

Sermon for Sunday October 4 2026

The Parable of the Tenants

Today we return to Matthew and this the second of three parables spoken to the leaders and Pharisees before Jesus crucifixion. Jesus is still in the temple teaching the crowds and the Pharisees are not too happy.

This parable involves a landowner, tenants, and slaves, and the Son. The landowner is a very trusting man. He leased his land to tenants and went away. When it was time to collect the harvest he sent some slaves to collect. They killed them! So after getting word of this, the landowner (for a second time) sends slaves but even more of them. The tenants again kill them. They next waited for the landowner's Son to kill him and take his inheritance.

I don't know what they were thinking that if they would kill the landowner's Son they would get his inheritance. How absurd. Not too brilliant. It doesn't work that way.

The tenants are removed by the landowner and the kingdom given to new tenants. Jesus concludes his teaching by addressing the Pharisees in particular by saying to them with the most important words of this passage, "The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom."

Now we know what Paul says in Galatians 5 "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness and self-control." Galatians was also written 50 years after Matthew. So what are the fruits of the Kingdom that are being described in today's text.

Let's take a look at the ten commandments in our first reading from Exodus. We should all know the commandments or recall some of them. One of the important facts about the ten commandments is that God our Creator speaks first before acting and really giving us a gift. "I am the Lord your God who brought

you out of the house of slavery: Ex 20:2 The Commandments lead us to the questions of how do we live our lives? What is life giving for creation? Will you live in response to the graciousness of God by being the embodiment of that grace? We need not be afraid to do any of these things. We will bear God's fruit in the process.

So what are the fruits of the kingdom? Well let's continue by addressing the obvious. The fruits of the kingdom are founded in grace. Last week we heard Jesus ask the Pharisees about their belief about John the Baptist who made changes in many lives including Jesus' through his baptism. His ministry began then and there. The fruits of the kingdom begin for us at our baptism. God blesses us with the Spirit and the gift of welcoming into the family of Christ and the kingdom of God. The gift of baptism brings a responsibility to the Lord's love and bearing fruit in the kingdom of God.

How can we bear fruit? Well, I am going to ask you some questions to reflect on. Let's think for a minute. Who grants you strength in the morning? What do you do to contribute or have contributed at Zion? Worship is a given because you are here. Do you serve or participate in any groups here? Do you pray for one another? Do you care for each other? Do we reach out to visitors? In our community do we reach out to those in need? Do we share our faith with the community of Pembroke? Do we encourage others? Do we help feed people? There are so many places and ways that we can bear fruit for the kingdom. One thing though that I encourage you to remember is that no matter how much you can or can't do to bear fruit for the kingdom, God gives us a free grace to live by. Everything we do is a response to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

We need to remember that God's way of grace and love is wooing us to respond to our good fortune of living in his vineyard by reflecting that love in our actions toward others. That as we care for, as we exercise stewardship over God's creation – especially our fellow human beings – we do so as a reflection of God's love. That love is poured out to us in such measure that it overflows from us, and through us can overflow onto all creation. An overflow that allows us to maintain creation and preserve it and protect it from harm. An overflow that impels us to love others and share with them the Good News of God in Christ – a truth they

might miss if we ignore our mission and neglect that which so graciously enriches us.

If we will concentrate on God's setting us up on a fabulous vineyard, lovingly and graciously giving us all we have, we can recognize that this is his way of coaxing us and wooing us and encouraging us into being good and faithful servants – good and loving workers in the world he has left to our care – good and faithful followers of his son, Jesus. Wooing us to give and pray for the spread of his kingdom and for the wellbeing of his children, our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Amen.