

Order of Worship for April 3, 2022

Prelude

P: The Lord be with you,

C: and also with you.

Opening Hymn: “Christ is Our Cornerstone” - Hymn #912

Confession and Forgiveness p. 203

Service of the Word

Entrance Psalm

P: Salvation belongs to the LORD;

C: Your blessing be on Your people!

P: But You, O LORD, are a shield about me,

C: my glory, and the lifter of my head.

P: I cried aloud to the LORD,

C: and He answered me from His holy hill.

P: I lay down and slept;

C: I woke again, for the LORD sustained me.

P: I will not be afraid of many thousands of people

C: who have set themselves against me all around.

**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: Salvation belongs to the LORD;

C: Your blessing be on Your people!

Kyrie (“Lord, Have Mercy”): pg 204

P: The Lord be with you,

C: and also with you.

Prayer of the Day

P: Let us pray: Almighty God, by Your great goodness mercifully look upon Your people that we may be governed and preserved evermore in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Hymn of Praise: “Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle” - Hymn #454

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 43:16-21

R: Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who

brings forth chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: “Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The wild beasts will honor Me, the jackals and the ostriches, for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to My chosen people, the people whom I formed for Myself that they might declare My praise.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle Lesson: Philippians 3:4b–14

R: If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Holy Gospel: Luke 20:9-20

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 20th chapter

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

P: And [Jesus] began to tell the people this parable: “A man planted a vineyard and let it out to tenants and went into another country for a long while. When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, so that they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. And he sent another servant. But they also beat and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. And he sent yet a third. This one also they wounded and cast out. Then the owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.’ But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Let us kill him, so that the inheritance may be ours.’ And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.” When they heard this, they said, “Surely not!” But He looked directly at them and said, “What then is this that is written: “‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone’? Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”

The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on Him at that very hour, for they perceived that He had told this parable against them, but they feared the people. So they watched Him and sent spies, who pretended to be sincere, that they might catch Him in something He said, so as to deliver Him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor.

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

Nicene Creed:

Sermon Hymn: *“Hail, Thou Once Despised Jesus”* - **Hymn # 531**

Sermon: *“Rejected”* - **Luke 20:9-18**

Have you ever been rejected? You probably have. Maybe you were rejected as a kid, when people were picking teams and you were picked last. Maybe you were rejected when you tried to get that girl or that guy to dance with you. Maybe you were rejected when you applied for your top school, and instead had to go with a backup. You could all probably tell me a story of rejection, because those stories are difficult to forget. They stick with us, and make us afraid, and feel unwanted and unloved. Throughout our lives, we experience rejection in many ways, and for many reasons. We all want to be accepted, and we feel like a failure when we're rejected.

God knows all about rejection. Jesus spends his earthly life being rejected. He was despised and rejected by his family and his neighbors. He was despised and rejected by those who should have been best prepared to listen to him. As we see today, Jesus knows the final rejection that is coming. Yet he takes on that rejection, so that we could be accepted by God.

Jesus is teaching in parables again, as he usually does. He's teaching in the temple in Jerusalem after the first Palm Sunday, entering as a king. He's also overturned the tables of the money changers in the temple. He's shaking things up, and the chief priests and other religious leaders aren't thrilled about that. And so Jesus calls them out on it.

This parable, though, needs no explanation. Jesus and his hearers know that he's telling it against the chief priests, against the religious leaders. 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, the servants God had sent to the tenants, and how they would soon kill him.

And this message isn't coming to some group of people who have never heard of God. It's not coming to some group of people who have only seen the sun and the stars and nature around them and made up their own stories about those things and how they came to be. This is coming to people who have heard the story of how God made them his people again and again and again. And yet they still reject him.

In fact, this shows perhaps the central theme of Scripture; God wants us, but we don't want God. God comes to His people again and again. And they reject Him again and again. God comes to us. And we reject Him, too.

The people of Israel had rejected God throughout their history. Despite seeing all that God had done for them in bringing them out of slavery in Egypt, they rejected God and worshipped a golden calf. Despite God bringing them into the land he had promised them, they went astray and worshipped the false idols of their neighbors. Despite God giving them prosperity, they worshipped their wealth. And when the prophets came to call them back to God, they rejected the prophets, as well.

Now, they continued to reject God. God had been silent since Malachi had been the last prophet. The chief priests and teachers of the law had become more concerned with keeping their own power than following God's commands.

The chief priests knew Jesus was talking about them. And instead of hearing the parables as calls for them to repent, they only hardened their hearts. They ramped up their plans to arrest and kill Jesus. Their rejection of God intensified.

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.

Prophets weren't all doom and gloom, though. Our Old Testament reading shows this. Isaiah spends the first part of his book warning of the coming destruction and exile. But that's not all he says. The second half of his book looks past the destruction and exile to restoration and return. After seeing their holy city and the temple where God dwelled destroyed, their expectations of what it meant to be God's chosen people were destroyed too. They felt rejected by the God that they had rejected so many times.

Isaiah doesn't pull any punches. Yes, he said, they were being judged for their sins, for rejecting God and His commands, and the judgment was severe. But that was not God's ultimate purpose in sending the Babylonians to drag the Israelites away. The real purpose was to call them to repentance, to get their blinders off and see how they had failed to live up to their covenant with God. The purpose was to get them to open their eyes to the new way that God was working.

The chief priests 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. They start the plots in motion that will send Jesus to the cross. There he will do a new thing, God taking on the punishment that we deserve for rejecting him. Then, after three days, the new thing God is doing is fully revealed, as death is defeated.

As much as we may hate to admit it, we need this message, too. We, too, reject God despite living in a country that can at least claim to be Christian. The latest surveys show that those who identify with the term evangelical can no longer best be predicted by church attendance.

Instead, it comes with political affiliation. Church attendance is an afterthought. God is rejected by those who claim to follow God best.

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. But Jesus went to the cross to die for all of that, too.

We may still reject God, but God keeps coming to us. God comes through His word, where we are called to repentance and receive forgiveness. God comes to us in Holy Communion, as we are welcomed to the feast. God comes to us in each other, as we love and serve and forgive each other because God has loved and forgiven and accepted us. Jesus was rejected so we could be accepted. How wonderful to be accepted by God!

Prayer of the Church

P: Lord in Your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

Sharing our Ministry

Offering and Voluntary

Service of the Sacrament

Preface: p. 208

P: It is truly good, right, and proper that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, almighty God, heavenly Father, for instead of destroying us for rejecting You, You sent Your Son Christ Jesus to be rejected by all of us on the cross so that our sins could be forgiven and our hearts turned to You. Therefore with angels and all the army of heaven we praise and make great Your holy name, evermore praising You and singing . . .

Sanctus: (*Holy, Holy, Holy*) p. 208

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

P; We thank You LORD God, creator of the universe, for in Your great love for us You endured our disobedience and gave us Your Son, Christ Jesus, who was rejected by all of us on the cross and took the punishment we deserve. Send us Your Holy Spirit so that we come to Jesus' supper in true faith, not doubting, but trusting that we receive His true body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. Hear us then as we pray the prayer He gave us . . .

Lord's Prayer, The Words of Our Lord and Pax Domini (*Peace of the Lord*) p. 209

Agnus Dei (*Lamb of God*) p. 210

Distribution of Holy Communion

“Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted” - **Hymn # 451**

“We Sing the Praise of Him Who Died” - **Hymn # 429**

Song After Communion: *“Grant Peace We Pray, in Mercy Lord”* - **Hymn #777**

Prayer After Communion:

P: Almighty God, our Redeemer, in our weakness we have failed to be Your messengers of forgiveness and hope in the word. Renew us by Your Holy Spirit, that we may follow Your commands and proclaim Your reign of love, through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

Blessing (Pastor)

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: *“Glory Be to Jesus”* - **Hymn #433**