

October 5, 2008
 Messiah
 Pentecost 21 - A

Matthew 21:33-46
 "The Heir Paid the Price"

Introduction

1. Unless my parents have written me out of their will, unbeknown to me, I am assuming I am one of the "heirs" of my parent's estate
2. When people die, they often leave things like money and land to someone still living
3. The person receiving the money and land is called "an heir" –
4. An heir is NOT the "giver" – the heir is the "receiver" – they "get" the gift left to them
5. My guess is that many of us who are heirs of someone's estate, have lost MUCH of our inheritance over these last few weeks with the financial crisis of our nation
6. But could things ever get so bad that we would lose absolutely EVERYTHING?
7. In the last few weeks, we have been focusing on parables of Jesus during that week we call "Holy Week" – just days before His death on the cross
8. The parable today has to do with someone who has a GREAT ESTATE, and it involves His "heir"

I. Here is another parable that involves a VINEYARD

- A. Jesus says, "There was a master of a house (an estate) who planted a vineyard
 - a. Let it be known from the beginning that Jesus is talking about God the Father, creator of heaven and earth
 - b. And the vineyard He planted was the Garden of Eden
 - c. And throughout the Old Testament – Israel was the Vineyard of God

- B. And as Jesus tells this parable – the master of the house put a fence around His vineyard, dug a winepress in it, and built a tower
 - a. Throughout the Old Testament – God protected Israel, like a fence, protecting her from her enemies
 - b. God cared for His people, He loved them, He fought for them

- C. But instead of being a lush vineyard producing the fruit of faithfulness, love, charity, and compassion – Israel became spiritually rotten, and sour, and dried up, and turned away from God
 - a. The entire Old Testament is like our season of ADVENT in the church year –
 - b. Israel waited and waited for rescue, and hope, for a Redeemer
 - c. And all during this time – God sent prophet after prophet, calling Israel to repent; to believe, and to produce good fruit
 - d. Hear the prophet Isaiah, sent by God, calling His people to turn from their sins, "Let me sing for my beloved my song concerning his vineyard...What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?"
 - e. Time and again – God sent His prophets, looking for the fruits of faith, but there wasn't any fruit to be found –

- f. And not only that – the prophets God sent to His fallen vineyard – the people drove out, mocked, ridiculed, stoned, and even killed
 - g. The Jewish audience of Jesus telling this parable knew exactly what Jesus meant when He was telling this parable – that the tenants in the parable who drove out the master’s servants and even killed them – were sinful Jewish people who killed the prophets!
- D. God speaks the same message to us today
- a. If we were likened to a grapevine, what does our fruit look like?
 - b. Is it the fruit of lust and greed, hate and dissention? Is it the fruit of pride and gossip, adultery and selfishness?
 - c. God sends His prophets and pastors to call His people to worship, and we say, “Can’t the Packer Game’s on at noon”
 - d. God sends His prophets and pastors to call His people to love, and still we fight at home, bully on the playground, and want to get even
 - e. God sends His prophets and pastors to call His people to give their offerings to the Lord, and we say, “I’m going to enjoy life – let God get His own”
 - f. If you and I were likened to a vineyard – the fruit is rotten in every home, in every office building, in every school cafeteria, in every mall, at every computer → our fruit is so rotten, we have just gotten used to the stench!

II. **And then Jesus’ parable takes on a unique twist**

- A. Instead of the master coming to town with a warrant of arrest, or with a team of attorneys, or with a military brigade – the master sends His Son
 - a. The Vineyard is not lush and green, ripe with good works and faith
 - b. The Vineyard is broken down and trampled, it is laid to waste with thorns and briars – (this symbolizes our lives)
 - c. The Vineyard is ripe with greed, and murder, and sin, and death
 - d. And the master sends His Son???? – What is He thinking???
 - e. Is the master so naïve to think “they will respect His son?”
- B. The Master sends His Son, but He is not so naïve to think He will be respected...
 - a. Here is the story of CHRISTMAS – the Master, God, the Father – sending His only-begotten Son into this fallen world of sin and death
 - b. Not a big strapping young man with arms of steel, like a human killing machine
 - c. But the master sent His Son as an Infant, helpless, fragile, meek, humble, even with the outward appearance of being so very weak!
 - d. Israel laughs at this representative from the master –
 - e. The world looks into the manger and says, “He sent us this? This is going to save us?”
- C. And as Jesus tells this parable – the Infant is now a grown man – it is Jesus Christ
 - a. Still He appears weak, still He speaks of love and humility and forgiveness

- b. But what the audience failed to realize, and what the world today mocks – is that THIS IS THE HEIR OF HEAVEN!
- c. Being the Son of God is to BE GOD Himself
- d. The heir is God, taking on human flesh and blood; the heir is God, taking on Adam's flesh and Adam's sin
- e. Jesus is the heir – and He owns the entire estate of God, because He is God – all honor, glory, power, majesty, dominion, and might belongs to this heir, Jesus Christ!

III. **In the parable, the heir comes to the Vineyard – and I wonder what the crowd thought Jesus would say next**

- A. Were they expecting Jesus to pull a sword, or His disciples would put on capes and be super-heroes, or He would snap His fingers and turn these bad tenants to salt
- B. What Jesus says next is what most of this crowd wanted to do with Him for some time now
 - a. Jesus said, "But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'THIS IS THE HEIR. COME, LET US KILL HIM AND HAVE HIS INHERITANCE'"
 - b. Jesus tells them about GOOD FRIDAY – and it's still only Tuesday
 - c. This group of sour grapes, this Vineyard of rotten fruit, this Vile crop of briars and thorns – this very group of people – will kill the heir, they will kill Jesus, they will kill the Son of God, they will put to death the most Holy One
 - d. Before we get too down on this rotten group of people, it is quite clear that neither are we that full, sweet fruit of God either
 - e. It is of you and me that God comes and says, "I came looking for my people to yield good grapes, but you yield only wild grapes"
 - f. In case we missed the point – God is not the CEO of Smucker's jams and jellies looking for good grapes;
 - g. God is the Lord of Heaven and Earth – the good grapes of which He speaks is FAITH, repentance, good works, Trust in Him, obedience – of which we are incapable of doing apart from this HEIR, Jesus Christ
 - h. We have killed the Lord of life with our rebellion and our sin – we too drove out the HOLY HEIR OF GOD
 - i. And Jesus says, "What will happen to those tenants?"
 - j. To which the crowd responded, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons" – the "other tentants" are the Gentiles, non-Jews who will come to believe in Him

IV. **And then Jesus says, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the capstone..."**

- A. In this one parable – Jesus has taken us through Advent, Christmas, Holy Week – and now EASTER!

- a. The Capstone who was rejected was the VERY HEIR that was killed
- b. The Son of God was killed for the sins of the world – and now this same Son will rise from the dead
- c. The True Heir of heaven gives His life and rises from the dead – and in doing so – he paid the price for all our sins
- d. The good grapes God desires of us – we are incapable of producing: right down to the core, to the stem, and to the root – we are rotten and dead in sin
- e. THE ONLY WAY we could be good fruit once again; the ONLY WAY we could produce good fruit – is by Jesus taking our death for us, and by Him rising from the dead – giving us new and eternal life...
- f. His good fruit would be transferred to us!
- g. This STONE, this HEIR who rises on Easter morning will be rejected still by many – by which they will be crushed
- h. But the heir calls us to repent of our sins, to believe on the name of Jesus, and to confess that in the waters of Holy Baptism – we are now made heirs of heaven – and this is solely by the grace of God!

Conclusion

1. In recent weeks – many “heirs” have come to see their inheritance come to ruin with our nation’s economic crisis
2. Have we lost **everything**? Are we without an inheritance?
3. Absolutely not – we have not lost everything – we have the riches of heaven, the priceless gift of forgiveness of sins!
4. We are heirs of God and Sons of God through Jesus Christ –
5. This is a “will” never broken, an inheritance that never fades, a status that never needs a bail-out
6. The heir of heaven, who is Jesus Christ, paid the price for our sins; and has made us now Sons of God, and heirs of eternal life in heaven. Amen.