

He went on to tell the people this parable: “A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time.¹⁰ At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed.¹¹ He sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed.¹² He sent still a third, and they wounded him and threw him out.

¹³ “Then the owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.’

¹⁴ “But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over. ‘This is the heir,’ they said. ‘Let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’¹⁵ So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

“What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them?¹⁶ He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.”

When the people heard this, they said, “May this never be!”

¹⁷ 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’?

¹⁸ Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.”

¹⁹ The teachers of the law and the chief priests 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. (NIV84)

Theme: May this Never Be!

1. That we reject God’s Word.
2. That we are crushed by God’s judgment.

It was Tuesday of Holy Week. Jesus already rode triumphantly into Jerusalem on the back of a lowly donkey. He had already turned over the tables in the temple for a second time. He had already done much preaching and teaching. As he was teaching, some of the Jewish leaders—the Scribes and chief priests came up to him wanting to know by what authority he was doing what he was doing. Jesus refused to give them a straight answer. But in a way he did, via a parable.

Through this parable we see just how much hatred some of the people had for Jesus. And we are appalled at their actions. We might respond to that story the same way the Jews did: by saying, “May it never be.” May we never reject God’s Word, and may we never be crushed by God’s judgment.

Jesus’ parable was about an owner of a vineyard. He planted the crops. But he went away for awhile. So he rented it out to some tenants. Then he came back. And it was time for the harvest. So he wanted to collect his rent—some of the fruit. He wasn’t asking for anything out of the ordinary. It is quite normal to pay such a price for farming someone’s land.

So he sent one of his servants to collect the payment. But the tenants refused to pay him. And they beat him violently. So he sent another servant. They also beat him. But this one they shamed before they sent him away empty. So another servant was sent. This one was wounded before they sent him away. So the owner of the vineyard decided to send his beloved son. He figured, **perhaps they will respect him.**

But they didn’t. When they saw him coming they decided to kill him. **‘This is the heir,’ they said. ‘Let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’** And that is exactly what they did—they killed the owner’s son. What a dumb plan. Why would they ever think that if they killed someone’s son they would gain his inheritance? It doesn’t make sense at all. And yet, that is exactly what the Jews did with Jesus. God sent his beloved Son. But the Jews mistreated him. In just a few short days after Jesus told this parable, the Jews arrested Jesus. They put him under an illegal trial. They made a trumped-up charge against him, and forced Pilate to crucify him.

The leaders of the Jews were the ones who led the charge in Jesus’ death. They killed him just as the tenants killed the son of the owner. And that isn’t the only thing the Jews did. They also killed and abused the prophets. Again and again they rejected those God sent to them. The prophets were rejected and abused. Some were even murdered. The Jews did the same thing to God’s prophets as the tenants did to the owner’s servants.

And when they did it, many of them thought they were pleasing God. They thought they were doing God a service. They didn't believe Jesus was God's son. When Jesus made that claim before the high priest they accused him of blaspheme. So they killed him like any good Jews would do. And they figured that by killing Jesus they would earn God's favor. That by killing God's son they would receive the inheritance of eternal life.

What about us? We are rightly appalled at what we read about the tenants and thus also about the Jews. We reply as they did, **May it never be!** The Jews who said that were appalled at the thought of killing the owner's son. But that's exactly what they did. They were appalled, yet they fell into the same sin. We may too. We are Christians. Lutherans—we have been for awhile. We may think that we are immune. But we may fall into the same sin. Sure, none of us killed Christ. We didn't accuse him of blaspheme. We didn't abuse or kill the prophets. Yet at time we may reject part of God's Word. That is, we may doubt it from time to time. We may be skeptical. We wonder if what we read on its pages is true. Or there are some portions of his Word that our reason or our lifestyle may not agree with. So we may simply choose to ignore those portions of Scripture. And when we do we abuse the prophets. When we reject portions of God's Word it's as if we kill the Son.

Despite the sins of the tenants the owner repeatedly gave them other chances. Three times he sent his servants. Each time was another opportunity for them to do what was right. And when they mistreated them, he gave them one more opportunity by sending his son. God did the same for the Jews. Again and again he gave them chances to repent. And he didn't just send them three prophets, but many. Time and time again he sent them his Word. Time and time again he gave them opportunities to repent. And finally he sent them his Son. He does the same for us. Where we are not faithful, God is. Even though we sin against him time and time again God comes to us time and time again. He repeatedly seeks our forgiveness. He doesn't want anyone to perish. So he gives us many opportunities to repent. He gives us his Word and he sends others so he may forgive us.

He even sent his Son for us. His one and only Son. The Son whom he loved. God loved us so much that he gave up his Son for us. And he didn't just send his Son for us to collect some sort of payment. He sent his Son to make that payment for us. He did this while he was on the cross. For on the cross he became guilty of everything we have done wrong, he took all our sins upon himself. And he paid for an eternity of damnation when he was forsaken by his Father. So the price we have to pay for our sins was paid for by the Son on our behalf.

And Jesus knew that this was going to happen. Remember that Jesus told this parable on the Tuesday of Holy Week. This was a prophecy about his death. In a few days he would be betrayed, arrested, and put under trial. Soon he would be beaten, mocked, ridiculed, crowned with thorns, and flogged. Then he would be nailed to a tree and murdered. Jesus knew this was going to happen. And yet he didn't run away or go into hiding. He kept on preaching and teaching. He did what he normally did. So that he could be arrested and eventually pay for our sins. That is how much God loves us.

May it never be that we reject God's Word. For all those who reject God's Word will be crushed by his judgment.

Jesus said so. **Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.** Jesus is the stone. He is the one the builders rejected. The Jews looked at Jesus and they rejected him. They wanted nothing to do with him like builders who would want nothing to do with a bad stone. Little did they know what they were doing when they threw away the stone. Little did they know what would happen to them. They would be crushed. Destroyed, and broken into pieces.

This goes in line with what Jesus said about the tenants. Jesus asked what the owner of the vineyard would do to tenants for killing his son. Jesus answered his own question: **He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.** In Matthew's account, Jesus is even harsher. **He will bring those wretches to a wretched end.** God would kill and destroy those who abused his prophets. He would punish those who murdered and rejected his Son. It would be a wretched end for them indeed. For their punishment would never end as they suffer in hell.

And there in hell they will suffer through more pain than we can ever imagine. Being broken into pieces will be the least of their worries. And there will be no hope for it to get better. There will be chance that their pain and torment might let up. They will not only die, but they will die eternally. Crushed by the full wrath of God. Punished for their sins and their unbelief.

And all who do not believe in him reject him. They don't just reject Jesus by rejecting him. Or by inflicting damage to him or his people. All who do not believe reject him. That is what the Jews did as a whole. Most of them rejected Jesus as the Messiah. So God rejected them. And he took his gospel elsewhere. May it never be! May we never reject the stone. May it never be that we are crushed by him.

For the stone that was rejected is the stone that crushes. And the stone that is rejected is the chief cornerstone. Which is a better translation than the NIV's "capstone. Psalm 118, which Jesus quotes, really says, **The stone the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.**

Jesus was rejected by the Jews. They thought he was a bad stone. But it ended up that he was the best and most important stone. A cornerstone at that time had to be straight and true. The rest of the building was built on that one cornerstone. If it wasn't straight, the rest of the building would be off. If it crumbled so would the rest of the building. If it was removed the rest of the building would fall. Jesus has become the chief cornerstone upon which the Church was built. Without him there is no Church. And if he is removed the Church fails. The stone that was rejected became the most important rock of all.

Jesus' parable was certainly a prophecy about his death. He would be murdered by the Jewish leaders. He would be rejected by them. But that rejected stone would rise to greater glory. A prophecy about Jesus' resurrection. That is why Jesus was so willing to suffer and die. He was so willing to be crushed because he wouldn't stay crushed. He knew he would rise from the dead. He knew that he would win for us the gift of eternal life.

We could easily say along with the Jews: May it never be. May we never reject the stone. May we never fail to listen to his Word. May it never be—but sadly from time to time, it is. But that's why Jesus willing went to his death. He paid for our sins and sends others to us

time and time again so that we may receive the forgiveness he one for us. We know that the stone that was crushed was made glorious. He is our God and Savior. And he will make us glorious like him forever. Amen.