

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ!

Our gospel this morning is a parable, a story. We hear about a landowner, a fairly ordinary story, nothing special. But this story is a metaphor for Jesus' own story, for what we read in the Old Testament, and the gospels. Think of the landowner as God, who created everything.

God repeatedly sent his prophets to the people of Israel. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah, Elisha, Micah, Hosea, the list goes on. Yet the people did not listen, they heard but they not listen. Instead they rebelled against God, willfully going their own way, ignoring God's word, and stoning, beating and killing his messengers. God then sent his Son, the "only-begotten from the Father" thinking they will listen to him, Jesus the son in our parable, in our story. Jesus comes after unsuccessful attempts to get the tenants to listen.

Jesus tells this story on his way to the cross, he knows he came from God and that he is going back to God and he is telling us a story about it. A simple story because Jesus has a simple message. God didn't give up on the Israelites, he does not give up on us. No matter how often we get it wrong, no matter how often we do not listen to his messengers, God still loves us and continues to reach out to us even now. And when we reject the capstone, the cornerstone, we kill the landowner's son, then God surprises us because he takes that rejection and makes it part of a stronger foundation than we can ever imagine. A foundation and a structure made of the love of God.

So think now about the vineyard. What does a vineyard produce? Grapes, that is, fruit. We are so loved that God sent his Son, that all who believe in him may not perish. Saved by grace through faith we believe in God's Son, and the story continues. Vineyards produce fruit and God expects and wants us to produce fruit.

This is our life, life from faith, faith lived out with commitment, knowing where our treasure is. Life producing fruit. Now think for a moment about all the commitment when it comes to the Vikings, the Twins, hunting and fishing, work or retirement, to living on or near the lakes here in this part of Minnesota. Is there as much commitment when it comes to church, to living a life that bears fruit for the kingdom? We are often unwilling to accept God's authority, we have a desire to work for ourselves and keep the fruit of our labors.

Messengers from God are sometimes seen as threats to lifestyles and to economic wellbeing. Messengers from God seem to want what tenants assume is their own, the fruit that stems from their efforts. The parable you just heard describes life then and life now. But we are not living a metaphor.

I preach Christ crucified and I preach discipleship and I encourage you to live them in your daily life. We need to consider what it means to live lives that produce fruit. It's never been about giving back to God from what is ours because none of what we have is ours. It is all God's. We are tenants, we are stewards, charged with the care of creation and each other, charged with sharing the love of God with one another and with those outside our walls.

Jesus was anointed to bring good news to the poor, he has anointed us to do the same, to produce fruit. We are the Body of Christ and we are his stewards.

The landowner will come back and I pray we will be found working for the Kingdom. By being even more engaged in mission beyond our walls we can be better stewards of God's creation. The fruit we produce can make this world a better place for each of God's beloved children.

AMEN