



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

Today we have another familiar parable from the Gospel of Matthew. Actually it is one of only three parables that are found in all three of the Synoptic Gospels. I guess that might mean that it is an important one, and one that was generally in use after Jesus' time as a good teaching parable. It is an interesting one that I believe has many layers of meaning.

Matthew presents this parable of the wicked tenants as an allegory. That means it is a story in which each of the elements has a hidden or symbolic meaning. The landowner is God. The vineyard is the nation of Israel. The tenants are the people of Israel or its religious leaders. The slaves are the prophets. The new or other tenants are most likely the church. And of course the son is Jesus. So there you have it! To explain. . . .

Here is how Dr. Anders explained this parable, "Matthew's interpretation relates to the story of salvation history. God entrusted his kingdom to the Israelites during Old Testament time. When they steered off course, God sent the prophets to try to correct them. Most did not listen to the prophets. Finally, God decided to send his son Jesus to make clear God's message. But the leaders turned against Jesus and finally had him killed. Then the majority of the Jewish people refused to accept Christ. So the kingdom was given to a new people, the church." So you see. Pretty straight forward, isn't it? But I think there are a few notable things in this parable that I would like to talk about briefly this morning.

The first being what an amazing God we have. In this story and throughout history God has great patience with the Israelites and us. As the landowner,

God invested a lot in making his vineyard really nice for the tenants. After the beautiful colors on our trees this past week, who can argue that one. And God still cares for His creation. So He entrusts it to us to continue to look after the earth and produce fruit from His creation.

Another piece of this lesson is that God has an great amount of trust in those who will be using and caring for his creation. God sends slaves to collect the fruits of creations labors. This is a part of stewardship that belongs to us. God trusts us to care for the earth and for each other and so we see ourselves in this parable as the tenants. We are given all we need in this life by God yet we are expected to grow our lives and then render them, at least some of our yield back to God.

Our parable shows how wicked tenants did not want to give fruit to the owner, how they rejected his authority and would rather work for themselves.

And don't we often have the same tendency to think that the earth is ours and all we work for is ours as well. We too often forget that all of creation belongs to God including products of our making. One thing about God is that He does not ask for everything we make or create. He only asks, like the landowner in the parable for some rent.

The rent God seeks from us is our time. There are 168 hours in a week and yet we begrudge being asked to spend one quiet hour in worship each week to give thanks. I'll never forget when our son Frank was little. He would sit quietly in church every Sunday that is until the hour was over. He would then point to my watch and whisper to me "Overtime, Mom".

The rent God seeks is our abilities. We have been gifted with amazing talents and skills, but we often dismiss what we can do and we covet someone else's talent. Boy am I good at that one. I cannot tell you how many times I have said I wish I could sing like Barbara Streisand or I wish I could play piano as good as Mr. Donner!

And yes God also seeks rent in a portion of our money. Everything we have in this world actually belongs to God and is simply on loan to us. And as you all have heard before God requests 10% of our earnings back to support the Kingdom. I know that you all know that it is Stewardship time here at CTS. I

hope that you have taken some prayerful time to reflect on your giving to this church and filled out your pledge card appropriately.

The rent that God seeks is also righteous living. Greed and sin do get in the way and need to be confessed and then we can get on with forgiving our neighbors and living the abundant life God sets before us. And so if we think of this sort of "Rent" I think we are more aware that God has given us a wonderful place to enjoy. Once our rent in the form of time, abilities, money and righteous living are paid, we can get on with life.

Jesus gave up His life so we could have an abundant life here on earth as well as forgiveness and eternal life. As our reading in Matthew continues, we hear that Jesus is the cornerstone on which we should build our lives. There is plenty of fruit for all in the kingdom of God.

If you were here last week you heard the story of my computer crash. And as I was thinking about Jesus being the cornerstone around everything that is to be built. It dawned on my that Jesus is much like the operating system in my computer, good old newly installed "Mohave". That operating system runs and manages everything I do on my computer. Whether I am running iWord, Quicken, or Firefox, the operating system is the heart of my computer. It determines how everything else runs on it.

Jesus Christ should be the operating system in our lives, our cornerstone. If he asks for rent we should pay it. We have an amazingly patient God who gives us all we need in this life and a promise of a great life in eternity with him. So let us all be good stewards of God's creation as we live the abundant life He has given us. **AMEN**