

“People that Produce”

Matthew 21:33-46

October 2, 2005 – World Communion Sunday

the Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor

[Zion West Walworth United Methodist Church](#)

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³³“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. ³⁴When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. ³⁵But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. ³⁷Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ ³⁸But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.’ ³⁹So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. ⁴⁰Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” ⁴¹They 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.”

⁴²Jesus 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 amazing in our eyes’?”

⁴³Therefore 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. ⁴⁴The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.”

⁴⁵When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

Prayer.

When
being grilled by a bunch of religious
authorities
you want to be careful what you say
or they might hold it against you
or lift you up on it
and crucify you.

Let me put it another way:
THERE WAS A LANDOWNER WHO PLANTED A
VINEYARD

In the beginning God created the heavens
and the earth.

THE LANDOWNER PUT A FENCE AROUND IT
DUG A WINE PRESS IN IT
AND BUILT A WATCHTOWER

In seven days the Lord created
all that is in the world.

After He created all
He still had time to rest.

THEN HE LEASED IT TO TENANTS
AND WENT TO ANOTHER COUNTRY.

God created man and woman in His image
and gave them stewardship over
all creation.

WHEN THE HARVEST TIME HAD COME
HE SENT HIS SLAVES TO COLLECT THE PRODUCE

In due time

God sent Abraham
made with Abraham a covenant
to be Abraham's God
to bless Abraham's ancestors
with the stewardship
of a chosen people.

In due time

God sent Moses

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to lead God's people
to leave with them
the Law to follow.
In due time
God sent David
to rule with
righteousness
and justice;
to establish
a new kingdom
of peace
and prosperity.

BUTTHEPEOPLEWOULDNOTLISTEN

THEYSEIZEDHIS SLAVES

BEATONE

KILLEDANOTHER

ANDSTONEDTO DEATHA THIRD.

They would not listen
and sold their brother Joseph
into Egyptian slavery.
They would not listen
They built and worshiped
a golden calf.
They would not listen
and the king
resorted to murder
and adultery.
The kingdom crumbled.

THEVINEYARDBECAMEDESOLATE.

AGAINTHELANDOWNERSENTOTHERSLAVES

MORETHANTHEFIRST

ANDTHEYWERETREATEDTHESAMEWAY.

Jeremiah

gave due warning.

Isaiah

wore sack-cloth and ashes
walked half-naked through the streets

“Prepare ye the way of the Lord,”

he proclaimed.

He pronounced destruction

to king and commoner alike.

To neither would they listen.

Job went to the dogs.

Jonah wouldn't go to Nineveh

but found himself in the belly of a whale.

Daniel and Ezekiel

took us to images

of fire and judgment

to brimstone and banishment

- but the people

just wouldn't listen.

THENTHEDIVINELANDLORDSAID,

“THEYWILLRESPECTMY SON;

IWILLSENDHIM.”

And the angel said to the shepherds

“Behold, I bring you great tidings of joy!

For unto you is born this day

in the city of David

a Savior

who is Christ the Lord.”

BUTTHEYKILLEDHIM

HOPING TO STEALTHE INHERITANCE.

And he was crucified

died

and was buried.

It is Jesus

who knows his passion

and death awaits -

It is Jesus

who points to the Psalms (118:22-23)

“The stone that the builders rejected

has become the chief cornerstone.

This is the Lord's doing;

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it is marvelous in our eyes.”

Three days later
he rose from the dead
ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of God, Almighty.

To make a martyr
kill a zealot.
To make a Savior
reject God's son.

People that produce
work the vineyard
faithfully
tending the vines
stewards of the land
bringing in the harvest
which God provides.

People that produce
have an eye for
that which others
have thrown away;
tossed on the scrap pile of life.

In a universe where
energy is perfectly balanced
- nothing made, nothing lost -
there is no dump
no collection of lost souls
in God's kingdom.

With a similar conservation
everything and everyone
is recycled
and given new life.
The stone that was rejected?
It is the keystone!
The keystone holds
the kingdom together.

The adulteress who comes to draw from the
well?

She is given a drink
of living water
that she will never thirst again!
The condemned
who lived a life of misery
among the tombs of the dead?
The demon is cast out
hurled into a herd of swine
who promptly drown themselves.
The chains are broken.
the prisoner is set free.

People that produce
rise each new day
committed to picking through
life's refuse pile,
searching for
the lost,
the vulnerable,
the throw-aways,
all those condemned,
dying,
and left for dead.

People that produce
for the Divine landowner
are faithful stewards;
stewards who tend His vineyard
recycling lost souls
and are prepared
to welcome
each salvaged person home.

The Word of the Lord, as it has come to me.
Thanks be to God. Amen.