

“Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.” So the saying goes. Those who fool you, trick you, fail you, are not to be trusted; shame on you for giving them a second chance. But the vineyard owner in the parable Jesus told, simply chose not to live by that old saying. The first time should’ve been enough to know, these tenants were scoundrels, thieves, violent.

What’s most astounding is not the perversity of the tenants but the patience of the owner; not their evil, but his good. This parable, at its core, about the heart of God—the God of second chances, and third chances, even more. He doesn’t act according to the ways of the world.

Any reasonable man, would never dreamed of doing what the vineyard owner did next. Not “I’ll get them!” “I’ll teach them a lesson they’ll never forget!” Instead, **I will send my beloved son.**

Jesus describes what’s happening to Him. Vineyard is Israel, place of God’s people to dwell; with this parable Jesus is playing off of Isaiah chapter 5. His hearers will know that very well. The landowner built the vineyard for them to dwell, takes care of them; made them His people, declared, **You are Mine**. They rebelled, embraced all sorts of false gods, corrupt living, immorality.

Did the Lord condemn them right away? No. He sent prophets to warn them of their sin. They rejected His message, persecuted the prophets. And how did the Lord respond? He sent more prophets, kept on calling to repentance, warning of judgment. The tenants responded to God’s patient mercy by rebelling all the more. Some turned to the Lord, most would not listen, He send His Son, intentionally to save them, knowing what they will do to Him.

This Luke, chapter 20. Palm Sunday has already happened, a mob will soon demand the Son of God crucified. How does God respond? True to His Word, He uses the death of His beloved Son for the greatest good for sinners,

For this is how God treats sinners: with patience, mercy, grace. Not wishing that any should perish, but that all repent. The entire life of the believer is one of repentance, basking in His forgiveness. He continues to send His servants to preach His Word, give the gifts of His kingdom, patiently showers you with forgiveness to keep you in the true faith, even as He patiently gives this dying world more time so that more might hear and be saved.

Sin isn’t reasonable, the tenant think they can get away with it. So do you, just because you aren’t immediately punished or suffer much consequences for your crimes. Stop! Realize what you do against God and those you love. See the patience of God, who suffers long to give grace to sinners, wicked tenants like us. Don’t be a fool to think you aren’t that bad.

This parable reveals our own condition. We’re tenants, not owners. Everything we have is gift. Yet, we imagine we’re the owners. “I deserve to be happy, I can do what I desire.” “It’s my life to do as I want.” I have plenty of excuses to justify my actions, making myself to be good people. Repent. Turn from your sins in sorrow. Do you see, do you grasp, how incredible God has not given up on you!

He doesn't say, "Fool me twice, shame on me," strip you of His blessings, kick you out of His kingdom. No, instead, He affirms, you are my dear child, foolish, wicked though you are, heed my Word and live. I give all I have to have you,

That is why he came. Not to die for the self-righteous but for those whose lives are full of one failure after another. He comes only for sinners; His blood washes away the filthiest stains embedded in your soul. He came to search out you wayward, erring tenants, and restore them. The heart of God, His works. He keeps no record of how many chances He's given you. For in the end, it's not about how many times you've messed up, failed Him, rebelled but how constant, how unwavering, the Father's love, desiring you receive His forgiveness.

We thank God for the fathers, mothers in the faith who have gone before us, so many, who struggled, fought, sacrificed, even died so that you could sit there and call yourself a Lutheran. This congregation, 111 yrs. ago today. What has happened here wasn't easy for those who went before us. This congregation should have long ago ceased, this place shouldn't be here, but God preserved His people. We celebrate every anniversary, even every day here, in a spirit of grateful humility that God still allows His good news of forgiveness to be preached in this vineyard, that many more might hear unchanging truth, hear the pure doctrine that God forgives sinners all by grace in Jesus. a vineyard here, as foretold by prophets, when the Christ comes, the vineyards will over flow, wine will not run out. The wine never runs out here, there's always more forgiveness. That you may bear fruit of repentance. The fruit (and share it) unexpected joy of sins forgiven, of His love beyond all thought, of His truth, the only truth this world has ever known that flows from the Son who was killed.

Oh, another one of your problems, you don't pay attention, you aren't very observant. I'm not either. We should be more observant to others needs, more empathy, what others are going through. But here's my point. 3 weeks ago, a Bible verse went up on the balcony underneath the 6 parts of the Catechism. (Don't look now). Rom. 3:28, similar to what you heard today from Phil. **For we hold one is justified by faith, apart from works of the Law.** It's all be grace, all Christ alone, nothing you do can even help your cause. That verse went up on the balcony in Luther's church in Wittenberg, copied through Europe, the world, and here. We confess Scripture alone. our only source, rule, norm for all doctrine. 111 years in this place.

In the years ahead, I think we'll all be amazed what the Lord continues to do in His vineyard here. What will happen in years ahead, I do not know. But I know the Lord will take care of His vineyard. I know the gates of hell cannot prevail against His Church, this place, against His people, against you, not now, not ever.

We will abide in our Father's eternal vineyard, home given by grace, born in love in blood and water from His pierced side, raised to life. He declares, **You are mine**, forgiven. God bless this vineyard and his dear tenants. He will never give up on you.