

Sermon: 5th Sunday in Lent

Text: Luke 20:9-20 (v.13) - The Parable of the Tenants

Theme: The love and patience of God.

Goal: We are God's vineyard. God sent His beloved Son and still sends His messengers.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: This story was not totally new to Jesus' listeners. The Old Testament speaks about God's people as a vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-7). In short, to understand the symbolism in the parable: The owner is God Himself; the vineyard is His people, the church; the tenants are the leaders of the people; the servants/messengers of the owner are the prophets; the beloved Son is the Messiah, Jesus Himself.

I – We are God's vineyard

We are God's vineyard. Whatever we have, whoever we are, it's a gift from God. We just confessed at the Baptism: *I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heavens and earth.* By His grace we are alive and are able to do what we do. Our achievements are only possible because we are alive and we got the skills to reach them. This is a gift of God as well, as Solomon describes it so well in the Book of Ecclesiastes (5:18-20).

To be God's vineyard is a special gift of God's love. He has chosen us and He has planted us into His vineyard, that is into His Kingdom. This was the main preaching of Jesus: To call people to repentance and to proclaim the Kingdom of God. And this is God's grace, not our merit - Just looking at the Baptism that we performed today. Little Luke Eerik has not yet been able to do anything to please God. But God gives us the Holy Baptism to receive the little ones in His

gracious arms, to forgive them, to declare them His beloved children and to inscribe his name in His Book of Life. This is pure grace of God!

Once planted in His vineyard, God expects to see fruits. The Holy Spirit strengthens us by the Word and the Sacraments, leading us to live a life of love toward God and toward our neighbours.

II – God sent and still sends His messengers and His beloved Son

It is easy for us to condemn people of Jesus' time for not producing right fruits and for not accepting God's messengers and God's beloved Son. But this is a story that has passed. What about us today? Are we doing it better? This is our story as well. The Apostle Paul says that "*these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did*" (1 Corinthians 10:6).

The Old Testament is full of stories of good leaders and of bad leaders. It goes always up and down in the history of God's people. When bad leaders were leading the people astray from God's will, He sent them prophets to call them back through repentance and changing of life. Some prophets were accepted, but many were rejected and some were even killed. God showed His love and patience again and again, coming to the aid of His people. When we read the Old Testament, we have to read it not only as a book of stories, but we always have to try to find how God intervened with judgment and with love to restore and to save His people, pointing to the final restoration when the Messiah comes.

The last prophet God sent was John the Baptist. Many were called back by his preaching of repentance. But eventually he was killed as well, due to the whim of King Herod.

Then God took the big decision: "I will send my Son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him."

Jesus (John 3:16, 17) summarizes this decision of God in the most well-known Bible verse: “God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.”

We are in the Lent Season and we know what happened to Jesus: The beloved Son of God was killed by the tenants who didn't accept Him. *Jesus' rejection by the leaders is, however, not the end* (ABC 1244). God reversed human's decisions raising Jesus from the death on Easter Sunday! The resurrection of Jesus changed the course of the history! We count our time as B.C. - 'Before Christ' and A.D. - 'Anno Domini', The Year of the Lord. *The birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ are the "turning points" in world history.* (Wikipedia)

III – The Cornerstone

Jesus uses another comparison to explain what was happening and what would happen in the future of His church. He talks about a rejected stone that becomes a cornerstone. He quotes this from Psalm 118. He is the stone that didn't fit in the building plans of the Kingdom according to men's projections. People and leaders were trying to build an earthly and powerful kingdom, like the other nations around them. God's Kingdom is spiritual and eternal. It begins among us by God's grace and goes further to the sphere of heaven. The stone once rejected by men was used by God as the cornerstone to build up His church, not by bricks of clay, but by living stones, as Peter wrote quoting the same image: “As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in the Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” (1 Peter 2:6, 7).

Conclusion: Have you ever tried to correct someone of your relationship, a friend, a relative, a close family member, because of his/her bad behaviour? maybe a drunkard? How many times did you approach him/her? How far goes your patience? Sometimes conflicts grow in such a way that we give up.

Transport this experience of yours to our relationship with God. *Just as this particular person has repeatedly frustrated your attempts to amend his or her ways, so you and I have frustrated God's efforts to eradicate some fatal flaw in ourselves, rejecting God's plan for us.*

(Series C,107). God has not given up calling us to His Kingdom up to now.

As long as we are alive He sends us His messengers, searching for fruits, fruits of faith, fruits of good deeds. *Again and again the Scriptures tell us of God's incredible mercy and infinite patience. He keeps sending His beloved Son to us, over and over, in the Gospel and in the Sacraments, hoping that we will not reject Him, but will someday embrace the truth He speaks to us in such great love and that the truth will make us free... free to serve Him here and hereafter, free to enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God in God's eternal home.* (Series C, 108). Amen

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 17 March 2013