



Table Talk

The Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost, A

October 04, 2020

Matthew 21:33-46
“Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits” Vs. 34



Jesus delivers a parable of judgment into the ears of the chief priests and elders of the people. They recognize the illegitimacy of those wicked tenants. They answer correctly when they say, “[The master] will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their season” (vs. 41). Jesus then uses their own words against them, visiting the condemnation they anticipated for the wicked tenants upon the priests and elders themselves: “the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.”

The implied threat contained in this verse—produce fruit or you’ll lose the kingdom—turns us all into grocers. We become “fruit-checkers.” First, we check to see that we’re producing fruit. This move turns us in on ourselves, the very definition of sin: “in curvatas in se.” Second, we examine our fruit; is it good or bad fruit? Is it perfect or not? Is it worthy of the kingdom? How does it compare with the neighbor’s fruit? Such questions destroy our contentment; they disturb the peace of our conscience;

they dethrone Christ from our conscience and place an imposter on his throne. The Law, “Produce fruit!” sits on Jesus’ seat.

Fruit worthy of the kingdom is never the work of the Law. The fruitfulness of the kingdom depends upon one thing and one thing only: the preaching of the gospel. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ, him crucified, and him alone produces faith. It is impossible for faith to be without its fruit. The presence of faith alone determines whether the fruit of the kingdom is present. Does this mean we need to become “faith-checkers” rather than “fruit-checkers?” By no means! Faith is not something for us to know or possess. Faith is constantly given to us through the work of the Holy Spirit in the Word and Sacrament ministry of your preacher. Hear the Word! Receive the Supper! Be confident of your faith.

Table Talk: Discuss how this parable of judgment speaks to you.

Pray: : Heavenly Father, grant me the fruit of a faith which comes by hearing. Amen

Written by Rev. Timothy J. Swenson
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www.ilt.edu • PO Box 833 • Brookings, SD • (605)692-9337



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33 “Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country.

34 When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit.

35 And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another.

36 Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them.

37 Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’

38 But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.’

39 And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

40 When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”

41 They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.”

42 Jesus 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 marvelous in our eyes’?”

43 Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.

44 And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”

45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them.

46 And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.



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