesus** with our lives - bringing Him **fruits of faith**. In view of God's mercy, we will **continue** to offer ourselves to God - all that we **are**, and all that we **have** - as living sacrifices of **praise** and **thanksgiving**. We have an **amazing** God - a God who used

the **wickedness** of the men who crucified His **Son**, to result in an ever **growing** and **expanding** Church of **believers**, who happily respond to God's love with thankful hearts. Amen.