**18th SUNDAY after PENTECOST SERMON: Matthew 21:33-44**

**October 4, 2020**

IN the gospels, Jesus told some 46 parables. 3 of these parables are about the VINEYARD and we heard them during these three successive Sundays.

The Sunday before last, Jesus told the Parable of *a landowner who went out five times during the day to call laborers to go and work in his vineyard*.”

In last Sunday’s parable, Jesus told the parable about a man who also called his two sons to” go *and work in the vineyard today.*' Both these two parables are calls to discipleship – to work in the vineyard. The question that was asked was in both parables: *what is the right response to* ***the call to work*** *in the vineyard?*

This Sunday, Jesus changes focus by telling us about the Parable of the Tenants of the Vineyard – that is to say, about **those who are now working in the vineyard**. So, the question changes focus also, to the question: *“what is expected of those who are working in the Vineyard?* This is the question of today’s parable.

So, let us look at the parable more closely: Jesus tells about an owner of a vineyard who rents out his vineyard to local tenants. Naturally, he expects to receive his share of the produce at harvest time. So, the owner of the vineyard sends a servant to collect his share. The servant is beaten up, and sent away empty-handed. Another servant is sent, and then another. Each is treated more cruelly than the one before. Finally, the landlord sends his own son. “Surely, they will respect him,” he reasons. But no: the tenants kill the son, and claim ownership of the vineyard.

So, Jesus poses this question: “40“Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”

**The people who heard the story** clearly understood it for they exclaimed: “41“He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.”

**The chief priests and the Pharisees** who were among those who heard the story also clearly understood it for they exclaimed in verse 45 (gospel reading ends in verse 44) says: *‘they knew that he had spoken this parable against them.*

The story, then, was clearly understood by those who first heard it. The owner of the vineyard is God, who expects his share of the fruit of his vineyard from his tenants – the people of Israel and their leaders. This owner is a patient and loving God who sends his servants – the prophets – who tried to collect a share of the fruits of the vineyard. Instead these prophets were so cruelly treated by the people and their leaders.

Finally, God, the owner sent his son – Jesus Christ – who, ---------- we know the end of the story: The Jewish leaders made up false accusations and delivered him to be sentenced to death by the Romans.

And the other tenants – the people who were attracted to Jesus’ teachings and amazed by his miracles. they even hailed him *Hosanna to the son of David their great King* and three days after, shouted *“crucify him.’* As a result, the Kingdom of God was taken from them, and given to the Gentiles.

This is the point where we enter into the story. We are the new tenants of the vineyard of the Lord. The Lord’s vineyard at present, is the Church in general, and Jesus Our Savior Anglican Church in particular.

So, let us look at our own story: The vineyard is our Church of Jesus Our Savior. God is the owner of this vineyard. It is the Church of God. God has entrusted this vineyard to us as tenants. God expects us his tenants to work hard in the vineyard – growing, fertilizing, watering, pruning, -- to make it fruitful.

That is to say, in the vineyard, we have the bible, we have the sacraments, we have priests, teachers and other ministers. We have the Holy Spirit. We have Jesus.

And we have a place to worship, to gather in prayer, for teaching and for fellowship – even if we are not fully using it because of the coronavirus pandemic.

With all these resources and blessings within in the vineyard, God expects us to produce good and abundant fruits. This is our responsibility as tenants – both as leaders and members of this vineyard of Our Savior Church.

We are expected to share our blessings with one another; to sacrifice our time and talents for one another --- by calling one another, by encouraging one another, by doing what we can to one another more joyful and more hopeful especially during this pandemic.

Finally the fruits of the vineyard are meant to be shared outside the vineyard – to the needy and suffering brothers and sisters. Amen.