

“Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine,
that we may be saved.” AMEN!

(Sing!)

“On the turning away
From the pale and downtrodden
And the words they say

Which we won't understand

Don't accept that what's happening
Is just a case of all the suffering

Or you'll find that you're joining in

The turning away.”

Children of God, behold Pink Floyd! :-)

This song from their
“Momentary Lapse of Reason” album was
written by David Gilmore and Anthony Moore.

“On the turning away from
the pale and downtrodden, don't accept
that what's happening is just a case of all

the suffering.

Or you'll find your joining in the turning away."

So we have another parable that was told
right after the one we learned about last week.

If you recall, that was
the parable of the two sons.

They both change their mind when
their father (and vineyard owner) ordered them
to go work in the field.

The one who said, "Yes, I'll go work."
Then changed his mind and didn't go work.

The other said, "No, I'm not working."
Then changed his mind and went to work.

The teaching story was directed to
the scribes and temple authorities in order
to teach them it is good to change your mind

when you realize you were wrong
about someone or something.

Since they didn't change their mind
"the tax collectors and prostitutes will go

into the kingdom of heaven before them,”
Jesus said.

Then he moved into another parable.

The one read today is about mind changing, too.

There is the familiar,
“Landowner and vineyard” imagery.

This is a kingdom of God image and language
reflecting the temple’s purpose.

In the fashion of the Genesis creation account
they (and we) were told how
the landowner did everything.

The landowner, like God in Genesis,
planted the vineyard, put a fence around it,
dug the wine press, and
built the watchtower.

Now, God didn’t do these specific things in Genesis,
but God created everything and then in
the special garden placed two
human beings and gave to
them everything they needed
and there was no shame
among them.

So it strikes me how similar the parable is to the story of creation.

How?

By showing the way human beings can have everything we need, ample amounts without any of the shame.

We can have purposeful work and cooperative relationships, and still not be content.

We still want more and more and more until the final want is... to be like God.

This is what happens when we have it all.

We want even more...

Both accounts, the creation story and the conclusion of the parable are what happens when people assume that no one will hold them accountable. (Pause)

Jesus told the truth in another way through this parable.

Ironically, he told it to the people that
were supposed to know, the temple authorities.

The temple authorities were the tenants of
the vineyard placed in their positions by God
and they blew it.

They blew it because they
wanted to be the owners.

“They turned away from the suffering and
the downtrodden,” and thus turned
away from God.

Even when they saw God doing things
they never changed their minds. (Pause)

(Sing!)

“It’s a sin that somehow
Light is changing to shadow

And casting its shroud
Over all, we have known

Unaware how the ranks have grown
Driven on by a heart of stone

We could find that we’re all alone

In the dream of the proud.”

Are we more like the temple authorities
than we thought?

Do we live “in the dream of the proud?” (Pause)

In Isaiah, we are told of a beautiful vineyard.

It’s implied, but it was God who
did all the work there too.

Lovingly planted and tended the garden
yet something went terribly wrong.

It yielded only bad fruit.
Sour grapes.

Not just part of it, it was all bad.

Now historical study reveals that
the prophet was speaking about
the temple system and the same can
be said about Jesus when he spoke
to the temple authorities
with his parable lessons,

but what happens when
we are the ones with the power?

What happens when we are the power and
God speaks this truth to us?

Will we turn away?

Commentator Amy Oden wrote that many
“white Christians are in a time of
reckoning with our owner.”

She tells the way she believes
“there is an awakening to systemic power
we have wielded blindly.

We all swim in this water,
immersed in systems of privilege designed
to be invisible,” she said.

In this way, using my own words now,
Jesus said, “We think we own it.
We think it belongs to us.

Bad fruit will be our harvest.”

Yet, we will not turn away from
the truth telling from Christ.

We will not allow privilege to make us tone-deaf,
nor will we be “driven on by a heart of stone.”

He, that is Jesus, wants NOT to just break
the hearts of people, but to break OPEN
the hearts of people because

broken open hearts see and hear things
with fresh perspectives and broken open hearts
let the “T” in truth come inside.

This is the way our hearts will produce
the good fruit the world desperately needs. (Pause)

In his book, “Economic Parables” David Cowan writes,

“The contents of the soil are infused into the grape,
so unpredictable that it yields differently
under different conditions.

In the Lord’s Supper, the influences of the earth,
of God’s creation, find their way into the grape,

into the fluid, and into the chalice
to be consumed in the name of our Lord
Jesus Christ.

We are at that moment connected to
the totality of God’s creation.

In that moment we are to die to ourselves and

to live in Christ.

This is our calling.” (Pause)

“There’s a legend about a simple man
who was lifted from the gutter and
magically granted three wishes.

First he wished for material goods and
forthwith became very rich.

Then he wished for understanding and
soon became very wise.

At last he used his third wish to express
his desire to become like God, and immediately
he found himself back in the gutter.”

More than once, Jesus said,
“The first shall be last and the last shall be first.”

This could be the day for
the clarity to finally come.

The kingdom of heaven, according to Jesus,
is given to those who produce fruit.

Come, eat and drink, you are the one God loves
and God will let nothing separate you

from that love.

AMEN!