

18th Sunday after Pentecost October 4, 2020

17th Sunday after Trinity Proper 22 (27)
Lectionary Year A – the Gospel of Matthew

Living the Lutheran Lectionary

A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.

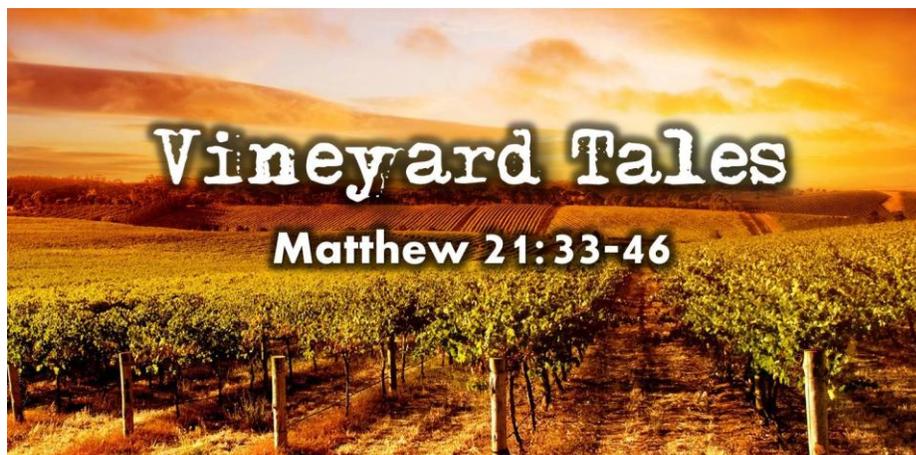
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.

Available on line at:

- ✦ www.bethlehemplutheranchurchparma.com/biblestudies
- ✦ Through www.Facebook.com at “Living the Lutheran Lectionary”, “Bethlehem Lutheran Church Parma”, or “Harold Weseloh”
- ✦ All links in this on-line copy are active and can be reached using Ctrl+Click

Gather and be blessed:

- ✦ **Thursdays at 10 AM (5pm Kenya/Uganda):** At Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH 44134 and on line through <https://zoom.us/j/815200301>
- ✦ **Wednesdays at 7 PM in a house church setting:** For details, contact Harold Weseloh at puritaspastor@hotmail.com
- ✦ **Thursdays at 1:00 PM (8pm Kenya time)** via Zoom to the Lutheran School of Theology - Nyamira , Kenya
- ✦ **On Facebook through Messenger** in a discussion group shared by people throughout the United States, Kenya and Uganda. Contact Harold Weseloh on Facebook Messenger.



<https://michaelanthonyhoward.com/blog/2014/10/05/vineyard-theses-matthew-2133-46>

Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 544 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) Not listed

“O love, how deep, how broad, how high”

“The rich liturgical resources of the Medieval Church have yielded a treasure of hymns and chant. This hymn is attributed to St. Thomas à Kempis (1380–1471) because it sounds like him; we do not know for sure that he was the author. It survives in but one source. St. Thomas is known mostly for The Imitation of Christ. Originally twenty-three stanzas, it has generally been published with only seven; the doxological stanza is from another source. It leads us from the incarnation of our Lord through His Baptism, His obedient life, His life-giving death and His glorious resurrection...” study by Larry A. Peters

- <https://www.lcms.org/worship/hymn-of-the-day-studies>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYCPxK7_lyk Trinity Lutheran Church Choir, Reading, PA, arrangement by Carl Schalk
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wMDhEN7h2Rg> “I was surprised and really pleased to find this arrangement of "The Agincourt Song" in a Presbyterian Hymnal ... The tune name is Deo Gracias and is based on the E. Power Biggs arrangement of the "Agincourt Hymn" This arrangement is by Richard Proulx. There are five verses (last is almost full organ) and the final Fanfare is with Solo Trompette...”
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLqQG7v4ujA> The Agincourt Hymn (sometimes known as "The Agincourt Song", "The Agincourt Carol", or by its chorus and central words, "Deo gratias Anglia") is an English folk song written in the early 15th century. It recounts the 1415 Battle of Agincourt, in which the English army led by Henry V of England defeated that of the French Charles VI in what is now the Pas-de-Calais region of France. The carol is one of thirteen on the Trinity Carol Roll, probably originating in East Anglia, that has been held in the Wren Library of Trinity College, Cambridge since the 19th century. The hymn is featured in Laurence Olivier's 1944 film "Henry V".
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZkVGKJUd64E> Alternate melody in SATB choral arrangement. Lloyd Larson, [The Lorenz Corporation](#)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvUtpWgXmRM> “Rejoice in God’s gift of hymnody, taken from Higher Things”, a conference closing service. Always a joy.

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001
by [Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.](#)

O. T. - “I will sing for the one I love, a song about his vineyard”

Psalm – “Restore us,^[a] **O God;... O God of hosts;... O LORD God of hosts!**”

Epistle – “For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish”

Gospel – “**Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:”**

Isaiah 5:1-7; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20 or Isaiah 5:1-7 (Next week: Isaiah 25:6-9; RCL, Exodus 32:1-14 or Isaiah 25:1-9)

“...read the Hebrew in its beautiful poetic form; he (Isaiah) pictures the love God tendered on His vineyard. His relationship with His Vineyard is shown in the deep personal loving care. God, the Vineyard owner, says, “My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; He built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine press in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes...” From our Christian perspective, we can unpack the symbolism of Isaiah’s poetry: The fertile hill is the horn of a mountain—an area that receives both an abundance of nourishing rain and warm sun. Isaiah’s poetry describes a choice hill, freed of confounding stones, worked painstakingly by hand, and planted with the choicest of vines.

Further, Martin Luther’s commentary identifies the choice vines as our forefathers of faith: Abraham, Isaac, David, and the faithful kings of Israel. Citing Romans 12, Luther posits that the winepress is the mortifying of the Old Adam—our human nature. He describes the watchtower as symbolic of God’s Word, His promise, and Mercy Seat ... the things in faithful spiritual worship. By Luther’s description, we begin to see details of God’s planning: loving care, and meticulous tending ... hard work ... and how it applies to us today...”

➤ <https://concordia-seminary.ca/2016/03/03/sermon-on-isaiah-51-7/>

Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, President, Mid South District, LC-MS, Tennessee

The Song of the Vineyard Verses 1-7

5 I will sing for the one I love
a song about his vineyard:
My loved one had a vineyard
on a fertile hillside.

2 He dug it up and cleared it of stones
and planted it with the choicest vines.
He built a watchtower in it
and cut out a winepress as well.

Then he looked for a crop of good grapes,
but it yielded only bad fruit.

3 “Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and people of Judah,
judge between me and my vineyard.

4 What more could have been done for my vineyard
than I have done for it?

When I looked for good grapes,
why did it yield only bad?

5 Now I will tell you
what I am going to do to my vineyard:

I will break down its wall, I will take away its hedge,
and it will be destroyed;

and it will be trampled.

6 I will make it a wasteland,

neither pruned nor cultivated,
 and briars and thorns will grow there.
 I will command the clouds
 not to rain on it.”
 7 The vineyard of the LORD Almighty
 is the nation of Israel,
 and the people of Judah
 are the vines he delighted in.
 And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed;
 for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.

Woes and Judgments Verses 8-30

“This reading is known as the "Song of the Vineyard" and is considered one of the finest literary pieces in the Old Testament. It is a carefully crafted **allegory**, a relatively rare literary form in the Old Testament that uses symbolic figures, characters, or actions to illustrate a truth or observation about human experience (cf. Eze 16; a **fable** is a specific kind of allegory in which plants or animals are allowed to speak in order to illustrate the message, for example, Jud 9:7-15, 2 Kings 14:9). An allegory usually involves a short story in which different elements represent different aspects of the truth to be illustrated. This differs from the much more common use of **metaphor** or **symbol** in which one thing represents or is compared to another ("the Lord is my shepherd," Psa 23:1; cf. Jer 2:21 where the same imagery of a vineyard is used in a simple metaphor). An allegory likewise differs from a **parable** in which a single truth is illustrated by the parable without specific parts of the story representing specific things (for example, 2 Sam 12:1-7).

While the allegorical reading of much of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, was a common practice in the Early Church and still prevails in some circles, allegory is now recognized as a very specific literary form that is little used in Scripture. In all biblical occurrences of allegory, the meaning of the story is clearly explained within the context of the biblical text. Parables or didactic narratives (for example, Jonah), on the other hand, are often left for the reader to reflect on the meaning and make his/her own application and response.

Like many of the collections of prophetic sayings, the particular historical context of this passage is unknown. We can only place it within the general ministry of Isaiah of Jerusalem during the Assyrian crisis as he brought God's warnings of consequences for the nation because of their unfaithfulness to God...”

➤ <http://www.crivoice.org/lectionary/YearC/Cproper15ot.html> Dennis Bratcher, Copyright © 2018
 "Copyright © 2019 CRI/Voice"

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 “The speaker is Isaiah (“my”; 5:1, 9); the prophet speaks in the first person for the first time.

The “beloved,” the owner of the vineyard, is God and the “vineyard” is Israel (5:7). After speaking 5:1-2, Isaiah quotes God in 5:3-6 and then returns to speak the balance of the chapter. For Isaiah to refer to God as “my beloved” is to identify himself as a representative of God’s beloved people Israel.

The image of a vineyard for Israel is used elsewhere (see 3:14; 27:2-6; Psalm 80:8-19); it is sometimes associated with the image of a bride with her beloved. This association is evident in the immediately prior book, where the loved one is likened to a vineyard (Song of Solomon 7:6-9; 8:11-12).

For Isaiah to use a vineyard image for the God, Israel relationship stands in that tradition; only now it is deeply ironic given the breakdown in Israel's relationship with God. The love-song imagery sets up the audience to hear words of love, but words of judgment soon fill the room. It has been suggested that such a turn would be like singing "Holy, Holy, Holy" to the tune of "Let me call you sweetheart"!

Given this imagery, Isaiah 5:1-7 is best designated an allegory (cf. 2 Samuel 12:1-6). But only in 5:7 are identities made clear and only then would the people see that the song is actually a harsh judgment on them. This strategic use of the love-song is to get them to recognize what they have done and to respond to God's questions in 5:3-4 in a way that would be fair and just..."

- http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1943 [Terence E. Fretheim](#) Elva B. Lovell Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

Psalm 80:7-19; RCL, Psalm 19 or Psalm 80:7-15 (Psalm 23; RCL, Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23 or Psalm 23)

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19 was used on the First Sunday in Advent, Year B

"Psalm 80's thrice-repeated refrain (vv. 3, 7, 19) is a clue both to the psalm's liturgical origins and its driving theological concern...

The refrain indicates that the poem finds its origins as a corporate prayer, with the congregation or a choir intoning the refrain...The petition in the psalm's second verse, "Stir up your might, and come," is the source for prayer of the day for the First Sunday in Advent: "Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come."

In terms of the psalm's overriding theological concern, the refrain shows that the psalm is a prayer for deliverance: "Restore us, O God!" The psalm is vague as to what crisis may have originally precipitated the plea. Perhaps it was the Babylonian exile or some other national humiliation. Or perhaps the psalm was composed to be performed annually as part of a national worship commemoration. This is not clear, but the surrounding doubt is actually a positive--it allows the prayer to be sung by any community undergoing crisis, or even by a thriving community on behalf of others who are suffering..."

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=188 [Rolf Jacobson](#) Professor of Old Testament and Alvin N. Rogness Chair in Scripture, Theology, and Ministry, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

Restore Us, O God

To the choirmaster: according to Lilies. A Testimony. Of Asaph, a Psalm.

80 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock...

³ Restore us, ^[a] O God;
let your face shine, that we may be saved!...

⁷ Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved!

⁸ You brought a vine out of Egypt;
 you drove out the nations and planted it.
⁹ You cleared the ground for it;
 it took deep root and filled the land.
¹⁰ The mountains were covered with its shade,
 the mighty cedars with its branches.
¹¹ It sent out its branches to the sea
 and its shoots to the River.^[b]
¹² Why then have you broken down its walls,
 so that all who pass along the way
 Look down from heaven, and see; pluck its fruit?
¹³ The boar from the forest ravages it,
 and all that move in the field feed on it.
¹⁴ Turn again, O God of hosts!
 Look down from heaven, and see;
 have regard for this vine,
¹⁵ the stock that your right hand planted,
 and for the son whom you made strong for yourself.
¹⁶ They have burned it with fire; they have cut it down;
 may they perish at the rebuke of your face!
¹⁷ But let your hand be on the man of your right hand,
 the son of man whom you have made strong for yourself!
¹⁸ Then we shall not turn back from you;
 give us life, and we will call upon your name!
¹⁹ Restore us, O LORD God of hosts!
Let your face shine, that we may be saved!

a. [Psalm 80:3](#) Or *Turn us again*; also verses [7](#), [19](#)

b. [Psalm 80:11](#) That is, the Euphrates

“First, the superscription for Psalm 80 identifies it as belonging to Asaph, mentioned in 1 Chronicles as a Levitical worship leader appointed by David (1 Chronicles 6:39; 25:1-2). Acknowledging the legitimate questions raised about the historicity of psalm superscriptions, Psalm 80’s association with the Asaphite singers reminds us to ponder the canonical shaping of the Book of Psalms as a whole. The twelve psalms associated with Asaph (Psalms 50, 73-83) are a collection “likely of northern origin, reflect[ing] a strong interest in divine justice, Israel’s history from exodus to exile, and Zion.”¹ William P. Brown, “Book of Psalms,” in *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*. ed. K . D. Sakenfeld (Nashville, Abingdon, 2009), 4:673.

➤ https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3484

[James K. Mead](#) Associate Professor of Religion, Northwestern College, Orange City, IA

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“Learning to Live with Mystery

Certain questions are asked of God in this psalm but they are not answered. The people have been faithful in worship, asking for God’s help, but God has not responded. The question is “How much longer, Lord?” (v... 4)

The city walls have been broken down, leaving a heap of ruins and rubble. Such scenes have not been uncommon in our times... The question remains, even today: “Why, Lord? In many such cases, the questions will remain questions. But somehow, despite these unanswered questions, God’s people have survived. They have had to learn to live with the mystery. Somehow, they have been enabled to go on, remembering the mighty acts of God on the past (vv.3, 7, 19), and praying to a God whose ways they do not understand (vv. 4, 12)...”

➤ James Limburg, *Psalms*, a *Westminster Bible Companion*, pages 274-5 Westminster Press, 2000

Philippians 3:4b-14; RCL, the same reading (Philippians 4:4-13; RCL, Philippians 4:1-9)

“Paul describes a reversal of values. He is not abandoning scripture, let alone abandoning God, but he is abandoning a theology based on seeking to please God by zealous protection of divine laws. He is abandoning a theology which sees God as obsessed with his own laws and preoccupied with becoming angry and offended when things are not done in exactly the prescribed way. Such theology is a projection of human egotism. In Christ he has found an understanding and embodiment of God which says that God's being is characterised by love and generosity which is pained and angered by human sin and harm and seeks to reconcile people from their estrangement and their captivity - including their captivity to religion.

Without throwing away his own religion Paul, nevertheless, throws away a theology which had made him important and given him great status. In its place he embraces Christ and Christ's way. But this is more than just a change of values. It is also a deeply spiritual and personal change which affects Paul at the heart of his being and changes his future forever...”

➤ <http://wwwstaff.murdoch.edu.au/~loader/AEpPentecost17.htm> William (Bill) Ronald George Loader, Emeritus Professor of New Testament, Murdoch University, Perth, Australia

Righteousness Through Faith in Christ Verses 1-11

3 Finally, my brothers,[Ⓜ] rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.

*2 Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. 3 For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God[Ⓜ] and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— 4 though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 **circumcised** on the **eighth day**, of the **people of Israel**, of the **tribe of Benjamin**, a **Hebrew of Hebrews**; as to the law, a **Pharisee**; 6 as to zeal, a **persecutor of the church**; as to righteousness under the law,[Ⓜ] **blameless**. 7 But whatever gain I*

had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. **For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish,** in order that I may gain Christ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Straining Toward the Goal Verses 12-21

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus...

- a. [Philippians 3:1](#) Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses [13](#), [17](#)
- b. [Philippians 3:3](#) Some manuscripts *God in spirit*
- c. [Philippians 3:6](#) *Greek in the law*

“When the cross of Christ was on the line, Paul’s language was blunt, direct, raw. As Paul begins what we call Philippians 3, it quickly becomes apparent that like so many of the congregations in the early church, so also the congregation in Philippi had come into contact with a group of Jewish teachers who were proclaiming that salvation would come only to those who followed certain strict rules, the chief one of which was that all males had to be circumcised.

Since the Philippian church was made up primarily of Gentiles, it is likely that very few of the Christians there had ever been circumcised. And yet Paul says in verse 3—and the Lectionary’s insistence that this reading begin at verse 3b makes no sense since it just takes away this all-important contextual point—that the Philippians have *already* been circumcised. What these other teachers were offering, therefore, was not salvation but mutilation—a mutilation not just of their bodies but even worse of their faith. “These other teachers want to carve up not just your body but your faith. They want to make you believe that what they can do to your bodies with their scalpels is better than what God can do to your hearts with his Son.”

These are strong words. After all, for at least two millennia circumcision had been a sacred, biblically mandated sacrament for God’s people. All his life Paul had also been raised to see this as a sign of God’s covenant—a sign that began already with Abraham. And yet now Paul calls it “mutilation!” Just imagine if one day you heard of a pastor somewhere describing the Lord’s Supper as a nauseating display of gross cannibalism. How shocked you would be to hear a once-cherished sacrament described as disgusting...

Starting in verse 4 Paul says, “I know how futile it is to pin your salvation on outward ceremonies and laws because I spent most of my life doing it all right: I kept all the rules, I had an I

was so convinced that excellent religious pedigree, keeping the law was the only way to heaven that I persecuted the Christians who thought otherwise. But then I met Jesus and I knew in an instant that all my shining religious accomplishments were no more than a pile of manure!”

The word translated as “rubbish” in verse 8 is a very strong word. This is the only place in the entire Bible where it occurs, and small wonder: most commentators say that it is a raw, gross, barnyard-type word that refers to excrement. The revelation that God’s own Son had to *die* in order to secure salvation turned Paul’s world upside-down. “And to think,” Paul writes, “that at one time I thought handing God this pile of manure was going to be my entrance ticket to the kingdom!”

Paul then goes on to say that now the only thing he wants to do is to know more about Jesus. “What’s important is not that God knows what you’ve done but that you know what God has done!!” For most of his life Paul had been saying to God, “Look at me! Look at me! See what I’ve done.” But now all Paul can say is “Look at Jesus! Look at Jesus! See what he’s done!”

➤ https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/lent-5c/?type=lectionary_epistle Scott Hoezee

Matthew 21:33-46; RCL, the same reading (Matthew 22:1-14; RCL, the same reading)

“...Just read today’s parable, for instance. It doesn’t all start here, of course, but in this week’s parable and in the weeks to come, we’re going to hear Matthew relate some pretty dark things. More than that, we’re going to hear Matthew use these things to try to win the argument he’s having with the Pharisees, the opponents of his day, as they each vie for the loyalty of Matthew’s community.

So, in this week’s parable, Jesus, according to Matthew, plays off the familiar imagery of the vineyard and the unfaithful managers of the vineyard to score some serious “gotcha” points. You know the story...” (continued after the reading)

“The Holy Gospel beginning in the 21st Chapter of St. Matthew”

The Triumphal Entry Verses 1-11

Jesus Cleanses the Temple Verses 12-17

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree Verses 18-22

The Authority of Jesus Challenged Verses 23-27 (Proper 21)

The Parable of the Two Sons Verses 28-32 (Proper 21)

The Parable of the Tenants

33 “Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. 34 When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants^[a] to the tenants to get his fruit. 35 And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. 36 Again he sent other servants,

more than the first. And they did the same to them. ³⁷ Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ ³⁸ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.’ ³⁹ And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. ⁴⁰ When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?’” ⁴¹ They said to him, “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.”

⁴² Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

**“The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;^[b]
this was the Lord's doing,
and it is marvelous in our eyes’? Cited from Ps. 118:22, 23**

⁴³ Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. ⁴⁴ And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”^[c]

⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶ And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.

- a. [Matthew 21:34](#) Or bondservants; also verses [35](#), [36](#)
- b. [Matthew 21:42](#) Greek *the head of the corner*
- c. [Matthew 21:44](#) Some manuscripts omit verse [44](#)*

**For a more detailed study of verse 44 read, “A Case for the Assimilation of Matthew 21:44 to the Lukan “Crushing Stone” (20:18), with Special Reference to §104” **

➤ <http://jbtc.org/v21/TC-2016-Lanier.pdf> Gregory R. Lanier, Reformed Theological Seminary

“This is the Gospel of the Lord” “Praise to You, O Christ”

“The parable and the larger part of the story it occupies fulfill several narrative and theological goals for Matthew. **1)** It is part of the build-up of tension and suspense that has percolated throughout the gospel but now approaches its crescendo in the days between Jesus’

clearing out of the moneychangers and his betrayal and arrest. **2)** It invites contemporaries of Matthew to see the Pharisees and chief priests in a less than flattering light and for this reason, perhaps, either to give this story of Jesus a second hearing or, if they're already believers, to be encouraged in their decisions to follow Jesus. **3)** It offers a theological explanation for why the Temple was destroyed and thereby once again confirms his community in their faith. I can sympathize somewhat with these reasons when Matthew's community is in the minority, and is likely suffering hardship and perhaps persecution. We're glimpsing an exchange from an unhappy, even bitter sibling rivalry, and while it's uncomfortable we've seen enough of this kind of thing to at least make sense of it..."

➤ Reading the rest of Dr. Lose's commentary is worthwhile. <http://www.davidlose.net/2014/09/pentecost-17a-crazy-love/>

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"Now, of course, the parable Jesus offers now is told in the extreme. One cannot help but be outraged at the criminal behavior of the tenants as he describes it and them now. For those of us listening in it is obvious that the owner of the vineyard has done everything to make their 'ways of life' possible. He has planted the vines, placed a fence around it, put in the wine press and built a watch tower to protect it all. To be sure, the tenants are doing the day to day work, but none of that work would be theirs to do if someone else hadn't made it possible. One can hardly believe it when they murder not just one envoy of slaves, but two. When the owner's son meets the same fate, we find ourselves shaking our heads that those tenants could possibly believe the inheritance would then somehow actually be theirs to receive and enjoy. As though the owner could forget what was done to him.

Yes, the parable Jesus offers now offers an extreme image. And yet, it is also so for you and for me. We forget that we are simply 'tenants' here. We fail to remember that everything we are and everything we think we 'own' are just on loan to us. These homes, acres, jobs, congregations, children, spouses, communities --- even our very bodies --- were created by God and given to us for this little span of time. And yet, how often do I behave as though it all 'belongs to me?' In a sense am I also not 'taking the lives of those sent to collect the rent' whenever I live as though it is all mine? Indeed, the flip side of that is that every day I fail to entrust it all to God, I am also taking on far more than I am intended to hold.

It is a hard word we hear today. It is an important word. And while it may not seem like it at first, it is also a life-giving word. You and I are here because of God's generosity and God's tender care. God planted the vineyard. And put in the fence. And the wine press. And the watch tower. God has given us all that we need. All we are asked to do is remember that. It is God's Vineyard. It is all gift. And even the remembering of this is meant to be a gift.

<http://words.dancingwiththeword.com/2014/09/gods-vineyard.html> "Pr. J. Hunt is a long-time partner and Associated Trainer for [Church Innovations](#), a research and consulting non-profit institute that innovates capacities of churches to be renewed in God's mission."

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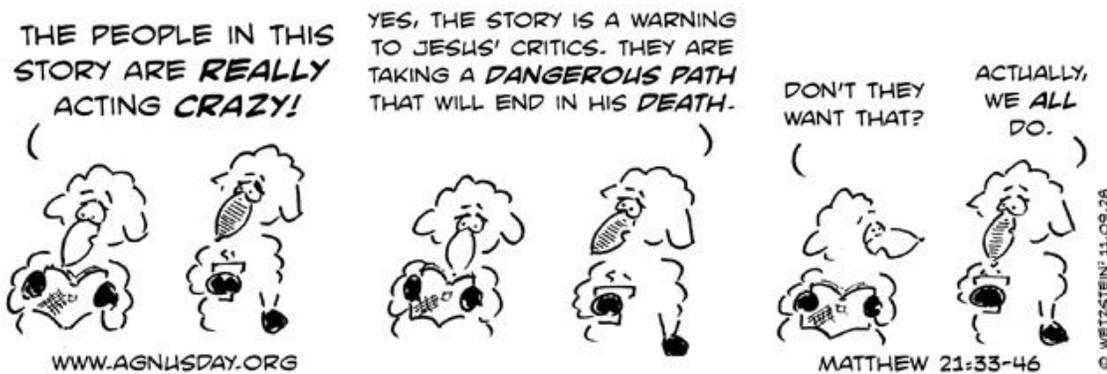
"This parable has something to say about the fact that we cannot control God's merciful, continual outreach to others. Even though we know full well that they have used up all nine of their lives and all three of their strikes, we are not the ones who get to say when they have used up all their chances with God. Even though they have pushed their luck, blown their opportunities, gotten on our last nerve, and brought us to the end of our rope, we can't call a halt to the height,

depth, or duration of the mercy of God. And the same is true when we turn our eyes to the person in the mirror.

Even without the three evangelists' specific statement of the vineyard owner's actions, those listening, if they had applied the parable to their own actions with regard to Jesus, would have been angry. The parable has a bite to it no matter how you look at it.

It all but forces us to look at our lives, our specific attitudes and actions, in light of whether they represent an embrace or a rejection of the message of Jesus, the Son of God. As Christians we do well to focus not so much on what the passage has to say about Jewish leaders as what it implies about Christians. The "others" to whom the vineyard is given over in verse 41 are also responsible to the owner, charged with producing the fruits of the kingdom (v. 43)."

- <https://www.patheos.com/resources/additional-resources/2011/09/wicked-tenants-alyce-mckenzie-09-26-2011.aspx?p=2> The Rev. Dr. A. M. McKenzie is the George W. and Nell Ayers Le Van Professor of Preaching and Worship at Perkins School of Theology.



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The Matthew Challenge

How about if you had someone read it to you?

How about if you read it to someone else?

How about if you took turns?

Weekly review thoughts

