

**Sermon**

**April 6, 2025**

**Luke 20:9-20**

**Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen!**

Today we turn our hearts to a parable from Luke 20:9-20, a story Jesus shared with great purpose. It speaks of a vineyard, unfaithful tenants, and a beloved son. At its close, Jesus declares, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. Anyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but if it falls on anyone, it will crush them.” These words carry deep meaning. Let us explore this parable together and hear what it reveals about God’s grace and judgment.

Jesus spoke this parable only days before His death on the cross. A parable is a story with a lesson, and this one begins with a man who owned a vineyard—a place where grapes are grown. He prepared it carefully, planting the vines and setting everything in order. Then he entrusted it to tenants and departed to a distant land. The tenants’ task was straightforward: tend the vineyard and give the owner his rightful share of the harvest.

Yet these tenants proved unfaithful. When the owner sent a servant to collect his portion, they did not offer the fruit. Instead, they struck the servant and sent him away empty-handed. The owner sent a second servant, but they beat him as well and treated him with disrespect. A third servant arrived, and they wounded him gravely before casting him out. Such actions show their rebellion against the owner’s authority.

At last, the owner said, “I will send my son, whom I love. Perhaps they will honor him.” But when the tenants saw the son, they formed a wicked plan. They said among themselves, “If we kill the son, the vineyard may become ours.” So they seized him, cast him out of the vineyard, and took his life. This act was both cruel and unjust.

This parable is not merely about a vineyard—it reflects the relationship between God and His people. The vineyard represents the world God created and entrusted to us. The owner is God Himself, and the tenants are humanity, including you and me. The servants sent by the owner are the prophets, whom

God appointed to call His people to love and obey Him. Yet many rejected these messengers, treating them harshly.

Then God sent His Son, Jesus, the greatest gift of all. Scripture tells us in John 3:16, “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” However, some, like the religious leaders of Jesus’ day, refused Him. They rejected the Son and delivered Him to death on a cross outside Jerusalem’s walls. This mirrors the tenants’ actions against the son in the parable.

Consider an event from January 2025. A powerful storm struck Texas, its fierce winds toppling a farmer’s barn. The structure collapsed; its beams shattered beyond repair. The farmer labored to mend it, but the damage was too great. He required aid from his neighbors, who brought stronger tools. So, it is with sin—our wrongdoings, such as lying or selfishness, fracture our bond with God. We cannot restore it ourselves. Yet God, in His mercy, sent Jesus to mend what we have broken. This is grace—a gift freely given, not earned.

In February 2025 heavy snow blanketed southeast Michigan. On February 12-13, Bay City received 3 to 6 inches of snow. Near Lake Huron, in the eastern Thumb region around Port Huron, some areas saw 7 to 10 inches, enough to cover paths and weigh down branches. On February 18-19, southeast Missouri faced a greater burden. Cape Girardeau recorded 6 to 8 inches, while nearby places measured up to 11 inches—snow so deep it hid fences and halted travel. In Kansas, around the same time, Hutchinson endured 5 to 7 inches, transforming fields into a vast white expanse. This snowfall, though beautiful, brought challenges, requiring effort to clear. It reminds us of God’s gifts—like the vineyard—bestowed upon us in abundance yet often neglected or misused by our actions.

Returning to the parable, Jesus asks, “What will the owner do?” He answers that the owner will punish the unfaithful tenants and entrust the vineyard to others. This came to pass in history. Some forty years after Jesus’ crucifixion, an army destroyed Jerusalem, a consequence of the leaders’ rejection of Him. Yet God’s love endured. He extended His grace to the Church—a community, not of stone walls, but of people united by His Word, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper, where His forgiveness is received.

Jesus describes Himself as a stone—the cornerstone, the foundation that upholds all. He states, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” In His time, many expected a mighty king to bring wealth and victory. Instead, Jesus came to forgive sins and grant eternal life. This was not what they desired, so they turned from Him.

Recall the Fern Hollow bridge collapse right here in Pittsburgh. I guess there were unseen cracks beneath its surface. It had borne the weight of countless travelers, yet it failed suddenly, revealing its weakness. Likewise, Jesus appeared weak, dying on a cross. But God raised Him from death, proving Him the mightiest stone of all—the Rock of Salvation, steadfast and true.

Jesus speaks of two outcomes with this stone. Some “fall on it” and are broken, while others are “crushed” when it falls upon them. To fall upon the stone is to recognize our sins—perhaps a harsh word spoken or a duty neglected—and feel sorrow. This brokenness is a gift, for God heals us. Psalm 51:17 declares, “A broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.” This is repentance, a turning to God who awaits us with mercy.

Yet if the stone falls upon someone, it signifies judgment—a heavy consequence for those who turn from God’s love entirely. God desires no such end. He sent Jesus to bear every sin—every misstep, from small disobediences to great wrongs—upon the cross. His grace encompasses all, leaving no one beyond its reach.

The parable holds a remarkable truth. The tenants believed that by killing the son, they would claim the vineyard. Yet God transformed their evil into good. When Jesus died, it seemed a triumph for His enemies. But God raised Him from the grave, and through that death, He offers life to all. The leaders’ rejection became the means of salvation for the world. Romans 5:8 proclaims, “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” This is the depth of God’s love, beyond our understanding.

Thus, God’s grace surrounds us, like the snow of February. In Michigan, Missouri, and Kansas, it covered the earth, renewing its appearance. So, Jesus’ sacrifice covers our sins, renewing us. Through Baptism, He cleanses

us, as water washes away soil. In the Lord's Supper, He grants us His body and blood, strengthening us as food sustains the body. In His Word, He speaks to us daily, offering comfort and guidance.

God's love stands firm each day, a rock unshaken. When trials come—be it concern over studies, illness in the family, or a heavy heart—He remains our support. The bridge of March failed, its flaws exposed, but Jesus endures forever. He is the cornerstone, the foundation of our hope.

As we ponder this parable, we hold fast to this truth: God sent His Son for us. The vineyard is His gift, a place where we dwell under His care. When we falter, His forgiveness lifts us. When we grieve, His peace consoles us. When we weaken, His strength upholds us. Jesus is the Rock of Salvation—God's love made manifest, securing us for eternity. Amen.

Pastor Ron Breight                      Christ Lutheran Church   Forest Hills, Pennsylvania

*Join us for worship online on our Facebook page, [ChristLutheranChurchfh](#). There you can view our 10 am Sunday service recording at your convenience. There is no need to register with Facebook or log in to visit our page.*