

We Can Be Tempted to Think That We Are Owners of God's Mysteries Rather than Stewards of Them. Nevertheless, Instead of a Display of Power to Give Us What We Deserve, God Sent His Son in Love for Us.

When Jesus told the parable of the wealthy landowner who built a vineyard and leased it to tenant farmers, the Romans were occupying the land, most of the farmland in Galilee was controlled by foreign owners who usually did little to improve the land, most of the food was exported, Palestine itself experienced regular food shortages, and the shortages drove up prices, the Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander said as he began his sermon Sunday.

"This economic stress—combined with the high taxes imposed by Rome and Jerusalem—drove many poor people into servitude, where they would sell themselves in order to provide food for their families," he continued. "Tenant farmers had some freedom, but didn't fare much better. They would rent the land from these absentee landlords, work long hours for long seasons, and return the lion's share of the profit to the foreign owner. Most of the time they were barely able to keep their families alive, and Pilate and the powers that be were ruthless in suppressing rebellion or (challenges to) the status quo.

"So here is what you have. You have abundant crops, food shortages, and absentee landlords in an oppressive system. And into this situation Jesus comes now and tells a story about a group of tenant farmers who get fed up and take matters into their own hands.

"How do you think Jesus' hearers felt about a story like this? How would you feel if it were you? Who would you be rooting for?"

"Most people listening to Jesus would have rooted for the tenant farmers. The deaths of a few landlords, or their kin, would not cause many tears in Galilee. But those listening to Jesus also would completely understand the answer to Jesus' question about what would happen to the tenant farmers."

It appears that the owner of the vineyard "lacks compassion, common sense, or both," Pastor Thelander said. "I read this and I say to myself, 'What are you doing sending your son? What are you thinking? Don't you have any common sense? Do you not know what will happen?' Apparently not. He sends his son to a violent and cruel death."

The "gotcha" moment in this parable, as in other parables, is "a moment where the world as they see it is challenged or turned upside down, and they are introduced to the world as it is in God's way of doing things. The 'gotcha' moment here . . . is that in the way the Jesus tells it, the landowner—the absentee landlord in an oppressive system, the guy we love to hate, the guy who seems to lack compassion, the guy who seems to lack common sense—is God!

"And all of a sudden our world is turned upside down. Our power-driven, 'get- (p.2 →)



Jesus heals 10 lepers, but only one, a Samaritan, expresses gratitude, as we will hear in the Gospel lesson Sunday. The O.T. lesson will caution against self-satisfaction and ingratitude after God delivers his people from danger and allows them to grow wealthy. The Epistle lesson urges us to be generous, in response to God's generosity to us. Image credit: www.globalrecordings.net/images

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Sundays, 9:00 a.m.: G. K. Chesterton discussion series

Sundays, 10:00 a.m.: Word & Table service

Sundays, 11:30 a.m.: Refreshments, conversation

This Sunday, 11:45 a.m.: Congregational dinner & discussion, all invited

Thursdays, 7:00 p.m.: Evening Prayers

Sermon (cont'd.) what-you've-got-coming world is overturned. . . . Conventional human wisdom would dictate" that the landowner "would take drastic action and send an army to annihilate the upstart tenant farmers." But that view of God "is simply too small," because "God's ultimate display of shock and awe is a Son who is sent as an act of suffering love." The owner's wisdom and mercy surpass ours. We may be tempted to see ourselves as owners of God's mysteries rather than as stewards, and to think that the harvest belongs to us. Instead, "in a world gone mad with power," God sends his son and shows us "an open tomb".

Readings, 10/12: Deut. 8:6-16; Ps. 113:1-8; 2 Cor. 9:6-15; Luke 17:11-19.

10/19: Is. 45:1-7; Ps. 96:1-9; 1 Thess. 2:1-8; Mt. 22:15-22.

Prayer Emphases: Suriname; United Pentecostal Church; Vineyard Christian Fellowship, Live Oak, CA, and the Rev. Steve Summerell; Nat'l. Council of Churches; parishioners on Alamo Road..

Chesterton's Orthodoxy:

Sunday's 9 a.m. discussion: "The Oddity of Things", based on chapter 5, "The Flag of the World". For discussion questions, chapter text, and notes, visit the Website.

