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| Gen 2+3 (selected verses) Luke 20:9-17(passages from the Message) | Who owns the Vineyard? | Pinelands – 9am – 04/02/2024Thornton – 10:30am – 04/+02/2024 |

**Genesis 2 + 3...** (Selected verses)

At the time God made Earth and Heaven, before any grasses or shrubs had sprouted from the ground—God hadn’t yet sent rain on Earth, nor was there anyone around to work the ground (the whole Earth was watered by underground springs)—God formed Man out of dirt from the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life. The Man came alive—a living soul!

Then God planted a garden in Eden, in the east. He put the Man he had just made in it. God made all kinds of trees grow from the ground, trees beautiful to look at and good to eat. The Tree-of-Life was in the middle of the garden, also the Tree-of-Knowledge-of-Good-and-Evil.

A river flows out of Eden to water the garden and from there divides into four rivers.

The first is named Pishon;

it flows through Havilah where there is gold.

The gold of this land is good. The land is also known

for a sweet-scented resin and the onyx stone.

The second river is named Gihon; it flows through the land of Cush. The third river is named Hiddekel and flows east of Assyria.

The fourth river is the Euphrates.

God took the Man and set him down in the Garden of Eden

to work the ground and keep it in order.

God commanded the Man,

“You can eat from any tree in the garden, except from

 the Tree-of-Knowledge-of-Good-and-Evil. Don’t eat

 from it. The moment you eat from that tree, you’re dead.”

God said,

“It’s not good for the Man to be alone;

 I’ll make him a helper, a companion.”

So God formed from the dirt of the ground all the animals of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the Man to see what he would name them. Whatever the Man called each living creature, that was its name. The Man named the cattle, named the birds of the air, named the wild animals; but he didn’t find a suitable companion.

God put the Man into a deep sleep. As he slept he removed one of his ribs and replaced it with flesh. God then used the rib that he had taken from the Man to make Woman and presented her to the Man.

The Man said,

“Finally! Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh!
 Name her Woman for she was made from Man.”

Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and embraces his wife. They become one flesh.
The two of them, the Man and his Wife, were naked, but they felt no shame.

**WHO OWNS THE WORLD?... GOD**

 **DOES ADAM OWN IT? NO**

 **DOES EVE OWN IT? NO**

***WHO OWNS THE WORLD?... GOD***

We continue with the reading…

*(Serpent deceived Adam and Eve,*

*God confronts them and*

*they all blame each other.)*

We pick up at… **Genesis 3:15…** *(following)*

God told the serpent:

“Because you’ve done this, you’re cursed,
     cursed beyond all cattle and wild animals,

 Cursed to slink on your belly and eat dirt all your life.

I’m declaring war between you and the Woman,

between your offspring and hers.
He’ll wound your head, you’ll wound his heel.”

He told the Woman:

“I’ll multiply your pains in childbirth;
you’ll give birth to your babies in pain.
You’ll want to please your husband,
but he’ll lord it over you.”

He told the Man:

“Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree

that I commanded you not to eat from,
     ‘Don’t eat from this tree,’
The very ground is cursed because of you;
    getting food from the ground
Will be as painful as having babies is for your wife;
    you’ll be working in pain all your life long.
The ground will sprout thorns and weeds,
    you’ll get your food the hard way,
Planting and tilling and harvesting,
    sweating in the fields from dawn to dusk,
Until you return to that ground yourself, dead and buried;
    you started out as dirt, you’ll end up dirt.”

**WHO OWNS THE WORLD?... GOD**

 **DO ADAM AND EVE OWN IT? NO**

Adam and Eve… Work hard in it…

 Sweat / Morning until Evening

 Struggle for food / in Pain

 They make life work

***BUT…*** **WHO OWNS THE WORLD?... GOD**

**Our Second reading** comes from… **Luke 20:9-17**

Then Jesus told the people this parable: “There was once a man who planted a vineyard, rented it out to tenants, and then left home for a long time. When the time came to gather the grapes, he sent a slave to the tenants to receive from them his share of the harvest. But the tenants beat the slave and sent him back without a thing. So he sent another slave; but the tenants beat him also, treated him shamefully, and sent him back without a thing. Then he sent a third slave; the tenants wounded him, too, and threw him out. Then the owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do? I will send my own dear son; surely they will respect him!’ But when the tenants saw him, they said to one another, ‘This is the owner's son. Let's kill him, and his property will be ours!’ So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

“What, then, will the owner of the vineyard do to the tenants?” Jesus asked. “He will come and kill those men, and turn the vineyard over to other tenants.”

When the people heard this, they said, “Surely not!”

Jesus looked at them and asked, “What, then, does this scripture mean?

‘The stone which the builders rejected as worthless
     turned out to be the most important of all.’

**WHO OWNS THE VINEYARD?**

Well to answer that question…

 We first have to **Identify the VINEYARD.**

The obvious answer is… The ***VINEYARD*** is the ***WORLD…***

 And everything in it

**Who owns the WORLD?...** and Everything in it?... ***GOD***

**BUT…** **For this sermon…**

 **The VINEYARD… IS…**

 ***Your World…*** The **house** you live in

 The **car** you drive

 The **Job** you have

 The **Savings account** you have

 The **minutes in your day.**

***EVERYTHING ABOUT YOUR LIFE.***

**USUALLY…**

We have ***no problem*** with…

Who owns the mountains or the oceans.

**Psalm 24:1**… ***“The world and all that is in it belong to the Lord;***

 ***The earth and all who live in it are his.”***

**BUT…** We **struggle** with who owns…

US… our time, our money, our rights.

That is what this **Parable** from Luke teaches.

**GOD** owns **IT** **ALL…** ***and…***

HE lets us use it to bless us, to make us happy.

Like Adam and Eve… We make Life work

Listen to the **words** **King David** uses to Praise God…

**1 Chronicles 29:10-12…**

***“LORD God may you be praised forever and ever!***

***You are great and powerful, glorious, splendid, and majestic.***

***Everything in heaven and earth is yours, and you are king,***

***supreme ruler over all.***

***All riches and wealth come from you; you rule everything by your strength and power”***

**GOD** owns **IT ALL…** ***and…***

HE lets us use it to bless us, to make us happy.

 Like Adam and Eve… We make life work

**GOD** lets us use it to bless us, to make us happy.

**He** did not have to. **He** does not owe it to us.

***THAT IS GRACE!!***

**Remember** the story:

**GOD** planted the Vineyard…

 Enters into a ***partnership*** with others

What did they **contribute?** NOTHING!!

 He made them partners.

***BUT…*** **Who owned the vineyard? GOD…**

**WHY** do they think **THEY** own it?

**GOD** lets it out to **tenants…** Who worked the soil

 Tended the vines

 Harvested the crops

They have lived there for some time…

And their **gratitude** has been **forgotten** through…

*Toil,* *Sweat,*  and *Labour* in the fields.

**THEY SEE** their labor, their hard work…

***BUT***… they have not seen the master out there…

sweating or helping or breaking his back

**They only see…** Their work

**Now They see…** **The owner** as some **outsider**

with **no right** to the vineyard.

**We do the same thing…**

We know...

WE are the ones who get up early and go to work,

**WE** put in the hard labour,

**WE** put up with the job… and the ***People,***

**WE** travel back and forth,

**WE** have the **stress.**

So when the pay check comes…

**WE BELIEVE IT IS OUR’s…**

***WE deserve it… WE earned it.***

If **GOD** asks for HIS share…

OUR response is to ***FORGET*** that it is HIS money.

Maybe we **work hard all week…**

waiting for the weekend and when it comes…

**WE think IT IS OURS…**

we worked hard for it,

we have planned for it…

**NOW** if God asks for His share…

He is an intruder… stealing our time.

You see WE have reached the place where…

**WE BELIEVE…**

 **…WE ARE THE OWNERS OF THE VINEYARD**

This is… *Our time, our stuff, our choices*

 *Our Jobs, our Actions, our Life*

We **FORGET** that **God is the owner of the VINEYARD.**

**And when we forget that God is the owner…**

***WE BECOME THE OWNER…***

 We make ourselves **GOD.**

***SO…*** We must **Remember…**

 **GOD IS THE OWNER OF THE VINEYARD**

***BUT…*** **HERE IS THE GAME CHANGER.**

 *- are you listening?*

 *- ‘lean in’*

**As much as…** **GOD OWNS the VINEYARD…**

 **HE…** **Does not** want to take it from you

 **HE…** **Wants to** **BLESS** you with it

**In the Parable…**

 **The Tenants,** like us,

- Became ungrateful

 - Felt the owner owed them

 - Badly done by

 - Felt Robbed

 They **resented** giving the owner his part / his due

**They are so busy** **HOLDING ONTO** **what they think is theirs…**

 Their **hands are not** **open to receive…**

what the owner still wants to give them.

**See the IMAGE…**

 Holding on **with closed fists…**

 Hands are ***NOT OPEN*** to receive any other blessing

**We think** **God** is trying to take something from us…

 By prying open our hands…

When what he is **actually doing…**

 Is trying to pry open our hands to fill them with

 Something more.

***IF*** we still see **God as the owner…**

we have no problem giving him what is His

***IF*** we **think we are the owner…**

we see Him as a ***beggar or a thief***

**If He is a beggar…** it is your choice to give and

you are doing Him a favor

**If he is a thief…**  you resent Him

The **most important question** you have to **answer is…**

**The toughest question of all…**

**WHO OWNS THE VINEYARD?**

**It is a question…**

**we ALL need to answer** **EVERY DAY** of our lives.

**Every day we have to decide… WHO OWNS IT.**

Our natural tendency is to believe…

**WE are the owner** and **God is the intruder.**

It is hard for us to understand that…

**God is the owner and he wants to share with us.**

**If we close our hands** and say… ***“Mine, Mine”…***

We cannot receive anything more

Because our hands are not open to receive

**WHO owns the VINEYARD?**

 **AND…** **How tightly are you HOLDING ON?**

*Silent Prayer…*

**Prayer of Confession**

Almighty God, who created the universe and deemed it good:

We confess that we have misused our dominion and ruled unwisely.

You have given us bounty, and we have horded.

You have given us wholeness, and we have fragmented creation.

You have given us good earth, and we have plundered it.

You have given us each other, and we have used and manipulated our brothers and sisters for our own profit and gain.

You have given us wisdom, but we have been content with convenience.

You have given us compassion, but we have offered poor imitations in our daily living.

You have given us yourself in covenant to be our God, but we have relied on our own passions.

You have given us your Son, and we have called ourselves by his name,

yet lived as though we had few responsibilities beyond ourselves.

O Lord, we have conserved the bounty of your love as though it could be exhausted, and we have wasted the bounty of your universe as though its resources were imperishable.

Receive us as ones who are broken, unreasoning, and afraid.

Receive us as ones returning again to claim life in the name of your Son, Jesus the Christ.

Renew your covenant with us, and forgive us, O Lord, in the name of your Son. Amen.

**THE COVENANT**

God made a covenant with the people of Israel, calling them to be a holy nation, chosen to bear witness to his steadfast love by finding delight in the law.
The covenant was renewed in Jesus Christ our Lord, in his life, work, death and resurrection. In him all people may be set free from sin and its power, and united in love and obedience.
In this covenant God promises us new life in Christ. For our part we promise to live no longer for ourselves but for God.
We meet, therefore, as generations have met before us, to renew the covenant which bound them and binds us to God.
Let us then seek forgiveness for the sin by which we have denied God's claim upon us.

*Silence…*
**Have mercy on me, O God,
in your constant love;
in the fullness of your mercy
blot out my offences.
Wash away all my guilt,
and cleanse me from my sin.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
Give me the joy of your help again
and strengthen me with a willing spirit.**

*The people stand as the presiding minister says:*

Sisters and brothers in Christ,
let us again accept our place within this covenant which God has made with us and with all who are called to be Christ's disciples.
This means that, by the help of the Holy Spirit,
we accept God's purpose for us, and the call to love and serve God in all our life and work.
Christ has many services to be done:
some are easy, others are difficult;
some bring honour, others bring reproach;
some are suitable to our natural inclinations and material interests, others are contrary to both;
in some we may please Christ and please ourselves;
in others we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves.
Yet the power to do all these things is given to us in Christ,
who strengthens us.

Therefore let us make this covenant of God our own.
Let us give ourselves to him, trusting in his promises and relying on his grace.

Eternal God, in your faithful and enduring love you call us to share in your gracious covenant in Jesus Christ.

In obedience we hear and accept your commands; in love we seek to do your perfect will; with joy we offer ourselves anew to you.
We are no longer our own but yours.

**COVENANT PRAYER**

I am no longer my own but yours.

Your will, not mine, be done in all things,

wherever you may place me,

in all that I do and in all that I may endure;

when there is work for me

and when there is none;

when I am troubled and when I am at peace.

Your will be done

when I am valued and when I am disregarded;

when I find fulfillment and when it is lacking;

when I have all things, and when I have nothing.

I willingly offer all I have and am to serve you,

as and where you choose.

Glorious and blessèd God,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

you are mine and I am yours.

May it be so forever.

Let this covenant now made on earth

be fulfilled in heaven.

Amen.