

Welcome : March 13th was the last time we worshipped together. That service was provided by Alana Levandoski and she also provided last Sunday's sermon online. We emailed you the link to her message and song as the gospel reading spoke to her. **Due to the Hydro power outage scheduled for this Sunday Oct 4th. we will postpone our first in person gathering until Thanksgiving Sunday Oct 11th at 11 :00 a.m. This Sunday's message will be emailed or mailed to you.**

In today's gospel reading, Jesus tells another vineyard parable, which serves as an image of Israel, the prophets' mission, and Christ's death. For us Christians, the vineyard also speaks of God's love poured out in the blood of Christ, given to us for the forgiveness of sin. And grafted onto Christ the vine at baptism, we are nourished with wine and bread so that we may share Christ's sufferings and know the power of his resurrection. Let us keep this in mind as we worship together in a new way, a way that may not be comfortable but is meant to keep us safe.

Confession and Forgiveness

Let us all may make the sign of the cross, as you are comfortable, it is the sign marked at baptism

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✙ one God,
who creates, redeems, and sustains us and all of creation.
Amen.

We will confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Faithful God,
have mercy on us.
We confess that we are captive to sin
and cannot free ourselves.
We turn from your loving embrace
and go our own ways.
We pass judgment on one another
before examining ourselves.
We place our own needs before those of our neighbors.
We keep your gift of salvation to ourselves.
Make us humble, cast away our transgressions,
and turn us again to life in you
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

God hears the cries of all who call out in need, especially during this pandemic
and through his death and resurrection,
Christ has made us his own.

Hear the truth that God proclaims:

Your sins are forgiven in the name of ✙ Jesus Christ.

Led by the Holy Spirit, live in freedom and newness
to do God's work in the world.

Amen.

OUR GATHERING HYMN IS 'How Great Thou Art' and although we will not be singing it when we gather, we can hum the tune and follow along with the meaningful words silently

Let us bow our heads in prayer together for the Prayer of the Day

Beloved God, from you come all things that are good. Lead us by the inspiration of your Spirit to know those things that are right, and by your merciful guidance, help us to do them, to speak up against racism, and all other injustices, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

The Scripture Readings: The First Reading is from Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20

The God of the exodus graciously gave Israel the Ten Commandments. Primarily stated as negative imperatives, the Ten Commandments forbid gross sins such as murder, adultery, theft, and perjury. In most of life they grant Israel freedom to live righteously, with maximum love for God and neighbour.

1God spoke all these words : 2I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery ; 3you shall have no other gods before me. 4You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 7You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. 8Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. 9Six days you shall labor and do all your work. 12Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. 13You shall not murder. 14You shall not commit adultery. 15You shall not steal. 16You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. 17You shall not covet your neighbour's house ; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour. 18When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they were afraid and trembled and stood at a distance, 19and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die." 20Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come only to test you and to put the fear of him upon you so that you do not sin."

Our Second Reading: is from Philippians 3:4b-14 In this reading

Paul reviews some of his supposed credentials, which no longer have any bearing in comparison to the right relationship he has been given through the death of Christ. The power of Christ's resurrection motivates him to press on toward the ultimate goal, eternal life with Christ.

Paul writes:] 4bIf anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: 5circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. 7Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. 8More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. 10I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, 11if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. 12Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal ; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own ; but this one thing I do : forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. Here ends the readings, thanks be to God.

And now the hymn Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness

The Gospel today is from Matthew Chapter 21: verses 33-46

Jesus tells a parable to the religious leaders who are plotting his death, revealing that their plans will, ironically, bring about the fulfillment of scripture.

Jesus said to the people: 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. The word of the Lord, Glory to you O Lord

Sermon:

I wish the gospels gave us the emotional context of the exchanges with Jesus. In today’s gospel I wish I could see, hear, experience that explosive moment between Jesus’ question (“What will he do to those tenants?”) and the response. What answer was Jesus hoping for? Did he have a glimmer of expectation? Or was he resigned to nothing more than the way they responded?

As the parable begins, the topic was a familiar one for his original listeners: imagery of the vineyard, as a metaphor for unfaithfulness.

The parable is carefully crafted to lead to an explosive moment: the accelerating violence of the vineyard, the increasing absurdity of the owner’s actions, the dramatic tension as the narrative is interrupted for the tenants to step aside to confer, and the illogical conclusion (“... let us kill him and get his inheritance”). The tension is built masterfully, excruciatingly, as the vineyard owner arrives and Jesus throws the question back at us: “What will he do?”

The tenants in the parable seem unable to look beyond their own handiwork, despite all the work the owner provided for a productive vineyard: fence, press, watchtower, even planting. At harvest time, when the owner’s representative comes to collect the proper dues, the tenants seem only able to see their own work: **We** did this, **we** worked hard, it should rightfully be **ours**. As they escalate their violence, their limited vision continues to shape their response to the vineyard owner as they seek security and prosperity, to keep “our” harvest, hold on to “our” work and ultimately, through murder, make the vineyard “ours.”

Their logic, of course, makes absolutely no sense: Why on earth would they think killing the heir means they will inherit the vineyard? But that is the tragedy the parable highlights, and that explosive moment after Jesus’ question is where it comes to an excruciating climax: Will Jesus’ listeners, **will we**, be able to imagine any reality beyond violence, punishment, vengeance, revenge? If we are left only with our handiwork, and if that is as far as our vision reaches, violence seems the only logical way to ensure security? It seems to unfortunately be the answer for some in our society as we hear daily in the news.

We are left impoverished, except that Jesus is the one telling the parable. He is the Son, sent to God's good vineyard despite, and because of, us tenants and all our actions and illogical behaviour and decisions. His resurrection is the surprise ending to the parable and it is "amazing in our eyes" (Matt. 21:42). As already mentioned Jesus is telling another vineyard parable, which serves as an image of Israel, the prophets' mission, and Christ's death.

Let us consider how the parable, and Paul's casting aside of everything he'd been taught was worthy and important might reassure us and also challenge us to move beyond merely human imagination and the "logic" of response and retribution as expected by the world around us or our peers, or our privilege.

What cycles of violence, vengeance, distrust, anger, disgust does the surprise ending of resurrection interrupt? How might this parable change our expectations of how life works and how we see one another? As we navigate this pandemic and the changing expectations, may we consider those that are vulnerable, and how our position of influence can create a true jubilee on earth.

The surprise in these parables is that God's ways are not our ways. God surprises those who are on the outside and invites them in. In what ways have we found ourselves on the margins, or noticed others who are neglected?

God also surprises those who are on the inside, confronting them with their privilege. In what ways have we exploited our status at the expense of others? In Philippians, Paul the apostle puzzles about his own elevated station in life as a Pharisee, but then rethinks everything that might be considered "gain" now as "loss"

In reading about the laws in the Bible, we find ourselves tangled in a web of judgment and cannot make our way out. We feel convicted. In preaching the gospel, we recognize that Christ's death and resurrection, his teaching, and his pattern of life break open the ways of God's mercy and forgiveness to those who need it (which is all of us).

Mercy is the joyful verse for our communal lives with God.

Amen

Please read ' My Hope is built on Nothing Less'

Prayer: God we stand before you. What is it that you want from us? How can we be shaped again and again by your word and the life that Jesus came to bring?

Help us to commit to living a life of faith together, by proclaiming the prayer Jesus taught us when we awaken and before we sleep each night. Help us to pattern your life on the Lord Jesus Christ all the days of your life"

Blessing :

May the Lord Bless you and keep you

The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and + give you Peace.

Amen

Our next hymn is ' I Surrender All' and feel the words provided

Followed by the Offerring and Sending Music : 'Take my Life' that I may be...

And please place your offering in the offering plate on the way out.

The back pews leave the church first keeping physical distancing thank-you

Go in Peace and Serve the Lord.