Sermon 18th Pent. Oct. 3rd, 2020

Texts: Isa. 5:1-7, Phil. 3:4b-14, Matt. 21:33-46

Title: “Why? For Me? For us!”

Prayer

Salutation

**Bridge**

 **When I became old enough to drive, (and I don’t know why I tell you these things because you’re going to laugh) my parents pressed me to go get my permit and all the information necessary to obtain my license. To be honest, I was scared when my mom came home with the handbook. I’m sure she sensed this for I had made no attempt to request any information. I had never been behind any kind of vehicle, except my bike! But they had confidence and trusted me. Besides, if I got my license, it would make their lives much easier. They rejoiced when I got it and I could use their car to take myself to all the different functions for school and the like. Except when…**

 **Except when I took the car to early church service, skipped out after communion, and drove straight to my favorite hangout, the A&W. I didn’t see any of my friends when I pulled in and I was glad afterwards that I didn’t, for when I pulled up to the speaker, I hit the metal pole and put a big dent in the car. Busted! What was I going to tell my folks? I had no choice when I got home but to tell them the truth. It's hard to hide a dent in an almost new car. I had to say I was sorry. Mustn’t we always do so?**

 **The first question out of my mother’s mouth was, “Why?” They both wanted to know why I would do such a thing. I had no good response. I have to admit, I wasn’t a “wild child” or anything like that, I was actually, a pretty good kid and I had, indeed, earned their trust before this. But now, that trust was gone. And I would pay for it. First, I had to pay to fix the car, but secondly, much to their chagrin, I was grounded from driving for two months and from the A&W for the rest of the season. Still, they wanted to know, “Why?” They searched to understand why, especially when they had done everything to help me make this step, and I had taken a wrong turn. Why? They really knew why, I was a sinner, just like they, just like you, just like Israel.**

**Law**

 **Why? That’s what God asked when after He planted the people of Israel in the Vineyard, for they had become wild. He had prepared it, clearing away the stones, because He loved it. It was in the best of soil. High on the hill. He planted the best vines. He built a tower and a vat all with a wall around it for protection. But when the yield came at the end of the growing season, it brought only wild grapes. He had entrusted them to care for the vineyard. But they had abandoned Him. Instead, they had made themselves as gods, taking the vineyard and making it their own. They worshipped other gods as well, and they spit in God’s face and killed His prophets and Son. He asked, “Why?” When He found out He was angrier than my parents. He determined that He would destroy its protection, for the grapes could not be rescued like I was, for the grapes were wild. Their punishment was much worse, and the nation was destroyed even though they were His chosen ones! The vineyard was trampled, laid waste, it’s walls broken down and all was devoured. But yet, God did not destroy the vines, for He had a plan.**

 **When a nation, it’s inhabitants both individually and collectively abandon God, then God’s wrath is stirred. It was for Israel and it is for us. God has subtle ways and not so subtle ways to get our attention, doesn’t He? For we are no better. Pastor Curt brought all of this to our attention last week, didn’t he? We are all part of this nation. We have been blessed just as Israel was. Our nation has been protected by Him, it has become strong and, in its history, glorified Him for it, but along the way the vines have become weak. We have taken our blessings and God for granted. We have sinned in many ways just like Israel, idolatry, fornications, murder, covetousness and so much more. So, we, WE build walls to keep HIM out! And we sinners, like the Jews, don’t even see it. It’s hard to repent if you don’t think you have a problem! We sinners deserve everything that an angry God could throw at us! And He just may if what we have seen here recently is any indication of what is yet to come. WE ALL need to repent. Just like we did here just a few minutes ago. We need get on our knees and ask that we may be saved and be found worthy upon His return. I pray that He listens to the prayers of His people and we can be restored. For I know He has done this before, and our God has shown mercy. That’s easy to see in my mishap and I know very well that you have done things like that. It's as if I ran that car right over Him instead of into a pole! As if I killed Him! I know we all have done things so selfish, so shameful that you don’t laugh about them, but instead, you cringe. Under self-examination, we can all see just how sinful to the core we are. We should cry out to Him, “Depart from us, Lord, for we are sinful men!” Jesus knows that. But yet, here He tells us about Himself.**

**Gospel**

 **Therefore, the parable Jesus told the Pharisees and priests that day in the temple sounds exactly like what I just told you about Israel. He said to them, “Look and hear this parable.” He told them about a master, Himself, who had planted them, HIS vineyard and placed them under HIS protection. And He built a tower on a hill, the very Temple of God, in their midst and then He left them to care for it. In the meantime, He sent His representatives, the prophets, in order that they would bring them back from sin, but they killed them. Finally, the Master sent His Son, but now, they would kill Him, too. And now, in these words of a parable, He had come to warn them, tell them to repent and tell them that they weren’t as righteous as they thought they were. They had thought that just because they were God’s chosen, the ones God had brought out of Egypt and set in the Vineyard of Israel, that their inheritance gave them a free pass. Even Paul pointed out in the Epistle text that they thought that no matter what they did God would accept their works and they would be forgiven, but in reality, they had stolen from God and would kill His Son, the very Messiah that stood in their midst. They saw that He was pointing to them and what they had done. But- they were too blind to see that God had provided and done it all for them and that now He was trying to bring them back to Him. They were once again going to reject the very cornerstone of the faith, Jesus.**

 **Jesus the owner of the Vineyard, the Master, had done it all for them. Loved them. Planted them. Nourished them. Saved them. He told them one more time just what He had done. God didn’t really like them at this time, but- He loved them. So now, He had come to do this process again. But instead, because of their rejection, He would give the vineyard to others who would produce good fruit and not wild. They were lost, but those that believed were saved. It turns out that Israel rejects Him, but we Gentiles are grafted into those vines. How wonderful is that?! That through faith in the perfect Christ, and the satisfaction provided by His death and resurrection, we are made His. He came to save you, to save us, to save me.**

 **He did this for me so many times, not just when I crashed my mom's car! When I think about how the heavenly Father did this in my life, for me, trusted me through Christ to receive my earthly father's trust once more boggles my mind! Yes, I was afraid to go home. Yes, I had to face the consequences. But I was amazed at how the love of the Father showed through my parents when forgiveness was given. I knew that I was forgiven. I was in awe. In fact, I was perplexed, and I asked myself, “Why? Why would my parents forgive me like that?” It was because of Him. That Christ forgave me for being so, so, human, and He trusted me to repent and be forgiven in Him. And He does this for you. You know all those times. You remember those times don't you? When your folks forgave you unconditionally? And we rejoice that in repentance and belief in Him, He acted and still acts as our advocate and cornerstone in the faith. We are now the Father's vineyard of good grapes, in Christ!**

 **So again, the question, “Why?” Why would Jesus come and try to help us, help me, out of the rubble of the vineyard? There is only one answer, because He loves us. The Isa. text’s first verse should give it away, for He said, “Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning His vineyard.” He loved us for He created us. He wanted to walk with us. That He would be our God and we would be His people. That God would rebuild His vineyard and new wine would be made. And that here at the table, we would enjoy together the bread and the best wine which gives life eternal. I say to you at the rail, "Take and eat, this is the body of Jesus, given unto death for YOU". And for me. For US! For through Christ, the Master of the Vineyard, all things are made new and life is given. That is the plan of the Father and through Christ reconciliation has occurred. Once again, valuable trust has been reestablished where it had been broken.**

**Conclusion**

 **That is the purpose of every good parent. My folks knew I was just like them- a sinner. I was given a second chance. By the time I left home, many more chances. And Jesus does this for me and for you. Every day. I don’t know how far heaven is from here, but He came all that way to save us. I figure I’ve driven almost a million miles in my lifetime. I’ve had a couple of other mishaps and tickets, but every time, restoration comes. That is God’s plan for us in our relationships with others and more importantly, with Him. And as our Cornerstone, He builds us up and shows us His solid love as our vine keeper. And He's soon coming again! Let us look up for His plan to once again be fulfilled! Rejoice and be glad for the wedding feast comes! To Him be the glory. Amen.**