

Wicked Tenants

4th Friday of Lent



Then he began to speak to them in parables. 'A man planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a pit for the wine press, and built a watch-tower; then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants to collect from them his share of the produce of the vineyard. But they seized him, and beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. . . . And so it was with many others. . . . Finally he sent [his beloved son] to them, saying, "They will respect my son." But those tenants said to one another, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours." So they seized him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. Have you not read this scripture: "The stone that the builders

rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes"?' When they realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowd. So they left him and went away. (Mark 12:1-12)

In this parable Jesus anticipates what is soon to come to pass in his life. The owner is God; the vineyard is the people of God; the tenants are the religious leaders; the servants sent by the owner are the prophets; and the son who is killed by the tenants is Jesus. Only at the end do the chief priests, the scribes and the elders realize that he is speaking to them. Like the tenants they had forgotten that they were merely stewards, not owners.

Whether you are the pastor, the music director, church administrator, singer, teacher, committee chair, or whatever in the life of your congregation, remember you are *not* the owner of your little patch of the vineyard, only a steward of it, and as such you are responsible before God, the owner, for what you do with it. It isn't about *you*, *your* success, *your* popularity, or *your* legacy. It's about God and God's purpose.

The same may be said of your life and mine. We are sometimes told: "It is *your* life; do with it as *you* want"; when in reality you are not the owner of your life, only its steward. It is your responsibility to manage it in such a way that suits God's purposes for you and in so doing you find your life's true fulfillment.

What, though, is most amazing to me about this parable is the persistence of God. When another might stop caring or trying, God continued and continues to reach us with the gift of his love, even at the cost of his own Son.

Prayer

What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul! What wondrous love is this, O my soul! What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss to bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul, to bear the dreadful curse for my soul.