

Luke 20:9-20 - "Broken But Not Crushed"

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In Jesus' parable about the evil tenants He begins by speaking of a man who "*planted a vineyard.*" For all who knew the Scriptures this was a clear reference to passages like Isaiah 5:1-7 where we read that "*the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel.*"

The "*tenants*" who were left in charge of the LORD's vineyard, referred to the religious leaders who were in charge of the public ministry in and outside of Jerusalem. Jesus parable wasn't directed specifically to them, but at the end of our text it's obvious that some of the religious leaders were listening, since they "*sought to lay hands on [Jesus] at that very hour, for they perceived that He had told this parable against them.*"

The "*servants*" who were "*sent to the tenants*" to collect "*some of the fruit of the vineyard*" referred to the prophets, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, whom the LORD inspired and sent to speak His word on His behalf. They foreshadowed Jesus Christ—the Word of God in the flesh (John 1:14). And, like Jesus, the prophets had for the most part been rejected over and over again by the religious establishment of their day.

Then we hear about the owner of the vineyard's son who was also sent to the tenants to collect "*some of the fruit of the vineyard.*" This is a clear reference to Jesus Christ, the flesh and blood Son of God. "*Perhaps they will respect Him.*" But the tenants "*threw Him out of the vineyard and killed Him.*"

These connections to the people in Jesus' parable are fairly easy to make, but how does this parable relate to you and me who are here in the church, not visibly rejecting God? If nothing comes to mind, then let me make another connection. When we as Christians say that we believe in God or Jesus Christ, we at the same time are saying that we believe in God's Word. God makes this clear when, as I mentioned earlier, He refers to Jesus as the Word made flesh (John 1:14). Therefore, whenever we reject the Word of God, which not only reveals His plan to save us but has the power to save us, we are rejecting God our only Savior, just like the tenants in Jesus' parable.

At this point we may seek to comfort ourselves by thinking of some obvious sins that we're not involved in, at least not in a stubbornly unrepentant way. I'm not a serial killer, I'm not having sex outside of marriage, I'm not an active supporter of abortion or the LGBTQ agenda, I'm not WOKE but asleep, and I think all lives matter.

It's at this point that Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere, makes us uncomfortable by telling us that if we have been "*angry with [our] brother*" or looked at someone with "*lustful intent*" we are "*liable to judgment,*" (Matthew 5:21-28). Let me add to this discomfort by telling you another parable-type story.

It was a rainy day, so a group of children in the neighborhood decided to play over at little Tommy's house. Someone suggested that they "play church." That sounded like a good idea to the rest of the group, so one child said that he would be the pastor, since his father was a pastor. Another child, who like music, said that they would be the organist. A couple others said that they would be the ushers. Someone else said that they would provide milk and cookies for after the service.

As they were passing out some books as pretend hymnals, little Tommy said, “What about Jesus?” Shouldn’t Jesus be here?

The rest agreed and so little Tommy was chosen to be Jesus.

“What did I do?” asked little Tommy.

“I know,” said one of the older children. “We’ll tie you up to this wooden chair and pretend it’s a cross. Then we’ll call you names, spit on you, and leave you for dead while we go and have milk and cookies.”

Little Tommy thought for a moment, then he said, “I don’t want to be Jesus. Let’s just play church.”

Unfortunately, were all guilty at times of simply “playing church.” Like the tenants in Jesus’ parable, we’re happy to use the things God has given us to produce good things for ourselves, but when it comes to using our time, talents and treasures to produce good things for God’s kingdom that’s more like a sacrifice or a cross. It’s then that our enthusiasm often fades and we come up with a list of excuses for why we can’t spare anymore time, talents or treasures to support the work of the Church.

If Jesus’ command to “*love one another as I have loved you*” (John 15:12) (which includes being willing to “*share in His sufferings*” for the eternal good of others) enables you to see that you are a broken sinner, then I have some good news for you. The Lord doesn’t want you to be crushed by your sins—by your brokenness. That’s why the Son or Word of God became flesh, so that He could perfectly fulfill His will for our lives in our place, and then, as Isaiah writes, be “*crushed for our iniquities*” (53:5)—suffer the full effect of our sins.

Through this Good News the Lord picks us up and washes away our sins through His gift of faith in His Word, which enables us to repent of our sins, and thank God for His forgiveness and “*the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*” to be His eternal children. Then, as God’s children, we, like St. Paul in our Epistle reading, “*press on toward the goal*” of making disciples of all nations. And what a wonderful opportunity God has given us here at Redeemer Lutheran Church, School and Preschool to do that in Jesus’ name.

[Children’s Sermon] When God made Adam in the beginning, he was like this new clay pot. Then God, who is strong like this rock, breathed His life-giving Word and Spirit into Adam.

So, even though man by himself can be easily broken, like this clay pot, when God is in us He promises to protect us from the things in this world that seek to not only break us but to crush us to pieces, like this crushed pot.

When the devil tempted Adam and Eve to disobey God and eat fruit from the tree that God told them not to eat, was God with them to protect them? Sure He was, but they didn’t see Him, just like we can’t see Him right now, even though we trust in His promise to be with us always. Unfortunately, instead of believing God’s Word, they believed what the devil told them and ate the forbidden fruit. That’s when they kicked God out of their lives, and were now empty, broken pot’s like this one.

But before they were completely crushed, like this pot, God, who was still with them, let them know that He still loved them and would send them a Savior.

That Savior is Jesus, who is “*the Rock of our salvation*” (Psalm 95:1). He saved us by letting Himself die or be crushed on a cross (like this pot), to pay for all our sins. But because He is not only a man but also God, He rose from the dead, in a body that’s as strong as a rock.

When we were born we were like this pot, cracked and empty, but not crushed. When we were baptized, Jesus (who was crushed on the cross and then rose from the dead and is forever strong like this rock) put Himself back into our lives. So now, even though we are still cracked in this life, Jesus reminds us in the Bible that He is always with us as “*the Rock of our salvation*.” Through His Word He not only saves us but He also keeps us strong in our faith so that we can share this Good News about Jesus with others, and pray that they will also believe in Jesus, and we can all be perfect pots in paradise, like Adam and Eve in the beginning.

All Glory be to God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.