

Paul reminds the new Christians at Philippi that if any have reason to brag because of heritage, lineage, or zeal, it is he. Yet all human achievements are to be counted as rubbish next to the joy and privilege of knowing God in Christ. Paul does not consider himself complete, but presses forward to learn yet more of the grace of Christ, the power of his resurrection, and the sharing in his sufferings. His goal remains ahead: God's upward call in Christ Jesus.

And now these words of St. Paul's to the Christians at Philippi
though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ - the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ - yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Matthew 21:33-46

Our gospel is the story of the wicked and disloyal tenants who are cast out of the vineyard. The parable is presented to us as an allegory in which the vineyard is Israel and the wicked tenants are its people. The servants sent to them are the prophets, and the son whom they kill is Jesus. To the hearing of the early church the destruction of the vineyard would parallel the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE, while the

heritage of the vineyard is now given to others. There is added an ancient prophecy concerning the stone which was rejected, but which has now become the main cornerstone for the Lord's new work.

Hear now these words from the gospel of Matthew.

“Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.

“The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. Last of all, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said.

“But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.’ So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

“Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”

“He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,” they replied, “and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.”

Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

“‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”

“Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.”

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them. They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.

Liturgist: This is the gospel message of our Lord and Savior

All: May the reading and the hearing of Your word inform our minds, comfort our souls, and guide our feet.

