

Listen for God's word to you this day:

<sup>33</sup> “Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. <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> Finally 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 [Jesus asks the chief priests and pharisees gathered around him in the temple] 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;[a]

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 the fruits of the kingdom.<sup>[b]</sup> <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>[c]</sup>

<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.

This is the word of God for the people of God...thanks be to God.

Today we are wrapping up the Season of Peace. Over the past four weeks we have examined the ways God calls us to peace within, peace in relationships, peace in community, and holistic peace. And, then today we come to this text that rings of everything that is opposite of peace, we have murder, stealing, greed. All of which go directly against God and God's creation.

Jesus uses this parable to remind us of two very important things.

The first is God has immense love and provision for creation. God, the landowner in this parable gets his land in proper order, with all that the tenants could need for producing a fruitful, abundant harvest. God has trust in them to care for what has been provided. Because what has been created is sufficient the landowner can step away and trust the actions of the tenants. And all does go well until it comes time for the landowner to receive the part of the harvest that is due to him, and then the tenants don't want to let it go.

Which brings us to Jesus' second point: when we try to take control of what is not in our control things go wrong quickly. I can imagine that over the year as the tenants are tending the land, caring for the vineyard, they begin to talk amongst themselves bemoaning all the labor they are pouring into the success of the vineyard, getting themselves all worked up, deciding they will defend themselves and the harvest against anyone who might come and lay claim to the fruits for which **they** have labored so hard. And, so when the slaves are sent to receive what is rightfully the landowners, they beat, kill, and stone the slaves. Not only the first set of slaves that come, but the second, and then they become even greedier and as the landowners son approaches they see the chance at receiving not only the harvest they have produced this year, but the sons inheritance, so they kill him.

But, they are the care takers, they are not the owners. It is not their place to stake claim to the full harvest, that was not in the deal when they became the tenants of the land.

Jesus' point is that the people (the chief priests, the pharisees, us), God's chosen tenants of creation, for whom God has prepared a beautiful, abundant, living creation, will destroy it, we will disrupt the peace provided when at all possible, to the point of killing the prophets whom God sends, and to the point of even killing God's son, Jesus. We try desperately to make creation our own, to reject the stone that is offered us for our foundation.

That takes us back to point one, God's immense love and provision for creation. When Jesus asks the temple priests gathered around him what the landowner, God, will do to the tenants when the landowner returns to the property they respond the landowner 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.” They believe God will forget God’s chosen people, because they have chosen themselves over God. But, that is not what Jesus says, and that is not what God does. God has tried three times according to this parable to reach the people, and each time they have been the ones to enact violence. God is not vengeful, God is not violent, God does not cause harm. Even, in the end of the parable when Jesus says, “the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom.” This is not an act of violence, it is an invitation to change their ways, to receive from God what has been prepared, to serve God in the capacity of their abilities, and to be in right relationship with all of God’s creation. To properly steward the creation that has been entrusted to us.

Jesus doesn’t give a vengeful answer when that is what the religious rulers would have him do. He offers a path to peace, reconciliation and restoration for even the ones who Jesus sees are not producing a fruitful harvest, who are not participating in God’s prepared plan of care and stewardship of the land and who resort to their own desires at the detriment to other humans and all that has been created. Jesus is reminding us that we are not the owners of the land, we are not the owners of God, or of Christianity. We are merely the tenants, entrusted to care for the well-being of it all.

In the same way we do not own Christianity, we do not own the table of peace that is offered to us through Jesus Christ. We are invited to partake in the harvest and join in the good works of God and even in our good works as stewards of God’s creation. But we are not owners.

These days are hard, many days feel like being shaken up in a snow globe with no way out. You're be challenged by the world and you're being challenged in worship. So let us not be stirred up and left without hope, let us look to the landowner, let us welcome the son, let us share in the fruit that is God's creation so that all of God's creation can flourish. As I wrote in the newsletter this week I encourage you to take a moment, in the midst of all that is swirling around you to stand still. To plant your feet firmly on the ground, outside or near a window, at a place where you can take in more than just what is in your possession, and take in the world. Invite God to show you the expansiveness of God, invite God to remind you of the ways God is working in the world and how you can be part of that, tending to the creation which God has entrusted to you.

God has immense love and provision for us, Jesus is extending the path of peace to us, today and everyday, an internal peace, peace for our relationships, peace for our community and a holistic, all-encompassing peace, all we need to do is come to the table of peace and receive from the harvest. Amen.