

Order of Service for October 4, 2020 (For Recording Only)

A video of the service will “go live” at **8:45 AM** (note change in time) Sunday morning on Memorial’s YouTube page here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqritUPMNz38pvRJ04-17Kw> and on Memorial’s Facebook page here: <https://www.facebook.com/mlcames/>



Prelude:

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

Opening Hymn: “*Rejoice, O Pilgrim Throng*” – Hymn 813

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 5:1–7

R: Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briars and thorns shall grow up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant planting; and He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, an outcry!

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Confessing Our Sins and Receiving God’s Forgiveness:

P: Christ Jesus, we are the work of Your hands.

C: **We are the vineyard which You planted. You dug and cleared the land of stones. You built a tower to protect it, and planted it with choice vines.**

P: Yet, what do You often see?

C: **Wild grapes instead of good fruit. You look for justice among us and instead see bloodshed, for righteousness, and instead an outcry.**

P: We bicker and complain in the midst of our luxuries, we take for granted what we have.

C: **We fail to love one another as You have loved us.**

P: We deserve to have You do what You did to Israel.

C: “I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briars and thorns shall grow up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.”

P: Lord, You gave up Your life on the cross so we can be forgiven and turn to follow, not reject, You.

C: Lord, have mercy on us.

P: In the Name and by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

Entrance Psalm:

P: Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;

C: for His steadfast love endures forever!

P: The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

C: This is the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

P: This is the day that the LORD has made;

C: let us rejoice and be glad in it.

ALL: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

P: Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;

C: for His steadfast love endures forever!

Hymn: “Fruitful Trees, the Spirit’s Sowing” – Hymn 691

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray...Gracious God, You gave Your Son into the hands of sinful men who killed Him. Forgive us when we reject Your unfailing love, and grant us the fullness of Your salvation; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Holy Gospel: Matthew 21:33–46

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the twenty-first chapter.

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

P: [Jesus said:] “Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did

the same to them. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.' And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons." 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 marvelous in our eyes'?" Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him." When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking about them. And although they were seeking to arrest Him, they feared the crowds, because they held Him to be a prophet.

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

Sermon Hymn: "*Christ Is Our Cornerstone*" - Hymn 912

Sermon: "*Rejecting Christ*" - Matthew 21:33-46

Sometimes, when we hear a parable of Jesus, it's one we can find an application for in our lives fairly easily. The parable of the Good Samaritan tells us how much Jesus has done for us, and how we should help our neighbors. The parable of the wise man who built his house on the rock reminds us to build our lives on the Lord Jesus Christ.

But the parable we hear today is a little more difficult to do that with, because it's not about us. As we read very clearly, the chief priests and the Pharisees perceived that Jesus was speaking about them. This is a parable speaking against them. What are we to do with it?

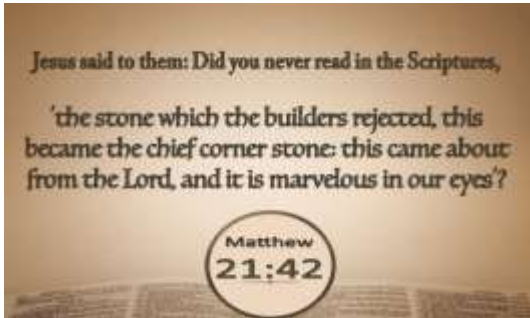
We need to look at the context. Jesus is teaching in the temple in Jerusalem after his triumphal entry the first Palm Sunday, when he'd entered like a king with crowds gathering to cheer for him. He's also already overturned the tables of the money changers in the temple. He's shaking things up, and the Pharisees and other religious leaders aren't thrilled about that. The long-simmering controversy between Jesus and the Pharisees that has been building for years is finally reaching the boiling point. Jesus isn't just up in Galilee anymore. He's in Jerusalem, the seat of power for the Pharisees.

We usually think that Jesus tells parables in order to help people to understand his message. The kingdom of heaven is like . . ." and then following with some object or practice that the people knew from their everyday lives. Given the number of times that he has to explain what his parables mean, though, that doesn't always work.

This parable, though, needs no explanation. Jesus and his hearers know that he's telling it against the Pharisees. Throughout the Old Testament, a vineyard was used to describe the nation of Israel, and what God was trying to do with it. Isaiah uses a vineyard to describe how much God had done for the people of Israel, and how they would be destroyed because they didn't produce good fruit. That came to pass when the people of Israel were taken off to exile in

Babylon. Jesus just brings it up to date, talking about how they had continued to persecute the prophets, and how they would soon kill him.

Jesus doesn't tell this parable just to anger the Pharisees. He does it to get them to see the folly of their ways, to see how they were continuing to go against the God they claimed to serve, just as their ancestors had. He does it to call them to repentance, to get their blinders off and see how they had failed to live up to their covenant with God, to see the new way that God was at work through Jesus.



The Pharisees don't see the new thing God is doing. All they see is their power threatened, the status quo on shaky ground, and they react and reject. They start the plots in motion that will send Jesus to the cross. Jesus, the Son of a God who can sometimes seem like an absentee landlord, would be killed by the Pharisees soon after he tells this parable. He'd be killed by the very Pharisees who recognized themselves as the tenants in Jesus' parable.

And like the tenants in the parable, they would be punished, as the Romans destroyed the vineyards of Judah, along with Jerusalem and the temple Jesus stands by.

But the greatest punishment of all would go on Jesus. All of the punishment all of the sin and rebellion of the people of Israel deserved, of the punishment all of the sin and rebellion of the Pharisees deserved, all of the punishment all of our sin and rebellion and rejection was on Jesus on the cross. There Jesus will do a new thing, God taking on the punishment that we deserve. Then, after three days, the new thing God is doing is fully revealed, as death is defeated. Through that, God's vineyard was restored. Through Jesus taking on our punishment, we are forgiven and freed to bear fruit for God.

We think we're past this Pharisaical mindset, that we'd never be bad tenants, that we'd never reject Jesus like they did. It's easy to reject Jesus when doing so allows you to maintain the status quo. The Pharisees and Sadducees, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, the scribes and elders, all had their power threatened by Jesus. If Jesus was really who he said he was, if Jesus really was the Messiah, the Son of God, then they needed to give up their power. They needed to give up who they are. But rejecting Jesus meant they could stay firmly in their places, and didn't need to change.

G.K. Chesterton wrote, "The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried." We still reject Jesus when following him would be difficult, when it would affect our identity, when it would affect how others see us.

We still fail to live up to God's commands on how to care for the world around us. We fail to care for God's servants, persecuting them when they say something uncomfortable or unsettling. The same Jesus who was a stumbling block to the Pharisees is a stumbling block to us, as well. When we're tempted to see ourselves as holier than others, when we get full of pride, he makes us stumble and fall. When we act like we own everything, instead of realizing that we should be good stewards, good tenants of a world that doesn't belong to us, he makes us

realize that we're not in control. When that happens, we can get offended. We can reject Jesus and his teachings and commands.

But Jesus went to the cross to die for all of that, too. We need forgiveness just as much as the Pharisees and Israelites did. But because we trust not in ourselves but in the vineyard owner and his son, in the Jesus who took all of that rejection to the cross, we have that forgiveness.

God did a new thing in Jesus, bringing life out of death, love out of hate, forgiveness out of punishment. We're then sent out to share that good news with those who need to hear it. As we share the message, though, some will reject the message, some will reject us. Some will stumble over that news, unable to believe that such forgiveness is possible. Others will react harshly, unable to see their need for forgiveness. Just as God kept sending prophets to call his people back to him, so he sends us out and promises to be with us.

When we hear parables like these, it's easy to focus on God's judgment and wrath. What they really point us to, though, is God's mercy. The mercy that kept sending prophets to call the people to repentance. The mercy that sent Jesus into the world to be rejected. The mercy that sent Jesus to the cross. The mercy that expanded the kingdom of God to all people. The mercy that never ends.

Confession of Faith: Apostle's Creed

Responsive Prayer on Jesus' Vineyard:

P: Lord Jesus, You fulfilled Your promise to us by freeing us from the power of sin.

C: "I will come and take you to a land like your own—a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive trees and honey. Choose life and not death!" 2 Kings 18:32

P: Lord Jesus, You have given us so much. Above all You gave Your own life for us. Yet, we daily turn against You in our sin.

C: "I had planted you like a choice vine of sound and reliable stock. How then did you turn against Me into a corrupt, wild vine?" (Jeremiah 2:21)

P: You gave us our families and friends to show Your love through our love.

But instead

C: "Many shepherds ruined My vineyard and trampled down My field; they turned pleasant field into a desolate wasteland." (Jeremiah 12:10)

P: Yet You came into this world to be this:

C: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes." (Psalm 118:22)

P: You were rejected so that we could be Your new vineyard. Help us to remember Your words spoken on the night before You died:

C: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He pruned so that it will be even more fruitful.

P: You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

C: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in Me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

P: If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

C: This is to My Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples.” (John 15:1-8)

(Other concerns . . .)

P: Help us to hold to Your promise.

C: “For this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: ‘Houses, fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land.’” (Jeremiah 32:15)

P: Until then, send Your Holy Spirit into us that we bear the fruits of Your love to us:

C: “They sowed fields and planted vineyards that yielded a fruitful harvest.” (Psalm 107:32)

Lord’s Prayer:

Closing Prayer:

P: Our Lord Jesus, You have endured the doubts and foolish questions of every generation. Forgive us for trying to judge over You, and grant us confident faith to acknowledge You as Lord.

C: Amen.

Blessing: (pastor)

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: “*Christ Is Surely Coming*” - Hymn 509

Postlude: