



## Sermon, Sunday, November 26, 2023

### “The Parable of the Tenants”

**SCRIPTURE: Matthew 21:33-46** “Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went away. <sup>34</sup> When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. <sup>35</sup> But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. <sup>36</sup> Again he sent other slaves, more than the first, and they treated them in the same way. <sup>37</sup> Then he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ <sup>38</sup> But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.’ <sup>39</sup> So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. <sup>40</sup> Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” <sup>41</sup> They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.” <sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the scriptures: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes’? <sup>43</sup> “Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces its fruits. <sup>44</sup> The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.” <sup>45</sup> When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. <sup>46</sup> They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

#### Introduction: The True Fruits of Christians

Today is the last week after Pentecost in the church calendar. Advent begins next week. The central message of the Bible can be summarized in one sentence: ‘**Love of God and love of neighbors.**’ Therefore, Christians must be able to establish peaceful relationships with their neighbors through the practice of ‘**loving God and loving neighbors.**’ However, this is often not the case.

Looking at today's text, even Jesus could not live in peace with the chief priests or Pharisees. In the Gospel, Jesus rebuked the chief priests and Pharisees for being hypocrites. And the conflict with them was one of the many reasons why Jesus had to die on the cross.

Today's text is known as ‘**The Parable of the Tenants.**’ Today's text explains the nature of the conflict and conflict that Jesus experienced.

According to today's parable, a man planted a vineyard. The vineyard owner signed a contract with the farmers and went abroad. When it was time to harvest grapes, the owner sent his servant to the vineyard to collect his share as he had agreed to with the farmers. However, the farmers stoned and killed the servant sent by the vineyard owner. So, the owner sends more servants to the farmers. But the farmers stoned them and killed them, too. Then the owner sends his son to the farmers. The owner expected the farmers to keep their contract with him out of fear of his son. However, the farmers thought that if they killed the vineyard owner's son, who was the heir to the vineyard, they could take over the inheritance. So, they also killed the vineyard owner's son.



In this parable, the servants sent by their master to the vineyard farmers represent the prophets of ancient Israel. However, Israel ignored the words of the prophets: **'Do not follow idols but repent and return to God.'** And, in today's parable, the owner's son refers to Jesus. Those who persecuted Jesus and crucified him were the chief priests of the Sanhedrin in today's text, and those who persecuted Christians were the Pharisees.

In today's parable, Jesus asks the chief priests and Pharisees, what will he do with the farmers who have done bad things when he returns from abroad? Then, upon hearing Jesus' story, they responded that **"He will put those wretches to a miserable death and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time."** The **'other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time'** in verse 41 of today's text are **'a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom'** mentioned by Jesus in verse 43. In other words, the people who produce the fruits in today's text are Christians. Why is this?

Christians are people who know and believe in exactly who Jesus is. Therefore, for Christians, the true fruit is not anything but the relationship with Jesus Christ. To put it in the parable of today's text, as stated in verse 37, is to honor the owner's son. In other words, it means acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God. However, to recognize Jesus as the Son of God, we must know who Jesus is. Today's text tells us who Jesus is.

### **Body: The stone that the builders rejected – The power that turns people into broken and crushed beings**

In verse 42 of today's text, Jesus says, **"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes."** This verse is Jesus quoting Psalm 118:22-23.

Stone is one of the most important building materials in the past and present. Today's text says that the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

The reason Jesus quoted the Psalms was to make people aware of the mistakes of the chief priests, Pharisees, and elders. They got caught up in their own thoughts and interfered with God's work. Also, they did not even know that they were interfering with God's work.

In Matthew 21:23 and following, there is a story that appears to confirm this. That accident was the purification of the temple by Jesus. Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. And he said to them; **"My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a 'den of robbers.'"** (Matthew 21:13). In response to Jesus' actions, the chief priests asked; **"By what authority are you doing these things? and who gave you this authority?"** Jesus said he would answer their questions if they answered where John the Baptist's baptism came from. However, they were unable to answer Jesus' question because they were worried about what people thought. Then Jesus said to them; **"I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him."** (Matthew 21:31-32).

At the time, people thought that Jesus was John the Baptist who had died and was brought back to life. The chief priests and Pharisees, who thought John the Baptist was an inconvenience, naturally thought of Jesus as an inconvenience as well. They thought that they were the cornerstone that supported the building of Israel so that it would not be shaken. This is because they had a monopoly on the Temple in Jerusalem, the home of the chief priests, and the law, the pride of the Pharisees.

At that time, Jesus was like a stone rejected by the builders, as the text says today. However, in today's text, Matthew testifies through the mouth of Jesus that Jesus, who was the stone the builders rejected, became the cornerstone. On what basis did early Christians, including Matthew, make this claim?



Verse 44 of today's text explains about the cornerstone, **"The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."**

According to this verse, the cornerstone has the power to break and crush. This is the power to destroy everything. In other words, it has divine power. This refers to God's power to destroy everything in the world and God's ability to judge the world fairly.

However, at the time of Jesus, the chief priests and Pharisees thought they had the greatest faith in God. They also had the power to exercise power. However, Jesus thought that the actions of the high priests and Pharisees distorted the correct faith toward God.

As seen in the purification of the Jerusalem temple (Matthew 21:12-17), God's holy temple became a den of robbers, rather than a house of prayer. The Pharisees distorted faith in God by making the law absolute. We must remember what Jesus said in the Sabbath controversy with the Pharisees: **"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."** (Mark 2:27).

However, the phrase in verse 44 of today's text, **"the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."** is not only a criticism of certain people, such as the chief priests and Pharisees, but also a criticism of us. This is because the behavior of the chief priests and Pharisees in the text appears equally in our lives and religious lives.

However, the Lord, the stone that the builder rejected, destroys this distorted way of life and faith. In other words, He destroys what we thought was absolute.

People who consider money as most important can live by sharing it with others when the moment comes that money crumbles. A person who views power as absolute can become free from the shackles of power the moment that power crumbles. Also, people who are happy with their friends and family can become true friends to lonely people when the source of their happiness crumbles. Likewise, a person who has enjoyed only success in life will be able to understand and accept those who have failed the moment their successful life crumbles.

However, we cannot free ourselves from the things we regard as absolute through our own strength. Only through Jesus, who destroys what we have absolutized and held on to, can we experience true freedom.

### **Conclusion: I hope we face the Lord in our life.**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! Starting next week, the season of Advent begins as we wait with joy and gratitude for the coming of baby Jesus to this earth.

Please look at what absolute value we place in our lives. No matter what we absolutely hold on to, it will all be meaningless if there is no direct encounter with Jesus in our lives. On the other hand, even if we are absolutely holding on to something in our lives, if we can face Jesus, we will be able to enjoy the joy and rest that comes from true salvation in Him. I hope we have a deep encounter with the Lord as we experience the season of Advent.

