

19Pentecost, Matthew 21:33-46
Rev. Kimberly Glenn
October 4, 2026

As the Psalm appointed for this morning says, Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my strength and my redeemer. Amen.

We all need a vacation every once in a while. We all know the feeling of needing to get away so it was so good to get away like I did last weekend. It really was so great to celebrate my mother's 90th birthday, and the bonus was that the weather was gorgeous! My hometown where she still lives is just so beautiful. I had forgotten just how beautiful Lexington and the surrounding mountains really are. Our whole family enjoyed that weekend very much. But as you all probably know, it is always great to come home, too. I watched the 10:30 service here online thanks to our friend Susan Taylor up there in the balcony with the camera. Although, there is no substitute for being present – here in this space, among this congregation, with all of you. I feel truly blessed that the Holy Spirit led me to this beautiful part of the world, and I am especially grateful that my journey in life led me here to serve all of you.

I think that feeling of gratitude is a good place to connect to the parable set before us today. Jesus starts out the parable by saying that a landowner planted a vineyard. The landowner didn't just put in the vines, he put in everything that was needed for the vineyard to flourish as a thriving business. He put in the vines and built a fence around it to keep out the grape-eating pests. He built a winepress to process the grapes into wine and he put up a watchtower to keep the workers safe from predators and enemies. What the landowner provided in completing that project was everything that the vineyard needed in order to survive and thrive. All of the amenities provided for

19Pentecost, Matthew 21:33-46
Rev. Kimberly Glenn
October 4, 2026

a vineyard suitable for a bountiful harvest. For any tenant, it was like moving into an already furnished house with all the furniture, artwork, pots and pans, kitchen tools, dishes and pool privileges. This vineyard was a bargain, a gift for any one who leased it.

Before we notice anything else about this parable, especially the violent parts of it, I think Jesus is inviting us to pay special attention to what was included in this package deal. Don't our lives begin in much the same way?

We come into a world, this amazing world, that we had no part in creating. We receive a life that is ours to do with what we will. As we grow, we discover that we have gifts and talents and abilities that we did not give ourselves. They are somehow just a part of us. On our journey through life, we come to realize that the people who are part of our lives are there for a reason -- insignificantly or not, they all play a part in our experience with love and life and our growth as a human being. We find ourselves involved in a multitude of communities: our families, our neighborhoods, our schools, our workplaces, our clubs and volunteer groups – as our churches' congregations are ultimately a community. We find that we have a responsibility to the people within these communities. Before there is responsibility, it is so important to remember that all of it began as a gift.

The trouble begins when we become so involved in meeting our responsibilities that we forget that the vineyard, that is our very lives, all came from a gift. I don't know about you, but the busier I am, the easier it is for me to forget the important stuff. I think that might be what happened to the tenants in this parable. They get so busy with the work involved in making that vineyard thrive that they forget that the vineyard isn't really

19Pentecost, Matthew 21:33-46
Rev. Kimberly Glenn
October 4, 2026

theirs to begin with. The landowner entrusted them with the vineyard but they convince themselves that it is theirs, that they own it.

When the landowner entrusted the tenants with the vineyard, he didn't hover over them like a helicopter parent. He allowed them to make decisions about it, he even allowed them to fail and then try again. He didn't micromanage their actions; he trusted them to cultivate the vineyard, to make something fruitful out of what had been entrusted to them.

The tenants were expected to provide stewardship for that vineyard. Stewardship in its deepest sense is not fundraising, or giving a percentage of "our fruits" to God. It is recognizing that what we call ours, what I call mine, was first given in trust to you and me. Our gifts and abilities, our resources, and even our time are entrusted to us. God gives it and then goes away. The question becomes: "Given the gifts that God has entrusted me with, what will I do with them? What does God hope I will do with them to produce the fruits he desires?" The tenants neglected to think about that.

The tenants failed to remember that they were tenants. In their shortsightedness, they failed to remember that all that their work at the vineyard produced fruit that had been entrusted to them, that the produced fruit was not theirs. They stopped behaving like tenants and started behaving like owners. When they convinced themselves that the vineyard was theirs, they felt entitled to the fruit it produced which were the fruits of their labors. When someone else came and claimed what they believed wholeheartedly to be theirs, they responded with violence. They perceived anyone who wanted what they had as a threat.

19Pentecost, Matthew 21:33-46
Rev. Kimberly Glenn
October 4, 2026

Sadly, that is just what is happening in our world today. People perceive that the wealth that they produce, the authority they have been given, the popularity they have achieved, the land that they dwell in is of their own doing alone. We can become so protective of the way we believe God's vineyard should operate that we forget whose vineyard it really is.

That brings us to the chief priests and Pharisees, the people to whom Jesus is directing his teaching. These were not people who thought they were doing anything wrong. They believed in their hearts that they were following God's law and protecting the religious foundations that God had laid down for them. Jesus's arrival into their world only created conflict. The tragedy for them was that the tenants had become so invested in their own understanding of their mission in God's vineyard that when the Son of the owner stood before them, they saw him only as a threat.

Jesus was sent into their world as a holy gesture. Not to grab them by the throat but to gently usher them in this new way of life – a newfound way to cultivate the fruits of their labor. God kept on reaching toward them - through Abraham, through Moses, and through the prophets. God kept sending messengers, and then finally God sent his Son, Jesus, but the tenants did not recognize him as a gift. Instead, they resisted him because receiving him meant they would have to relinquish their control.

When we understand this in our own terms, we see that sometimes we resist God's gifts. Many opportunities God puts before us are laid to waste by our own reluctance, our reluctance to change, Our reluctance to open our hearts and our minds to a new way of life or a new way of thinking. We have a hard time seeing beyond our

19Pentecost, Matthew 21:33-46
Rev. Kimberly Glenn
October 4, 2026

own idea of what it means to receive a new friend, a new opportunity, a new direction – because it is not what we thought we wanted or needed.

The chief priests and the Pharisees thought that God would send them a warrior king like David. They couldn't see that Jesus was the gift they had been waiting for. They rejected the Son and then He, and not they, became the cornerstone.

You see, human rejection does not have the last word. The tenants say, in effect, 'Get rid of him!' God says, 'I will build upon Him.' Humans reject. God redeems. Human beings try to possess. God continues to give. The Son that the chief priests and Pharisees rejected became the cornerstone of God's new creation.

Perhaps our repentance, as shown in this parable, is simply remembering whose vineyard we have been entrusted. This vineyard, this beautiful world, all of this was never mine, it is not ours. We do not have to control everything. We do not have to protect everything. We only have to receive what God has given us, cultivate it faithfully, and offer its fruit back to God.

Each Sunday, we approach the Holy Table empty-handed. The bread and wine are the fruit of creation and human labor - gifts that have come first to us from God. Through God's power of grace, God consecrates them and gives them back to us as something greater still. God gives these gifts back to us as the presence of Christ himself. The Son who was rejected by humanity becomes the one who feeds, empowers, and sustains us.

19Pentecost, Matthew 21:33-46
Rev. Kimberly Glenn
October 4, 2026

We need to be humble and remember that everything begins as a gift. Our lives are our gifts. Our skills and abilities are our gifts. Our resources are our gifts. Our church is a gift. This world is a gift. And Christ himself is a most wondrous gift to us all.

We are not owners of this vineyard that we live in, we are the grateful, if only temporary, stewards of it. And Christ? Christ is still the cornerstone, and God is still building upon Him – always creating something new through Him and through us.

The question that Jesus leaves us with this morning is corporate and it is personal: “What fruit is God hoping to receive from all that God has entrusted to us? What is God hoping to receive from me?”