October 8, 2023 **WISDOM FOR THE WAY**

The parable in the gospel passage for this Sunday, Matthew 21:33-46 is of the wicked tenants which represents our broken relationship with God. God’s attempts to repair it, and mankind’s rejects His attempts. Despite our continual rejection of Him, God never gives up on us. His love for us never diminishes. This parable of the wicked tenants is a statement of God’s concern for his people and a declaration that God’s plan cannot be defeated by man. If we love God, we realize that he knows the best way for us to live in this difficult world.

When I was growing up, I remember we had goats, ducks, chicken and other domestic animals in our home and we brothers and sisters were assigned certain animals to take care of them. I remember my parents or grandmother have taken a few animals away from me or from my siblings, because we have not looked after them well enough. Similarly, God will do to His people if they fail to take care of the things. It is a parable of God’s kingdom on earth. You can understand what Jesus is talking about in the parable of the wicked tenants. Specifically, God is the landowner, the Jewish leaders and people who reject Jesus or do not care about him are the tenants, the Old Testament prophets are the workers, or the slaves sent by the landowner, and Jesus is the landowner’s son.

God gave the kingdom to the Israelites to tend and do his work, but they rejected their duties and turned away from God. In return, God sent the Old Testament prophets to warn them, but the Israelites rejected the prophets, even to the point of hurting or killing them. Finally, God sent his son Jesus to warn them, but he was also rejected and crucified.

Greed is what the parable of the wicked tenants is all about, and greed is everywhere. That’s why the parable is so timely and relevant today; the wise owner knew the heart of his manager, so Jesus knows the selfish condition of our hearts, and he wants us to change our ways. This parable speaks of anger and hatred against not only God, but against those who oppose him. This can be anyone-nonbelievers, criminals, terrorists, or persecutors.

Consequently, the Jewish leadership, which failed to produce good fruit, was disenfranchised and the vineyard was given to the church, which will produce good fruit. Jesus was not so much foreshadowing the shift of God’s emphasis from Jewish to Gentile realms as he was anticipating the replacement of Israel by the church, which united both Jews and Gentiles.

The same situation exists today. God has sent ministers, priests, and preachers, to us to urge us to change our ways and accept Christ, but we and our worldly society continue to reject him. As men treat God’s people, they would treat Christ himself the same way, if he was with them. If we are faithful to Christ’s cause, how can we expect a favorable reception from a wicked world?

Eventually, God will deal with those who reject him just like he dealt with the leaders of the Jewish people. The kingdom will be open only to those who believe him and are willing to do as he asks. Opposition to Jesus is a wrong response as is an attitude of apathy. Those who harbor such attitudes are in danger of being judged.

It is somewhat ironic that the ultimate rejection of Jesus by the Jews led to the foundation of the Church- a body of believers who accepted him. It is an example of something that is rejected but that becomes something useful, something that changes history.

The attitude of the tenants is represented by the Pharisees. They were so concerned about obeying the Ten Commandments that they came up with many rules and regulations governing what the people could and could not do. In time, the Pharisees developed an attitude of being entitled to God’s kingdom even though they disregarded the spirit of God’s law and emphasized the letter of God’s law. They considered themselves to be the only people who were good enough for God’s kingdom. If you would like to know more about the love of God, please join us in our worship on Sunday at 11:00 AM.

Peace!

Rev. Dr. Christopher Ponnuraj

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