

The Son Is the Cornerstone

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Cornerstone; Vineyard; Son of Vineyard Owner / Matthew 21:33–46

- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Agriculture and Architecture

Jesus is good at using agriculture in his teachings, whether it be sowing or harvest. Agriculture can connect to most people, especially in the time of Jesus and it connects very well with our region of the country. Especially now as the beet trucks are making the roads busier and you see tractors in the fields all hours of the day. Grain harvest is done and soybeans are awaiting to be combined. Many understand the process of planting and harvest and a landlord wanting the fruits of the harvest.

Many of us can also appreciate architecture, I'm sure that most if not all of us live in a sturdy structure with a foundation. We may not completely understand how all the pieces are put together, whether it be in agriculture or architecture, but we see the ideas. We appreciate them. I can tell you, even though I grew up in a small city with lots of farms around us, I didn't really grow to appreciate the agricultural process before I came here.

Jesus weaves two popular vocations together in our reading today. He uses agriculture and architecture that the people of the time would understand to talk about the Lord's work and the work of those who fail in their calling. The Pharisees and Chief Priests that Jesus is talking to would understand greatly. How do these fit together - Agriculture and Architecture?

Let's explore that question a bit today!

Jesus is speaking in parables to the Chief Priests and Pharisees after the ride into Jerusalem, after he has put them in their place after they questioned his authority. This is still Monday of Holy Week as we inch closer to the institution of the Lord's Supper and Crucifixion of Jesus. The Chief Priests and Pharisees are the religious leaders of the day in Jerusalem. They are seeking someone to arrest Jesus. Jesus though isn't just speaking to the Pharisees of the day, he's also speaking to you and to me as well.

The master of the house planted a vineyard. This master is God himself and as we look to Isaiah 5, we see that the vineyard that God planted was his chosen people, the Children of Israel. God had given tenants or rather religious leaders to take care of the people. God the Father went to claim his people through his servants, the prophets. Rather, he sent the prophets to speak against the idolatry that the leaders of his people were leading them into. He sent them to call the Israelites and her leaders to repentance. As the servants, the prophets come, they are beaten, killed, and stoned. The prophets are persecuted, they are ran out of town by the religious elite.

If this would happen in a normal vineyard or even today if one of you leased your land to tenants and did not receive proper payment, you probably wouldn't continue to send servants or your hired hands and you probably wouldn't send your son either (I know I wouldn't). You'd probably start the litigation process against the renters. Rightfully so in the world's eyes.

Yet, God doesn't work like that. He sent His Son to gather the fruit of the harvest. What did the tenants do to him? They didn't respect him at all. They took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

This is the bridge from agriculture to architecture. Before we make the bridge, let's examine how casting out the son relates to you and to me. First off, you probably know the rest of the story, Jesus Christ is cast out of the city, he's beaten and killed by the hands of evil men. Yes, Jesus is rejected.

Jesus is rejected today as well. He's cast out of the city. He's cast out of the vineyard today as well. Satan is doing a good job at getting the world to agree with him, that anything that even remotely sounds like Jesus is publicly disgraced.

We can't just say that it's only the Pharisees and Chief Priests that reject Jesus. We can't just say that the world rejects Jesus either. You and I reject Jesus too. You see, you and I are also the tenants in the parable. We reject him every time we sin. We reject him every time we break one of the commandments. We cast him to the side every time we think about ourselves more than others. We reject him every time we become to greedy and want all the fruit to be for ourselves, and none for the Master or others. We reject him, when we don't give back to God the first fruits of his creation. We reject him in thought, word and deed.

Yet, this rejected Son, who was thrown out of the city of Jerusalem, sent to the Cross, is the cornerstone. The Cornerstone to what? First, a cornerstone is typically a large stone that supports to walls at right angles to each other. One might even consider this a foundation stone. In our text Jesus quotes from Psalm 118 to speak of himself as the stone that is about to be rejected, just as the Son in the parable is rejected and thrown out of the vineyard and killed.

Jesus Christ is the stone that the builders rejected. He was rejected by the Jews, his own people, including the religious leaders, the Pharisees and Chief Priests. He was rejected by the

Roman leadership as they allowed him to be killed. Jesus Christ is rejected by you and me, for our sin also put Him on the cross.

Jesus Christ, the Son who was cast out of the vineyard, has become the cornerstone. He is the foundation of faith and life. Jesus Christ and His Word is the foundation of the church, the foundation of a new and living temple. He is the Cornerstone of the church. The Church is built on Jesus Christ and his saving act of mercy. Jesus Christ, the Master's Son, who was cast out of the vineyard, and killed is the one who becomes the cornerstone and is marvelous in our eyes.

In the Hebrew of Psalm 118, cornerstone is identified as head of the corner. This could in fact be imagery of that foundational stone, since Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Church. It could also be the capstone or even keystone which locks a structure into place. This is at times could be seen a beautiful stone connecting two points of an arch in place. This imagery could be used to point out that the stone that the builders rejected has become the most beautiful stone in the building.

Jesus Christ as the rejected stone, took on the sins of rejection that you also commit. Jesus Christ as the rejected stone is forsaken by His Father on the cross. Jesus Christ as the rejected stone, suffered greatly with physical pain and with great spiritual pain as he was being killed outside the walls of the city. Jesus as the rejected stone, died for you to take away your sins! Jesus Christ as the rejected stone was buried for you.

On that first Easter morning, Jesus Christ although he may still be rejected by many, is now the living and beautiful cornerstone. Jesus Christ rose from the dead and is alive for you to grant you life. Jesus Christ is now being exalted and is precious in our eyes. Jesus Christ is the precious cornerstone of the church. Jesus Christ is the precious foundation of the church. Jesus Christ is even the precious capstone of the church and he is marvelous in our eyes. He isn't just marvelous in our eyes...he is marvelous in the eyes of the Master as he has saved the Master's vineyard, by dying and rising for His chosen and precious stones, who you are today in the very Church that Christ lived and died and lives again for.

Jesus Christ in our text for today brings together two vivid images, an agricultural scene, known as a vineyard and connects to an architectural context with the Son, Himself, a stone, being rejected and cast out, becoming the cornerstone, which was entirely the Lord's doing. Christ Jesus life, death, and resurrection is the Lord's doing and he did it all for you. Dear friends in Christ, Christ Jesus doesn't reject you, he chooses you. He loves you. He forgives you. He lives for you. He is the Son that is the cornerstone!

In Jesus Name. Amen.

- › Now may the peace of God which surpasses all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.