

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Twelfth Sunday after Trinity, August 14, 2016

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 383, 257:3, 460, 466, 466:4.

Lessons: 2 Chronicles 36:11-19, Acts 20:17-31, Matthew 21:12-22.

Sermon Text: Luke 20:9-19

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Dear Friends in Christ our Redeemer:

How important is it to accept Jesus and the blood-bought salvation He has won for us? If we were to judge by the lack of concern which most people show, we would have to conclude that it is not very important. Few people are concerned about religious matters. Even fewer people are concerned enough to want to read and study about Christ in the Bible.

Some people conclude that since the majority of people in the world do not believe in Jesus, God must have some other way outside of faith in Christ to save people. Or they think that religious beliefs outside of Christianity are also acceptable to lead people to heaven. Only a very few people have this conviction about Jesus: ***"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."*** Acts 4:12

The parable in our text will show us conclusively that it is absolutely essential to salvation to believe on Jesus as our only Savior, for we learn:

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN JESUS IS REJECTED?

1. **What happened to Israel and its religious leaders;**
2. **What will happen to all who today reject Jesus.**

Jesus told this parable the same week He was crucified: ***"A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time."*** Jesus told this parable to the people at the temple, but in the hearing of the religious leaders. The man who planted the vineyard represents the Lord. The farmers, the vinedressers, to whom the man rented the vineyard, represent Israel, especially the religious leaders. The long time spoken of in the parable is the time from when Israel was established as a nation until the Lord brought down His judgment upon them with the destruction of Jerusalem. The people, as our text indicates, also knew that Jesus was talking about their nation and their religious leaders.

In the parable we are told what the owner of the vineyard did at harvest time. ***"At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard."*** The servants sent to get the owner's share of the harvest represent the prophets the Lord sent to Israel to preach His Word. The parable shows that each servant sent was treated most shamefully. Of the first one it says they ***"beat him and sent him away empty-handed."*** The second one also ***"they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed."*** The third servant ***"they wounded ..., and threw him out."***

This is a picture of what happened to the prophets the Lord sent to His chosen people of Israel. God expected that the people of Israel would respect His prophets, would listen to their message and do whatever the Lord spoke through the prophets. But the people of Israel were a rebellious people who treated the Lord's prophets with contempt and hatred. They despised them, mistreated them, and finally put them to death. This is what the Bible says about this matter: ***"The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused***

against his people and there was no remedy.” 2 Chronicles 36:15-16. The Book of Hebrews says of the prophets the Lord sent: **“Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison.”** 11:36. Just before Stephen was stoned to death by the unbelieving Jews, he reminded them of what their forefathers had done: **“Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One.”** Acts 7:52.

In the parable Jesus went on to speak about Himself, the heavenly Father’s own beloved Son. **“Then the owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.’”** Surely the renters would show respect for the owner’s own son! So one would also expect that God’s chosen people of Israel would show respect when **“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. ... For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”** John 3:16-17.

But Israel and its leaders did not accept Jesus. The parable teaches this. When the tenants saw the owner’s son, they talked the matter over. **“‘This is the heir,’ they said. ‘let’s kill him and the inheritance will be ours.’ So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.”** The people of Israel and their leaders knew that Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be God’s one and only Son. They many times saw proof of that fact when Jesus performed miracles before them. But they hated Jesus and refused to listen to His preaching. The lowly Jesus, living as a humble servant of Jehovah, did not meet their expectations as to what their Messiah should be. The Savior harshly condemned their self-righteousness and their pride and hypocrisy, and they hated Him for it. They refused to accept Him as the sinner’s Savior. So they planned to put Him to death. Right after Lazarus’ resurrection, the Sanhedrin, the religious leaders, got together and reasoned: **“If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”** John 11:48. We see from these words that the Jewish leaders were selfishly concerned about their ruling position over Israel. So Jesus had to be eliminated. Caiaphas as their high priest also told them: **“You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.”** John 11:50

As we well know, their plans to get rid of Jesus were carried out. Jesus was arrested in Gethsemane, judged before the Jewish religious courts, condemned to death, and then taken to the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, to have the death sentence approved and carried out. The Roman soldiers took Jesus outside the gate of Jerusalem and crucified Him.

Jesus concluded the parable and then made application to the Jewish unbelievers. **“What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.”** The people understood exactly what Jesus was saying and then told Him: **“May this never be!”** They did not like to hear of Israel's destruction. Then Jesus made this application to Israel and its religious leaders: **“Jesus looked directly at them and asked, ‘Then what is the meaning of that which is written: The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone? Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.’”** This was Jesus' way of telling the people of Israel and their leaders that they had taken offense at Jesus and stumbled over Him in unbelief. And therefore they would be crushed in the judgment of the Lord on the Last Day. The religious leaders, our text says, **“Looked for a way to arrest him immediately, because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people.”**

We know from history what has happened to Israel and its religious leaders. They were rejected by the Lord, Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed in the year 70 A.D., and the Jews were scattered among many nations of the world. Unless those of Jewish nationality living today repent and accept the Messiah whom God long ago sent, they will suffer everlasting damnation. This is important, for many false teachers today teach that all Jews will be converted before the Last Day.

But we must not fail to apply the lessons of this parable to ourselves. We want to learn what will happen to all who today reject Jesus.

2.

In our text Jesus spoke words that apply to all people today also: **“Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.”** Jesus was speaking of Himself as the Stone the builders of Israel rejected, the One who has become the **“capstone,”** or, in other words, the Head of the Church. Everything depends on what people do with Christ, whether they accept Him in faith, or reject Him in unbelief.

Everything depends on this, because the Bible says: **"God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the Church."** Eph. 1:22 Everything depends upon what we do with Jesus because the Bible says: **"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins."** Eph. 1:7 Everything depends upon what we do with Jesus because the Bible says in Jesus' own words: **"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."** John 14:6 Everything depends on what we do with Jesus, for the Savior said: **"Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him."** John 5:22-23 Everything depends on what we do with Jesus because the Bible says: **"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."** John 3:18

Paul wrote to the Romans about the unbelievers of Israel: **"They stumbled over the stumbling-stone, just as it is written, 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed.'" Rom. 9:33 (NASB)** Paul was speaking about Jesus as the Stone over which men stumble, as Isaiah long ago foretold (Is. 28:16) Jesus says in our text that those who stumble over Him by taking offense at the lowly Jesus **"will be broken to pieces."** Everyone who takes offense at the lowly Jesus, the suffering Savior who died for mankind, foolishly rejects the only way to salvation. For our dear Savior came to keep the Law of God in exact holiness. He came to take our place, as our Divine Substitute. The Bible assures us that **"Christ died for the ungodly."** Rom. 5:6 **"While we were still sinners Christ died for us."** Rom. 5:8 Thus He paid for all our sins, atoned for all our transgressions with His holy precious blood, and innocent sufferings and death. And when He arose again after His crucifixion on the glorious Easter Sunday morning, we were assured that God accepted all that His Son did for our justification. **"He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification."** Rom. 4:25 That means that God no longer counts our sins against us for Jesus' sake, and we are holy and righteous in His sight.

Whoever believes this has the blessedness of heaven to look forward to. Whoever does not believe this will suffer everlasting punishment in hell. **"They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord."** 2 Thess. 1 This is the terrible result of rejecting Jesus, and what Jesus means when He says: **"but he on whom it falls will be crushed,"** What a warning to all those today who think the world has outgrown the old Gospel of Christ! May we not be so deceived, but rather confess with the poet: **"Christ is our Cornerstone, On Him alone we build; With His true saints alone The courts of heaven are filled. On His great love Our hopes we place Of present grace And joys above."** Amen. (The Lutheran Hymnal 465:1)

Reprinted from a Ministry By Mail sermon preached August 26, 1984. Edited by Robert Mehlretter.