

THE GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 20:9-19

(In the Parable of the Vineyard, Jesus reveals how Israel historically rejected those God the Father sent to them.)

⁹ He went on to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time. ¹⁰ At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. ¹¹ He sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed. ¹² He sent still a third, and they wounded him and threw him out.

¹³ "Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.' ¹⁴ "But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over. 'This is the heir,' they said. 'Let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' ¹⁵ So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. "What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? ¹⁶ He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others." When the people heard this, they said, "May this never be!"

¹⁷ Jesus looked directly at them and asked, "Then what is the meaning of that which is written: "'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone"? ¹⁸ Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."

¹⁹ The teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately, because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people. (NIV)

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY People: (In unison) **Almighty God, our Redeemer, in our weakness we have failed to be your messengers of forgiveness and hope in the world. 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, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

INTRO - My wife's job is like that of many others. For each hour she works she earns a certain amount of vacation time. This system of reward fits our natural belief in a system of fairness. We tend to believe if we do something well, if we do a good job, that we should be rewarded. We also tend to believe that it is unfair if we do something good, but receive bad. People are used to asking the question, 'Why do bad things happen to good people?'

I. Yet, we all should also know the truth, life is not fair. Often when we do the work of God, we expect a reward, but instead trouble follows.

A. Look at today's lesson.

1. We have a parable from Jesus about a vineyard.
2. The main point of this lesson is that the vineyard, the Israelites did not produce fruit for their owner, for the Lord.
3. But another lesson is that not only did Israel reject God, they rejected his many prophets and messengers, and even His Son.

A. You know when God's people bring His word this is God's will.

B. He wants people to know His teaching, is law, His love.

C. These prophets were doing something good, and in return they were rejected, beaten, and even killed.

D. The life of a Christian is not always fair.

B. This is not the way God created the world.

1. God intends blessings for those who do God's will.
2. Naturally, when people do God's will, obey his commandments, because this is the healthiest way to live there are indeed blessings.
3. But we have rebelled against God, and sinned, and our sin has ruined God's order in the world.
4. To put it plainly, life is not fair. Not only do we receive pain, or suffering when we sin. When we do God's will, evil still happens.

C. God calls us to receive the good news that Jesus saves us through faith. But, he also calls us to tell others about God's love in Jesus.

1. However, just because we do God's will does not always mean that we are received with joy, or love.
2. In fact, often when we share God's word with others WE are rejected, we are ridiculed. Sometimes today you can even get in trouble for telling others about our creator and savior and comforter.
3. But, still God calls us to share our knowledge of Him with others.

II. Please note again the parable of Jesus.

A. First the owner of the vineyard sent his messengers.

1. But then he sent His son. And, in the parable, the son was not only mistreated, but killed.

2. Bad things do not just happen to us when we do God's will.
 3. God sent his beloved son. This son came in love to God's people. But they rejected His teaching, arrested and beat him, They tortured him to death.
 4. The truth is Jesus knew this would happen, but he accepted the unfair suffering anyway, so he could pay for our sins, and win eternal life for us.
- B. Do you understand what this means.
1. God doesn't ask us to do anything he hasn't done for us.
 2. Jesus doesn't ask us to suffer anything he hasn't suffered for us.
 3. When God calls us to bring the Good News of His love in Jesus to others, He has already done the same for you and me.

III. This week you are being asked to invite others to worship next Sunday.

- A. You are not being asked to tell them about St. John, but to bring them to worship so they can hear about the forgiving fatherly love of God for them.
1. It may be difficult to ask someone.
 2. You might be told no, or even laughed at.
 3. But, remember what Jesus suffered to bring the love of God to us.
- B. And think what you can do for another.
1. If you ask and they attend, well, they may hear of God's love, or be reminded of God's love in Jesus.
 2. And, if someone renews their faith in Jesus, or comes to faith in God's love for us in Jesus, they receive eternal life.
 3. We have members today who have come to St. John through a friendship Sunday.
 4. Perhaps YOU can bring someone the blessings of God.

CONCLUSION - This week the Iditarod was completed, by the winners at least, again. You know the story of the Iditarod. In 1925 Nome was suffering from diphtheria. But, there was no vaccination in town, and boats could not get in. The closest serum was in Anchorage, but the only way to get it to Nome was to brave the winter weather to bring the life saving serum. On January 27 the serum made it to Nome, with many men braving the winter cold, and any winter dangers, in order to bring this serum to the people and children of Nome. It was dangerous, but the mushers believed it was worth it to save the lives of others.

I don't want you to think it is easy to tell others about God. Jesus says, if they rejected me, they'll reject you. But, it is worth the danger of rejection, to bring the life saving Good news of Jesus.

And remember, if you know someone whom you are afraid to call, I'll call them for you. Amen.