

Advent Devotional December 7, 2023

Scripture

Matthew 21:33-46

33 "Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. 34 When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. 35 But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. 36 Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. 37 Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 38 But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.' 39 So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. 40 Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" 41 They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time."

42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes'? 43 Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. 44 The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."

45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. 46 They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

Devotion

The Rev. Balajiedlang (Bala) Khylllep, Associate Director of the World Mission Initiative

As a person who comes from a family in India, I remember how our tenant for our rice fields would not only till the soil and inform my family about any issues with the land and harvest but also would share part of the harvest with us. There is so much trust needed between landowner and tenants, and both benefit from the process.

Instead, the landowner in our scripture did everything and leased the vineyard to the tenants to only to care for what was already planted. There is so much trust from the landowner here. The tenants seem to tend to the vineyard properly as they were supposed to do. But we are not quite sure about their reaction—beating up and killing the slaves and even the landowner's son. Were they scared that the landowner would find out about their failure to produce anything and lease the vineyard to someone else? Or, had they become corrupt, not wanting to share the plenteous harvest, and even deciding to take control and steal what didn't belong to them? Both of these questions point to the reality we witness today—the power of control.

In a power-driven world sometimes it is so difficult for us to trust one another because we are afraid of losing control of the things we love or own. So as humans, we do the best we possibly can—holding on tightly to the things we possess, afraid that if we loosen our grip we would somehow lose our power to control and influence others. Yet the landowner, who is God, willingly entrusts us with God's plentiful vineyard so we may fully enjoy God's abundance and be able to share with others. May you find joy in sharing God's hope, peace, and love with the world this season of Advent.

Prayer

Generous and self-sacrificing God, thank you for entrusting us with the many gifts and resources. Help us to be good stewards of these gifts so that we may not only enjoy the fruits for our gain but to willingly share with our brothers and sisters what belongs to you. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.