**God Has Left Nothing Undone**

Based on [Luke 20:9-20](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk20.9-20)

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Lent 5

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In the fifth chapter of the book of Isaiah, the prophet sings a song about a vineyard and its owner. The vineyard is Israel, God’s chosen people whom he “planted” in the Promised Land; and the owner is God. It is a sorrowful tune, because--though the owner takes great care in preparing the vineyard--it doesn’t produce like it should. The song goes like this:

"My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes."

If a gardener gives you some tomatoes from his garden, and they are large and juicy and ripe, you think, “**This fellow *knows* how to plant a garden**.” He’s a good gardener; and you know this because of his produce. But if he gives you small, pale tomatoes with the bottoms beginning to rot…you think the opposite. You think maybe this guy doesn’t know what he’s doing.

It is common today for people to be troubled by the state of the world, the state of nations, even the state of God's church. Maybe it’s not all rot and decay, but there certainly is enough of it. **In this world there is famine and disaster. Among the nations there is suspicion, greed, injustice and corruption. Among the church there is infighting and division, apostasy and neglect.** God planted a vineyard. He created the world and planted us in it. And he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes…rotten tomatoes. What are we to think of the vinedresser? What are we to think of God the Father almighty, gardener of heaven and earth?

Ladies and gentlemen, this question, this dilemma, is perhaps the central concern of the Christian faith. If God is so great and merciful, what answer can he give for this mess that is the world He created? **Scoffers will say that this can only be a sign that God is not here; or if He is here, it’s a sign that he is negligent and doesn’t care.** On the other hand there are pious, God fearing folk who see this dilemma, but dare not to judge God. He’s God! His ways are not our ways, and who are you O man, to talk back to God? You are not his judge?

It is certainly true that God doesn’t have to stand trial in our courtroom. He doesn’t have to answer for rotten tomatoes. He doesn’t have to justify himself to us; on the contrary we are the ones in need of Justification. And yet, we have a loving and merciful God, who does not desire to remain a mystery, but instead invites us to learn His heart as he has entrusted it to us in His Word.

In Isaiah’s song of the vineyard, God actually invites the hearer to judge him. He says, "**O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?**" The Law says, "God doesn't have to explain himself to you." And that is true. But the Gospel shows that God is eager to explain Himself--his mind and his judgments--to you. In the Gospel; God shows you His heart.

In today’s Gospel lesson, Jesus shows us the heart of God. In his own parable of the vineyard, Jesus shows us what great length God has gone to in order to bring us to repentance, and to bring about our salvation. Today’s parable paints a picture of the famous words of John 3:16, “**God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son**.”

Jesus tells a parable about a vineyard and a certain man who owned it. Like Isaiah's song, the vineyard is God’s people planted in the Promised Land…and the owner of the vineyard is God. The owner goes to another country. **This indicates God’s apparent absence from the world. God is the owner of this world, but on account of our sin he dwells in another country…heaven.** Heaven is not a place like we think of places, coordinates on a map. But it is away, it is a foreign land. Jesus came down from heaven, and ascended into heaven…out of our sight…”from” and “to” where the Father is…our Father “who art in heaven.”

But God in heaven didn’t abandon us in order to let his vineyard fall into disrepair. He leased it out to tenants. These tenants are the religious leaders. **Specifically in this parable they are the leaders of Jerusalem…the Chief Priests and the Scribes, the Sadducees and the Pharisees.** Throughout history, God has anointed kings and priests in Israel to attend to his vineyard. He gave them His Word, His Law, taught them how to tend the vineyard so that it would be well kept and healthy, bearing fruit as it should.

The healthy fruit of God’s vineyard are the Good Works of His people. John the Baptist came preaching saying, “**Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.**” Jesus says of false prophets, “**You will know them by their fruit.**” And of course, fruit does not produce itself, but it must be connected to a healthy vine. So Jesus says elsewhere to his disciples, “**I am the vine, you are the branches; Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit**” (John 15:5). The tenants, are those whom God called to tend to the vineyard…to teach his Law and to keep his people connected to the true vine.

So it is that the owner not only selected tenants to tend to his vineyard in his absence; **but while he was away sent servants to collect some of the fruit from the tenants**. As branches connected to the true vine, the vineyard cannot help but bear good fruit. And yet the tenants gave the servants no fruit to take to the owner. Instead in three separate episodes, the tenants beat one servant, shamed another and wounded yet another sending each one away empty-handed.

These servants who were sent to collect…they are the prophets who were sent to Israel. The prophets all preached that Israel should be bearing fruit, that they should be a holy people living in holiness because God--their “vine”--is Holy. But they were not Holy and the tenants are to blame. They were supposed to prune the branches with God’s word—teach and admonish His people that they would remain healthy on the vine. But the tenants didn’t do their job. Instead they taught what was right in their own eyes and gloried in their shame.

And when they were called to account, rather than repent, they stoned the prophets and killed those whom God sent them because the only fruit they had to give was rotten. As Jesus said to Nicodemus, “**For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light lest his works, [his fruits], should be exposed**” (John 3:20). The prophets were a light, they brought the lamp of God’s word and so they beat them and sent them away empty-handed.

So the owner of the vineyard said, “**What shall I do?”** “I planted a vineyard; I let it out to tenants; I sent servants repeatedly and patiently and I have received no fruit. What shall I do? The owner says, as if to say “You be the judge.”

Imagine the owner of rental property tells you he has sent three different landlords to collect from his tenants. And the owner tells you that all three of them were beaten, humiliated and sent away with nothing. Now he asks you what you think he should do next. What advice would you give?

You’d say to the owner, "**What were you thinking? You had every right to expect the tenants to pay right away, and not only do they not pay, but they beat the landlord. You should have had them arrested right away and prosecuted them to the fullest extent of the law. But more than that, you’ve already sent two other landlords and they were treated the same way. And you ask, “What shall I do?” Are you for real? It's long time you throw the book at them. It's time to throw them out of your building and into jail."**

Jesus once told another parable about an owner of a vineyard who planted a fig tree. And when he came seeking fruit he found none and said “**Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?**”

“**What shall I do?**” the owner asks and you know the answer. He should judge them unworthy right then and there, come back from his far away country and cast them out! But the owner of this vineyard is God, the loving and merciful Father. His ways are higher than our ways, and his thoughts higher than our thoughts. His mind is totally foreign to our way of thinking. It’s no wonder he went to live in another country. And so he does what no reasonable person on earth would do. He says, “**I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect Him.**”

Ladies and gentlemen, you and I are thinking at this point, "**No! Don't send your Son, they'll just kill him too**." And you’re right. And they do. And now you see. Scoffers and God fearers alike…now you see. Go ahead. Judge the Lord. Ask yourself whether he has done enough for our poor, pitiful, broken world? It’s his world, and we have broken it. It’s his vineyard and we have neglected it. It’s his fruit and we have squandered it. What excuse can there be now for those who reject the Son and are so inconsiderate of the Father as to expect an inheritance for it?

The Son is everything to the Father. Could you imagine sending your son off to war to die? Would anyone dare accuse you of not caring about your country? **Our heavenly Father, who "three times" sent prophets and had every right to call it quits, didn't stop there.** He left nothing undone. For now we know that God loves us, seeing that he has not withheld his son, his only-begotten son from his vineyard.

God has sent his son once for all as the sacrifice for our sin. "What shall he do...now?" Hebrews 10:26 says, "**For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.**" There is nothing else to be done. Christ is the Son, in whom there is redemption and peace, but apart from whom we have nothing. What will the owner of the vineyard do to the ones who reject his son? There is nothing left to do but to come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.

God still has a vineyard on earth, though it's not Jerusalem. It is his church, built on the thrice beaten bodies of the apostles and the prophets, Christ Jesus His son being the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20). And the apostle Peter says, “**you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices-[to bear fruit]--acceptable to God through Jesus Christ**” (1 Peter 2:5).

The Love of God is so complete and undeserving; we should stumble to our knees in repentance. We pray every Sunday that our love falls short…and that God would forgive us for what we have done and what we have left undone. But the Gospel tells a different story…it tells us of what God has done for us, *because He left nothing undone*. Romans 8:32 says, "**He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?**