

<sup>33</sup> **“Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. <sup>34</sup> When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.**

<sup>35</sup> **“The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. <sup>36</sup> Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. <sup>37</sup> Last of all, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said.**

<sup>38</sup> **“But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and take his inheritance.’ <sup>39</sup> So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.**

<sup>40</sup> **“Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”**

<sup>41</sup> **“He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,” they replied, “and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.”**

<sup>42</sup> **Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: “‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”**

<sup>43</sup> **“Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.** (NIV 84)

Theme: The Grace of God’s Patience

1. He sent his Son
2. He leads us to repent

“Patience is a virtue.” I really did not like that little saying growing up. I don’t think that many people do. That’s because most of the time it is said, it’s a way of saying, “Just Wait!” But we don’t like to wait very often. We live in a society of instant gratification. If we want to listen to a song all we have to do is look it up on a radio app. If we want to watch a movie, there is no need to drive to a store or a Redbox; we just have to look through the list on our DVR or download it instantly. If you order something over the phone or online, you

don’t have to wait that long for it to arrive—you can pay some extra and get next day delivery! The point is, we don’t like to wait. We don’t have time to be patient.

Perhaps it’s part of getting older, or becoming a parent, but you eventually realize that patience is indeed a virtue. You try to teach your child something but he’s just not listening. Your daughter isn’t doing what you asked her to do. You are getting frustrated and what do you want to do? Yell and scream. It might make you feel better, but it’s probably not too constructive—it’s probably not going to help your child understand any quicker.

Patience isn’t always a bad thing—it can be a virtue. Especially when it comes to the way God deals with us. If it wasn’t for his patience, we would be left all alone to try to pay for our sins. So today we see the grace of God’s patience. In patience he sent his Son for us, and he gives us time to repent.

It was the Tuesday of Holy Week. The chief priest and elders of the people had already decided that they wanted Jesus dead. He was too popular and he was pointing out their sins and heresies too often. So they got together to attack Jesus by questioning his authority. Jesus responded by telling them three parables—the parables of the two sons, the tenants (our text for today), and the wedding banquet. These parables were supposed to drive these spiritual leaders to see their sins. The Parable of the tenants is one we may know well. A wealthy man decided to build a vineyard—one in which he didn’t spare any expense. This vineyard was complete with a wall to keep out thieves and animals, a tower for the same purpose, and an on-sight press for easy wine-making. Then he rented it out to some farmers. When the time came to collect his rent—which must have been a portion of the harvest, he sent some of his servants. But the farmers didn’t want to pay so they **seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third.** So the owner of the vineyard decided to send some more of his servants; but the tenants did the same thing to them. So finally the owner sent his Son, thinking that they would respect him. But when they saw him coming they decided to kill him too—which is exactly what they did.

Jesus never tells us who the people in this parable represent; but it’s clear anyway. Just as the owner built a wonderful and amazing

vineyard, God made a wonderful and amazing world. The owner graciously let farmers use and take care of his vineyard, just as God made mankind the caretakers of his world. They especially represent the Israelites, God's chosen nation. The servants of the owner are the prophets, priests, and others whom God sent to his people to watch over the spiritual lives of the people. But time and time again the people of Israel rejected the words of the Prophets and others sent by God—even to the point of killing some of them.

So eventually God sent his own Son, Jesus. Jesus time and time again pointed out that he was the Son of God, and the Promised Messiah. But the leaders of the people didn't care what Jesus said. They made plans to kill him—something they would accomplish just a few short days later. This parable was spoken to the leaders of the people about themselves who were following the ways of their wicked forefathers before them. Stephen, when he stood before the Sanhedrin, the same body that condemned Jesus to death, pointed this out. **You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him.**

Think back to the parable for a second. Who in their right mind would send his Son to collect payment from a group of tenants who had already beaten, stoned, and killed many of his servants who were sent before? Yet, in his patience, that is exactly what the owner did. He didn't come and kill the farmers when they killed his servants the first time; he patiently sent more—hoping they would do what was right. And when they killed the second group, he patiently sent his Son hoping that they would respect him.

God did the same thing. The Jews rejected the prophets; they even killed some of them. So God could have yelled at the time and rejected them right away. But instead in patience he kept on sending more of his servants—more of his prophets. And finally he sent his one and only Son. That is God's grace in his patience. He sent his one and only Son into a sinful world because he had patience on us sinners. But despite the patience of the owner, the farmers killed the Son. In the same way, the leaders of the people condemned Jesus to death. So what will happen to them? The Pharisees and Sadducees answered that question themselves, **He will bring those wretches to a wretched**

**end.** In other words, God will destroy them. He will send them to suffer with the devil forever in hell.

At the end of our text Jesus reiterates the same point. **I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you.** The kingdom of God is Christ's rule in our hearts through faith—which comes only through the gospel. And those that reject Christ will not be part of his kingdom and they won't have the gospel.

God's showed his patience in not destroying sinners in their sin, but instead sending his Son. And we see his patience once again in that he gives us time to repent.

The message of this parable wasn't lost on the leaders of the people. They knew that this parable was about them. A few verses after our text Matthew comments, **When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them.** So when Jesus said that God's kingdom would be taken from them, they knew he was talking about them. When they told Jesus that the master would **bring those wretches to a wretched end**, they knew that they were saying that about themselves.

And yet Matthew says about them, **They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.** There's no remorse, no sorrow, no repentance. They heard Jesus' warning. They knew full well that he was talking about them. But they didn't care. Jesus had made fools out of them too many times; and now they were going to make him pay.

We shake our heads, don't we? And rightfully so. They rejected Christ's warning, and eventually rejected Christ. But we may act like the leaders of the people more often than we like to admit. How many times do we hear God's Word, do we listen to his law, and we tell ourselves that it isn't for us? "He's talking to someone else" we say. "That law doesn't really apply to me, because I don't commit that sin like other people do." Or maybe we convince ourselves that God's laws apply to everyone else but you. That somehow, you have a special deal with God. He knows you a believer and a generally good person, so he doesn't care if you break certain rules at times. It's like the speed limit. You know the law, you understand it, and you agree with the reasons behind it. But you convince yourself, "It's really a

law to protect others from bad drivers, and I'm a good driver, so it's okay if I go 90 on the interstate, I know I can handle it." And because we think that God's law don't apply to us because somehow we are special, we may fail to repent—just like the chief priests and elders of the people.

Three parables Jesus used to try to lead them to repentance. In this parable he even prophesied that they were going to reject and kill him, as they had secretly planned. And he warned them that they would suffer forever if they did so. Christ was trying to save them. He was being patient with them and was giving them every opportunity to repent.

He is equally patient with us. He doesn't destroy us whenever we sin. But he comes to us in his Word and through his servants—urging us to repent. And he gives us time to do so. He keeps us alive. Judgment Day hasn't come yet. Each day that we have on this earth is another opportunity to repent of our sins and lead others to do the same. Peter is thinking of Judgment Day when he says this about God's patience, **The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**

The leaders of the people refused to repent. They took Christ and sentenced him to death. The Romans led him out of the city and crucified him. He was rejected by men. They hated him, they wanted nothing to do with him. They rejected him like a flawed piece of stone, worthless to use for building

But he didn't stay dead—he rose from the dead three days after his crucifixion. And God exalted him to the highest place. Now he sits on his throne in heaven ruling over his whole creation. Jesus interprets this parable by quoting Psalm 118, **The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.** The Son whom the farmers killed is alive and rules forever. And he has become the foundation of the Church. The Cornerstone was the stone on which the rest of the building is built—it had to be right and true because if it wasn't the whole building would be off. The leaders of the people rejected Jesus, but God placed Jesus as our cornerstone. Through his resurrection we are living stones that make up his Church both here on earth and forever in heaven.

Whether you like the saying or not, patience is a virtue. It truly is a good thing. Especially when it comes the patience that the Lord has with us. For it is in his patience that he sent his Son and that he gives us time to repent. So let us not reject his warning and have his grace taken away from us. But let us repent and rejoice in the Chief Cornerstone, who was dead but is now alive. And through him we will be too. Amen.