

Week 26  
March 15, 2009

## **We've Been Given a Trust**

### **The Parable of the Tenants**

Matthew 21:33-46

1. READ Matthew 21:33-46
2. Some aspects of the story are obvious in their meaning. The landowner is God. The tenants are the keepers of the faith heritage handed to them by God. The servants who come to collect the landowner's harvest are the prophets. The heir is Jesus himself. Is there any aspect of the story that you find confusing?
3. Have you found moments in the study of the parables of Jesus when the metaphors or similes broke down? Are there moments when you've been tempted to squeeze more meaning out of a story than the apparent ones?
4. Why are the tenants so rebellious in the story? Have they forgotten who the fields belong to? Do they resent having to give the landowner his due? Are they resistant to the authority that the servants and the son of the landowner try to exercise?

5. Jesus is at least predicting his own death, and even trying to provoke the religious leaders to “go ahead and do it!” Why?
  
6. READ Psalm 118:19-24
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. Is Jesus borrowing an image from Old Testament hymnology to describe himself, or is he suggesting that Psalm 118:22 is somehow prophetic or predictive?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. What does Jesus mean when he says that those who fall on the stone will be broken to pieces and those on whom it falls will be crushed?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Describe the vineyard of your life. What has God given you “trust” over; or what has he given you in trust?

10. In what way are you being called to raise up a harvest of good fruit?
11. Are you ever forgetful about who owns the vineyard? Do you ever push away those (Jesus or God's messengers) who come to collect his due? If so, how so, and why? If not, why not?
12. "God has built a watchtower." Do you feel safe in this life? How so? Why not? When not? When so?
13. Over time, we become the "religious establishment." How do we avoid becoming rebellious and unresponsive tenants in God's vineyard?

For the hardcore group:

*Jesus so often confronts the religious leaders of his day about their approach to faith and spiritual leadership. Those confrontations have fueled the fires of anti-Semitism whenever people through the centuries have viewed Jesus as a critic and then a victim of Judaism. Obviously, there are different views on Israel and its place in God's*

*overarching plans. But without going too far into that conversation, how do we apply Jesus' strong condemnations of vain religion without stoking anti-Semitic fires?*