

Bible reading: Matthew 21:33-46

Taking responsibility for what's entrusted to us

Jesus tells a story about Israel and God using the familiar image of a vineyard. But Jesus' version leaves his listeners feeling uncomfortable. With their certainties challenged, the religious authorities are fearful for themselves.



Create a collage picture of two clusters of grapes on paper. For one, crush green or purple tissue paper into round balls and glue them to the page. For the second, glue raisins on in a cluster shape. God gave the workers, and us, many chances to repent. Are we producing good fruit for him?

Plant

Although we often think of harvest at this time of year, it is also a significant time for sowing and planting. Plant seeds of some winter vegetables like carrots, turnips, spring onions and lettuce. Reflect on what good fruit you are growing in your life for Jesus.

LOOK



Have you been to a vineyard? Did it look like this painting by Vincent Van Gogh? <https://www.dawn.com/news/1227214> Talk of vineyards may bring to mind art, visits to France or elsewhere, or TV holiday programmes. But when spoken to Jesus's audience, the people would know that the rabbi was referring to them – to God's people – drawing on the rich tradition in Hebrew Scripture of such references. Can you think of ways that you (and God's people) are like a vineyard?

Bible notes



This is Matthew's third vineyard parable, picking up on the Old Testament metaphor of the vineyard for the people of God. This parable reworks that which can be found in Isaiah chapter 5. While Isaiah focuses on the nation (vineyard) itself, here (as in Matthew's other vineyard parables: 20:1-16, 21:28-32) Jesus focuses on those working in the vineyard, representing the religious leaders. Jesus' attack on these leaders is clear. They have ill-treated the 'slaves' – the prophets sent by God. They have killed the 'son' – a foreshadowing of what will happen to Jesus. They may have worked the vineyard, but we know from Isaiah that its fruit is poor. Now we also know that they have a great disregard for its 'owner' – God.

Quoting from Psalm 118, part of the prayer of praise recited when celebrating the Passover, Jesus reminds his hearers of not losing sight of what matters. The cornerstone is that upon which everything else is laid. An alternative translation is 'keystone', the stone at the top of an arch that holds everything in place. Either way, losing that stone has awful consequences; such as being crushed by the collapsing structure. The Passover festival is the ultimate freedom festival, celebrating God's people set free from slavery, and becoming a people – have they now forgotten who and whose they are?

This is a juridical parable: a parable that invites its hearers to pass judgement on themselves as they reflect on their own approach to the 'vineyard', to their car for what has been entrusted to them, and to God. Have they – have we – forgotten for whom we are working? Have we become possessive about what we do, or developed a sense of entitlement to what is not ours?

First impressions

- What does it feel like to be entrusted with the class pet (or similar)?
- What does God entrust to us, individually or together?
- What is our faithful response?



Pray



Patient God, you give us another chance to hear your message of hope, challenge and grace: through the words of Scripture and of others, through the silence of prayer, through the beauty of creation; a chance to act and react with hearts in tune with yours, and with that freedom to give our all in your service, rejoicing that it is never too late to begin again. Thank you, Lord. Amen.



FIND

- Can you find:
- Five things that were given to you as a gift?
 - Three things that you have made?
 - Two things that you are responsible to look after?