

Worship Material
Taking responsibility for what's entrusted to us.
Materials from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 8th October

Begin with an opening prayer

Holy God, Father, Son and Spirit,
creator, sustainer, empowerer, we worship you.
We give you thanks for all that is beautiful:
for all that is fruitful, for all that is lifegiving, for all that is precious.
And we thank you too for entrusting us with the privilege and the
responsibility of passing on the baton of your creativity
and your ministry of care for all you have made. **Amen.**

Read Matthew 21: 33-46

Bible notes

This is Matthew's third vineyard parable, picking up on the Old Testament metaphor of the vineyard for the people of God (see notes on this week's Isaiah passage). 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 care 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?

Prayer

God of all creation, thank you
for calling us to be stewards of your earth and your treasures,
for calling us to tend your Gospel,
to share the fruits of your Spirit,
to encourage your disciples in their daily lives,
and to work together for the good of all –
joyfully, humbly and urgently, in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

A prayer to conclude

Go in Jesus' name, restored and renewed.
May you know God's face shining on you,
and the God's Spirit flowing through you,
so that your life may be fertile ground for good news. **Amen.**