

## **Sermon Draft**

**Text: Luke 20:9–20**

**Sermon: “Authority”**

The Fifth Sunday in Lent is leaning strongly toward Holy Week. The Old Testament Reading from Isaiah 43:16–21 points to a new exodus, and where an exodus occurs, a Passover has occurred, though Isaiah is not explicit on this point. Isaiah 43 compares going into and returning from Babylonian captivity with the exodus from Egypt many centuries earlier. Thus, the Old Testament Reading and Psalm are looking forward to liberation with joy, which our Lord provides by his death and resurrection, the greater Passover and exodus. The Epistle and Gospel are about authority. Who thinks they have it? Who really has it?

So, we ask the Lord to keep us from becoming like those who would despise and dishonor his servants, and then finally, him. Like those in our parable this morning.

Our Gospel lesson for today takes place on Tuesday of Holy Week in Jerusalem. The people around Jesus were becoming very polarized as He moved forward with His mission to save the world by dying on the cross. The enemies of Christ question His authority.

We all like the idea of having everything our own way, of being our own boss, and we don't at all care for somebody else telling us what we can and can't do. The same was for the tenants in the vineyard and for us today. We want things our way, when and how, just like the Jewish leaders and the Sanhedrin in our parable who Jesus was referring.

We, all have a problem with authority at some time or in certain situations even, whether we like to admit it or not, with God's authority.

In our text this morning, that problem has been simmering, and in the next few days or, in our church year, in the next two weeks it is going to boil over into the crucifixion of God's own Son.

You see, sinners' natural perception is that God's authority prevents them, us from getting what they want. The tenants in Jesus' parable of the vineyard decide that the master's authority over his vineyard stands in the way of them having it themselves (vs 9–10). Jesus' authority has been persistently opposed all throughout Luke's Gospel. Our text this morning is but a continuation.

In the parable, the authority that the vineyard owner delegates is challenged. The servants represent the many prophets God sent to his people (Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, and others) whom Israel rejected. The owner's son unmistakably represents God's Son, the Christ, whom God's tenants, Israel, would kill just days later. Incredibly, they believe this will cast off God's authority and make them their own masters. Just like the people of the world today, those who have chosen to belong to Satan.

As followers of Jesus, we, his holy priesthood, have problems with God's authority too.

We will be challenged by those who despise God's authority and therefore our faith and by the whole world system that makes evil seem normal or even good. We also challenge God's authority, spurred by your sinful nature operating in cahoots with the world. There are things we want despite the cost. Those who remain stubbornly opposed to God's authority will indeed then receive no good news. All that they have will be taken away.

The parable foretells the death of the Son but gives no indication of his resurrection. The same Jewish leaders, when confronted with Jesus' resurrection, will only see it as bad news. They go as far as paying the guards from the tomb to say the disciples took Jesus' body. (Matthew 28:11–15).

What then does our text mean? Jesus will ask in his cryptic and ominous quotation from Psalm 118. ***“What then is this that is written: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone’*** For those who reject Jesus, it's bad news! Those in our world who continue to oppose God's authority including the mission he's delegated to his Son will also lose everything.

Luther, in his commentary on verse 18 of our text for today stood apart from most interpreters or commentaries in that he wrote that those who fall on the stone and are broken to pieces can be Christians. His view was that we all stumble at Christ, and our stony wills must be broken so that we become nothing, and Christ becomes everything, all in all.

In this uncertain and often tragic world, our lives need a solid foundation. Jesus provides it for us. Through faith which is a gift from God, we receive and see Christ for who He is: our King of kings and Lord of lords, our Savior.

Don't like the message? Then kill the messenger. Welcome to the prophet Jeremiah's life. No doubt it was heady stuff for Jeremiah to be called by the Lord while he was still in the womb! . . . until he was sent to the tenants of the vineyard, the people of Jerusalem (Luke 20:10–12).

How did that go? Not very well. For many years, the people ignored him, dismissed him, and derided him. He was accused of treason. He was within an inch of capital punishment. He was imprisoned. One time, he was thrown into a deep cistern. The water was gone, but he sank into a thick layer of mud, left there to rot to death. Finally, he was taken to Egypt against his wishes, even though he had told the people the Lord's command not to go to Egypt.

But it is through this prophet that the Lord says, ***“This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people... I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more”*** (Jeremiah 31:33–34). The authority of Jesus won't always be rejected.

Easter two weeks from today will be no celebration for those who really wish Jesus dead. Those who despise his Word and him and yes go out of their way to silence us His church.

We do need to repent of challenging God's authority by our sin. But how does God in fact desire us to see his authority over us?

Jesus' enemies had entirely forgotten the point of millennia of God's authority over them. The master had planted this vineyard and entrusted it to them (v 9). God had graciously been using and blessing Israel all along. He sent his son, even after his servants had been mistreated, begging the tenants to repent (v 13). If they refused, he would "give the vineyard to others." It's still always God's desire to use his authority to give. God has now given the vineyard to us.

Jesus died also for all the times we challenge God's authority, but he has risen! In Christ resurrection we have the assurance of sins forgiven. Therefore God holds no good thing back from us! He gives us everything truly good as a gift. God wants us to understand that this is how he always wishes to exercise his authority. God desires us to see his authority not as withholding but as giving.

“Fear not, little flock,” Jesus says, “for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you” not just the vineyard but also “the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). Giving is his style.

Amen