

## Lenten Devotional March 28, 2018

### Scripture

#### Mark 12:1-11

<sup>1</sup>Then he began to speak to them in parables. “A man planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a pit for the wine press, and built a watchtower; then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. <sup>2</sup>When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants to collect from them his share of the produce of the vineyard. <sup>3</sup>But they seized him, and beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. <sup>4</sup>And again he sent another slave to them; this one they beat over the head and insulted. <sup>5</sup>Then he sent another, and that one they killed. And so it was with many others; some they beat, and others they killed. <sup>6</sup>He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ <sup>7</sup>But those tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ <sup>8</sup>So they seized him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. <sup>9</sup>What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. <sup>10</sup>Have you not read this scripture: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; <sup>11</sup>this was the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes?’”

### Devotional

#### The Rev. Dr. Hunter Farrell, Director of the World Mission Initiative

The Gospel of Mark’s hard-hitting parable echoes the violent story told in Isaiah 5, where “the house of Israel” is identified as a chosen, privileged vineyard. Even though Yahweh had done everything possible to prepare His vineyard to produce fruits of justice and righteousness, it yielded only “bloodshed” and injustice. So the Lord destroyed the vineyard. Today’s text from Mark takes the Isaiah story a step further by introducing the vineyard-owner’s son into the story: when the unruly vineyard workers refuse to listen to the pleas of the owner’s messengers to produce desirable fruit, the owner sends his own son, but “they seized him, killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.”

The temptation to early Christians was to misinterpret their “chosenness” as license to disobey God’s call to right relationship with God and neighbor—wrongly to assume, as Israel had done, that God’s saving acts in history did not require from them the fruits of repentance and justice. American Christians have been abundantly blessed: we have enjoyed economic prosperity (relative to many parts of the world), freedom of religion and expression, and a strong democratic tradition. Yet many global Christians question whether U.S. Christians allow our faith to guide our social and political choices. Has our *privileged* position as “the redeemed” dulled our memory of the time when *we* were immigrants?

### Prayer

God of Life, As we consider all you have done for us in Christ, give us hearts that overflow with gratitude and guide our choices in relationship with the poor and oppressed in ways that please You. Show us clearly what the fruits of righteousness look like today around issues of racial justice, immigration, and poverty. Through Jesus Christ, Amen.