

18th Sunday after Pentecost
October 4, 2020
Cross of Glory Lutheran Church
Brooklyn Center, MN

Today, the first Sunday of the month, we will celebrate Holy Communion. As we prepare to take part in this meal together from home, please gather bread (or a cracker) and wine (or juice).

PRELUDE

WELCOME

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who creates, redeems, and sustains us and all of creation. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Faithful God, **have mercy on us. We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We turn from your loving embrace and go our own ways. We judge others before examining ourselves. We place our own needs before the needs of our neighbors. Humble us, have mercy on us, and turn us again to life in you; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

God hears the cries of all who call out in need, and through his death and resurrection, Christ has made us his own. Hear the truth that God proclaims: Your sins are forgiven in the name of † Jesus Christ. Led by the Holy Spirit, live in freedom and newness to do God's work in the world. **Amen.**

WORSHIP SONG

It All Belongs to You

Worship Team

Chorus

It all belongs to You **1**
Every single thing
You deserve the best
Cause Jesus You're the King
It all belongs to You
You bought us with a price
We offer up ourselves
A living sacrifice

My gifts my talents
All the things I have for free
They're for Your glory Lord
For You and not for me
All my possessions
All the things I choose to buy
I offer You 'cause I'm Your servant
Here am I

2 The way I spend my money
How I spend my time
The choice is up to You
It's Yours Lord it's not mine
All my devotion
All the praises I can bring
Belong to You alone
'Cause Jesus You're the King

For You gave Your life unselfishly
You paid the price to ransom me
You washed my sin and made me new
Now everything I am it all belongs to You
Now everything I am it all belongs to You

You You You it all belongs to You
You You You not me (REPEAT)

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

SONG OF PRAISE All to You

You called me, Lord, You know my name;
I'm standing now, I'm not ashamed
I've searched and came up empty;
This world has nothing for me;

You are my One and Only.
I'm living my life for you;
I'm giving everything to You
Not holding back, but every part
I'm giving it all to You.

I'm living my life for you;
I'm giving everything to You
Not holding back, but every part
I'm giving it all to You. (REPEAT)

Worship Team

You are the Lord of all I am;
I'll never be the same again;
I've searched and came up empty;
This world has nothing for me;

You are my One and Only.
I'm living my life for you;
I'm giving everything to You
Not holding back, but every part
I'm giving it all to You.

PRAYER OF THE DAY The Lord be with you. And also with you.

Let us pray . . . **Beloved God, you are the source of all that is good. Liberate us from all that holds us captive and help us to live as guests on your vineyard, sharing the harvest with all those who hunger; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

READING: Isaiah 5:1-7

¹Let me sing for my beloved
my love-song concerning his vineyard:
My beloved had a vineyard
on a very fertile hill.
²He dug it and cleared it of stones,
and planted it with choice vines;
he built a watchtower in the midst of it,
and hewed out a wine vat in it;
he expected it to yield grapes,
but it yielded wild grapes.
³And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem
and people of Judah,
judge between me
and my vineyard.
⁴What more was there to do for my vineyard
that I have not done in it?
When I expected it to yield grapes,
why did it yield wild grapes?
⁵And now I will tell you
what I will do to my vineyard.
I will remove its hedge,
and it shall be devoured;
I will break down its wall,
and it shall be trampled down.
⁶I will make it a waste;
it shall not be pruned or hoed,
and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns;
I will also command the clouds
that they rain no rain upon it.
⁷For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts
is the house of Israel,
and the people of Judah
are his pleasant planting;

he expected justice,
but saw bloodshed;
righteousness,
but heard a cry!

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SPECIAL MUSIC

Keith Williams

GOSPEL: Matthew 21:33-46

The holy gospel according to St. Matthew. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said to the people:] ³³“Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. ³⁴When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. ³⁵But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. ³⁷Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ ³⁸But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.’ ³⁹So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. ⁴⁰Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” ⁴¹They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.”

⁴²Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the scriptures:

‘The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord’s doing,
and it is amazing in our eyes’?

⁴³Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. ⁴⁴The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.”

⁴⁵When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON

Pastor Ali Tranvik

I have to admit: I was really hoping for a different kind of Bible story today. Something like Jesus calming the storm, or Jesus and the little children. The Prodigal Son would have been nice. Psalm 23 would have worked just fine. I was hoping for a story that took me *out* of the violence and chaos, not one that’s *about* violence and chaos. As we just heard, today’s Gospel story is about a landowner, a vineyard, and some greedy tenants who kill a bunch of people. It is a *terrible parable*. It’s gory, it’s troubling, not to mention just plain confusing. So what’s really going on here?

First, let’s set the scene. Previously in Matthew: Jesus paraded through the streets of Jerusalem on a donkey (21:1-11), causing crowds to wonder, “who is this guy?” From there, Jesus went into the temple and discovered God’s house being used like a “den of robbers” so he flipped tables and drove out the money changers (21:12-13), causing crowds again to wonder, “who is this guy?” Then, in last week’s Gospel lesson, the question becomes explicit. The story was an exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees (the religious leaders) who ask Jesus directly, “by what authority do you do these things” (21:23)? In other words, “who *is* this guy?” The religious authorities were starting to feel a bit threatened, so they ask Jesus for some further explanation.

Jesus—in true Jesus form—does not provide a straightforward answer, but instead tells a story. It goes something like this: There once was a farmer who planted a vineyard. It was a beautiful vineyard, lush with fertile soil and lots of sunlight and all the amenities to help the vineyard flourish (a winepress, a watchtower, etc.). The farmer then leased the land to some tenants, who he hired to care for the vineyard, and then he went away. Like any vineyard upon first planting, it would take about five years to go from seeds to harvest (Scott). So for five years, the tenants

took care of the grapes. Five years of making sure the soil was just right, of fretting over the first frost, of watering around the clock in the scorching sun (McGee). The tenants worked *hard*, and they loved that land well.

Finally, the literal fruits of their labor began to burst forth. Grapes grew everywhere, and the tenants couldn't be more excited, more proud. There were enough grapes to sell in order to sustain the tenants. There were even enough for them to enjoy some of their own home-grown wine. *Life was good*.

But one day, some unknown people showed up to the vineyard—unannounced—with a message from the owner: it was time for the tenants to hand over the owner's share of the profits (as was customary in 1st century Palestinian culture). “The landlord!?” we can imagine the tenants saying. “No one has seen that guy in years!” These tenants were offended. They had labored day after day for this harvest (and had calloused hands and aching backs to show for it), and suddenly the absentee landlord—out of sight and out of mind—sends some strangers to take away part of what the tenants had worked so hard to produce! That did not sit well. So instead of giving in to what felt so unjust, so unwarranted, so out-of-the-blue, the tenants decided to protect what they had worked so hard for. “Maybe if we just get rid of these guys,” they thought, “the landlord will leave us alone and we can just get back to business as usual.” So the tenants did just that, they attacked and killed the owner's people, thinking that was that. But it was not long until another group of messengers showed up, asking again for the owner's share. And the same thing again: more violence, more bloodshed, more murder. The tenants didn't want things to come to this, but as their lives became increasingly under threat, they were increasingly willing to do whatever it took to protect what was theirs.

Finally, the owner sent his own son (“his only Son”)—unaccompanied and unarmed—to teach the tenants some things they had clearly forgotten. They might have rejected the messengers before him, but they'd have to listen to the son. But when the son showed up, the tenants were even more offended. “He's the landlord's son, is he? He's going to try and take what we've worked for? Not a chance. He doesn't even own the land! *We* have far more of a right to the harvest than *he* does!” And then the wheels in their heads started turning: “So what if... *what if* he wasn't around anymore? If the son wasn't around, we would get the harvest, the land, the inheritance, the control, the power. If the son wasn't around, we'd become the lords of the land...” (McGee). “So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him” (21:39).

Like I said at the start, it's a brutal little story. Clearly the tenants were in the wrong (it's pretty obvious that when scripture says love your neighbor, it doesn't mean kill them). The violence is quick, cursory, and totally uncalled-for. It's easy to focus on the violence as the main problem here, but I want to suggest that the violence is actually a symptom of a larger problem, which is that the tenants have come to think *they own the place*, right? The land (and the profit it produced) was theirs. They had earned it. They deserved it. And because of that, they'd do whatever it takes to protect what they think is rightfully theirs. They'd get rid of anything—and anyone—who tries to threaten it. Sure, the violence is extreme, but they thought they were just acting out of self-defense.

Now, while grape-filled vineyards and mysterious landlords and murderous tenants may not feel particularly relevant for our day to day lives, this story may not be as foreign to us as we'd like to think. Let's put ourselves in the tenants' shoes for just a moment. I may not have a grape-filled vineyard, but I do have a whole host of things that I've worked hard for and call my own: my money, home, my car, my education, my job, my family, my time, my church, my beliefs. And what would I do if, say, one day I'm getting into my car out in the parking lot, and a random person comes up to me and says, “This isn't your car.” (I may double check the license plate, as I've been known to accidentally try and get in other black sedans. But I'd verify that this *is* in fact *my* black sedan (that I've paid for and that I have a title for), and I'd tell the stranger that was the case and try to carry on with my day but the stranger would say, “Nope. This car does not belong to you.” What would I do if someone came up to me and say, “This isn't your church.” “This isn't your home.” “This isn't your money.” “This isn't your time.” “This isn't your spouse.” I certainly hope my reaction would not be murder, and I am not at all justifying the tenants' violence reaction, but if someone came along and told me what's mine isn't mine, I'd put up a fight!

My parents remind me that one of my very first words was “mine.” I'd go around the home pointing at every object and say “mine!” Mine is one of the first words I learned. “Mine-ness” is one of the

first concepts I knew. And this sense of ownership is something that—consciously or subconsciously—still shapes how I live in the world. And in an increasingly anxious and uncertain world, a world that feels a bit more out of my control right now than usual, my grip on what’s “mine” seems to only be tightening. I try to hold on to what I think is mine, *but* what I don’t always realize is how these things have gotten a hold on me. I try to grasp to what I think is mine, but ownership has grasped me...

Franciscan Friar and modern mystic Richard Rohr says that “there are two ways of being a prophet. One is to tell the enslaved that they can be free. It is the difficult path of Moses. The second is to tell those *who think they are free that they are in fact enslaved*. This is the even more difficult path of Jesus.”

This is why the father sent the son to the vineyard. The father sent the son to remind the tenants that they are guests on this land, not owners. The father sent the son to remind the tenants that once they got over their delusions of ownership, they could stop living a life of guardedness and instead live a life of gratitude, so that everything necessary for life could be shared and there would no longer be too little for some because others had too much (Taylor). The father sent the son to remind the tenants to give what they had away, not because the *landlord* needed it, but because the *tenants* needed it, because in giving they could remember who they were and whose they were. The father sent the son to remind the tenants that what they “have” is not about ownership, but about stewardship.

Although we don’t get to this part of the story yet in Matthew, we know the ending of this parable, don’t we? We know that though the tenants killed the son—although we killed Jesus—he would not stay dead. “To this day, he is still haunting the vineyard, reminding *us* that we are God’s guests, welcome on this earth and welcome to it so long as we remember whose it is and how it is to be used” (Taylor). The Son is here, still dwelling among the rows of grapes of *our* lives, reminding *us* that although we didn’t earn it, and although we certainly don’t deserve it, we are given the vineyard and as much of the harvest as we need. The Son is here, gently but persistently prying open our white-knuckled fists from the things we cling to so tightly, liberating us from the sin of selfishness, from all the stuff we try and *hold* on to that *holds us* captive. The Son is here, reminding us that because we are not owners, we are freed to be stewards, to share in the gifts of this bountiful harvest.

While being told that what we have isn’t ours may not sound like good news, while being told that God is God and we are not may not be what we want to hear right now, it’s actually *liberating*. Cause if we’re honest with ourselves, this whole ownership game is pretty lonely. It’s exhausting living with clenched fists. It’s burdensome to always be looking over our shoulder or watching our back. But when we stop trying to protect ourselves from Jesus’ unwelcome, unannounced, seemingly unfair interference in our lives, perhaps we’ll discover what it is that Jesus has been offering us all along: Life! Joy! Abundance! Community! The kind we saw last week, when groups of you visited some of our home-bound COG members. The kind we saw this past week, when a group of you showed up on yet another Zoom call to learn more about how we can tutor and mentor students from Progeny Academy in the midst of this extraordinarily difficult semester. When we loosen our grip and realize that none of this is ours to begin with, maybe we have a shot at actually living a bit. At really living life together.

I have a friend who’s a Lutheran pastor at a church in Greensboro, NC, located in a fairly poor neighborhood. The building is small, but the church has a great chunk of land, this big space out back that wasn’t really being used for much. So the church turned it into a farm, cared for by members of the church and the larger community alike. Pastor Matt often goes on walks around the neighborhood to get to know folks in area and invite them to stop on by anytime to help themselves to the fruit of the farm, or come get their hands in the dirt. A few weeks ago, Pastor Matt met Breonna, a fourth grader who lives down the street from the church. He invited her and her siblings to come work on the farm. The next day, Breonna showed up. She loves it, Pastor Matt says. She keeps coming back.

The other day Breonna asked Pastor Matt, “Do you own the church?” “Nope,” he said. “I just work here.” “So who owns it then?” Breonna asked. “No one owns it,” Pastor Matt replied. Breonna paused. “So I can come here whenever I want?” To which Pastor Matt responded: “Yes!”

So too may it be with our church, our vineyard. We don't own it. We just work here. And we (and the Breonnas of Brooklyn Center) can come whenever we want to share in and steward the harvest. Thanks be to God. Amen!

Sources:

- Emerson Powery, "Commentary on Matthew 21:33-46," *Working Preacher*, Oct 5, 2014.
- Emily Hull McGee, "Kingdom Economics," First Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, NC, Oct 8, 2017.
- Levine, Amy Jill. *Short Stories by Jesus* (New York: HarperOne, 2014).
- Rohr, Richard. *From Wild Man to Wise Man* (Cincinnati: Franciscan Media, 2005).
- Taylor, Barbara Brown. *Gospel Medicine* (Plymouth: Rowan and Littlefield Publishing Group Inc., 1995).

HYMN OF THE DAY #597 My Hope is Built on Nothing Less verses 1,2 and 4

- 1** My hope is built on nothing less **Refrain** On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;
than Jesus' blood and righteousness; all other ground is sinking sand.
no merit of my own I claim,
but wholly lean on Jesus' name.
- 2** When darkness veils his lovely face,
I rest on his unchanging grace;
in ev'ry high and stormy gale
my anchor holds within the veil. **Refrain**
- 4** When he shall come with trumpet sound,
oh, may I then in him be found,
clothed in his righteousness alone,
redeemed to stand before the throne! **Refrain**

CONFESSION OF FAITH Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

OFFERTORY

Thank you for continuing to support and sustain the work of Cross of Glory during this time apart. Please send your offering to the church (5929 Brooklyn Blvd, Brooklyn Center, MN 55429), or contact Sue in the office to learn more about how to set up automatic, online giving. We are grateful for your generosity!

OFFERTORY RESPONSE #824 This is My Father's World

- 1** This is my Father's world,
and to my list'ning ears
all nature sings, and round me rings
the music of the spheres.
This is my Father's world;
I rest me in the thought
of rocks and trees, of skies and seas;
his hand the wonders wrought.
- 2** This is my Father's world;
the birds their carols raise;
the morning light, the lily white,
declare their maker's praise.
This is my Father's world;
he shines in all that's fair.
In the rustling grass I hear him pass;
he speaks to me ev'rywhere.
- 3** This is my Father's world;
oh, let me not forget
that, though the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the ruler yet.
This is my Father's world;
why should my heart be sad?
The Lord is king, let heaven ring;
God reigns, let earth be glad!

OFFERING PRAYER

Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. You have given us the gifts of your good creation. Nourish us with this food and drink, and send us forth to set tables in the midst of a suffering world, through Jesus Christ, the bread of life. Amen.

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE

With confidence in God's grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

Holy God, you give us a vineyard where we can work and live. Open our hands from all that we tightly hold as our own, that we would live not as owners but as generous stewards, freely sharing with our neighbors the abundance of your harvest. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.** We are guests in a world not our own, a world lush with meadows and mountains, rivers and oceans. As we enter into this time of harvest, we ask that you bless those whose hands bring the fruits of the earth to the tables of all who hunger, and empower us all to steward the precious resources of your vineyard. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those affected by violence of all kinds, for survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence, racial violence, and war, for those who suffer violence that remains invisible or ignored. Forgive for the ways we contribute to violence, knowingly and unknowingly, and guide us in your ways of justice and peace. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all landlords and employers in our community, and for all who seek employment. Give hope and a future to those who lack meaningful work, those who have been marginalized or abused in the workplace, and those who desire new opportunities. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In these troubling times, assure us of your abiding presence, heal our pain and sickness, be a balm in our loneliness and anxiety, and embrace all bodies aching for wholeness. We pray especially today for healing for Bev Hoium, Gil Hartlage, Terry Stejskal, Jeanetta Barhorst, Jackie Fryhling, Vicky Jacobson, and the family of Marian Priest. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For the prayers we've prayed aloud and for those that remain in the depths of our hearts, we pray in the name Jesus Christ, our rock and our cornerstone. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one body by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

COMMUNION

The body of Christ is given for you, and the blood of Christ is shed for you.

You are invited to partake in this holy meal at home with a form of bread and either wine or juice, trusting that God is present in it, and that it unites us as one body, even while we are apart.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We give you thanks, gracious God, that you have once again fed us with food beyond compare, the body and blood of Christ. Send us forth now, nourished and forgiven, into your beloved vineyard to wipe away the tears of all who hunger and thirst, guided by Jesus Christ, and led by the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

BLESSING

Mothering God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you and lead you into life. **Amen.**

SENDING FORTH SONG #583 Take My Life, that I May Be

- Refrain** Take my life, that I may be
consecrated, Lord, to thee;
take my moments and my days;
let them flow in ceaseless praise.
- 1** Take my hands and let them move
at the impulse of thy love;
take my feet and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee. **Refrain**
- 2** Take my silver and my gold,
not a mite would I withhold;
take my intellect and use
ev'ry pow'r as thou shalt choose. **Refrain**
- 3** Take my voice and let me sing
always, only for my King;
take my lips and let them be
filled with messages from thee. **Refrain**
- 4** Take my will and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine;
take my heart, it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne. **Refrain**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Love your neighbor.
Thanks be to God.

The Order of Service is from Evangelical Lutheran Worship which is commended for use in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

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Community Announcements

- Following the Zoom worship service, you're invited to Virtual Coffee Hour, an opportunity to connect with one another for a brief time of small-group fellowship. Friends, family, and first-timers are warmly welcome!
- Thanks to all those who took part in our visitations last week. It is a joyful afternoon of connecting with our Cross of Glory community! If you did not receive a visit but would like one, please let Sue know.
- Join us for Bible Study on Tuesday mornings at 9:30 am on Zoom as we explore the texts for the upcoming week.
- Lend a hand with food distribution and meet some new neighbors at CAPI's Fresh Food Friday on 10/9. Email Pastor Ali for more information.
- The Cross of Glory softball team plays its last game of the season on 10/5 at 6:20 pm at the north field of Centennial Park. Join us for some outdoor, physically-distanced fellowship!
- October's Glory Banner was sent out this past week. If you did not receive a copy, please notify Sue (svukelich@crossofglory.us).
- Please contact Pastor Ali with any other announcements or pastoral concerns and needs. You can reach her by email (atranvik@crossofglory.us) or phone (763-533-8602).