

5th Sunday in Lent

Grace, mercy and peace are ours because of God's irrational and extreme love and patience that he would even sacrifice His dearly loved Son for all of us.

13 "Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.' 14 "But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over. 'This is the heir,' they said. 'Let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' 15 So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. "What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? 16 He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others." When the people heard this, they said, "May this never be!"

Prayer: Lord God Almighty, we ask for your continued love and patience for us ungrateful sinners. We are sorry for misusing, abusing, disrespecting and dishonoring the great gifts you have given to us through your Son Jesus. By the message of your love, fill us with your Spirit that we might overflow with appreciation to honor your Son and your Word by living for you.

Introduction: I remember my mother tell us boys growing up, "Never say never!" Countless times in my life it has happened to me that as soon as I say something like, "I never trip" – bam I trip and fall down the stairs. "I've never been in an accident." – Bam I hit a parked car. "I never strikeout." Bam! I strikeout on foul balls. In our text for today, Jesus reminds the people of the danger of disrespecting the Lord, His Word, His patience and rejecting the cornerstone of His family. The people all respond, "May this never be!" Never say never. In just 2 and a half days the crowds of Jerusalem will disrespect the Lord, His Word, His patience and reject the cornerstone of God's family – Jesus Christ. They will all shout, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" May we never! Never say never! Reject the cornerstone and despise the Word.

- 1) **Reject the Cornerstone**
- 2) **Despise the Word**

1) Reject the Cornerstone Jesus words for today were originally said on Tuesday of Holy Week, the week of Jesus crucifixion and subsequent resurrection. To his enemies and the crowds gathered around he told a parable that needed no explanation. The enemies of Jesus as well as the entire crowd who heard it understand that Jesus was talking about them. He was warning them of disrespecting God's irrational and extreme patience and love. At the end of the story everyone shouted, "May we never!" Never say never. For Jesus words were also a prophecy of what would happen in just a few short days. The Jewish leaders would arrest and kill the Son of God, believing they were getting the Promised Land, God's inheritance, because of their actions. And the crowds of Jerusalem would join their leaders and reject the very cornerstone of God's forgiven family – Jesus Christ, the Son of God – by shouting, "Crucify him. Crucify him."

We sing that the church's one foundation is Jesus Christ our Lord. Christ is our cornerstone! When constructing a building the cornerstone is chosen first. It is inspected and tested and measured to guarantee that it is perfect in angles and solid to its core. From the cornerstone the whole building takes its shape. From the cornerstone each brick and wall follows its angle. If the cornerstone is not solid, then the whole building will be unbalanced and collapse. What a beautiful picture of Jesus Christ for us the house of God.

Jesus Christ was tried and tested and found to be perfect. He was born to be perfect under God's law. Then the foundation was laid to make God's family. Jesus Christ's life was given into death to be the substitute for the world of sinners. Every sinner was imperfect, unbalanced and off center. Jesus Christ is the sure foundation solid to the core, the holy and innocent Son of God for sinners to build upon. Each of us have been brought to Jesus Christ through the gospel and baptism and built on him to be the house and family of God. Peter said it beautifully in his first letter:

NIV 1 Peter 2:4 As you come to him, the living Stone-- rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him-- 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Of course we all would say with the crowd, "May we never!" reject the cornerstone. We know what the consequences are if we try and build on any other cornerstone or foundation. Jesus reminded the crowds in Jerusalem that day and us today, that, "Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces but he on whom it falls will be crushed." Those words are a picture of judgment first in this life while Jesus is in his state of humility. The Jewish people and others tripped up on Jesus and they did not recognize him for who he truly was, the Son of God and Savior of the World. Jesus even prayed for mercy at his crucifixion for the soldiers, "Father forgive them, they do not know what they are doing." At least one soldier at the cross was broken to pieces at Jesus', death for crucifying the very Son of God and Savior, "Surely this was the Son of God." But Jesus also adds that the one on whom it falls will be crushed." Here Jesus pictures his return in Glory with full power and not to suffer for sins, but to crush all his enemies who rejected him as the cornerstone of salvation and God's family.

We too have been brought to recognize the truth of Jesus Christ the cornerstone. We have been broken to pieces. We know the truth about Jesus our Savior and about our own sinfulness. We are believers in the cornerstone of God's house, Jesus Christ. May we never forget our sinfulness and our Savior's great act of extreme love. Never say Never.

2) Despise His Word When I read this parable of Jesus I am always shocked by the events. They seem unbelievable, irrational and extreme! The first shock in the story is the hired farmers disrespect for the Owner's representatives and His orders. Who do they think they are that they blatantly disrespect, and that's not even harsh enough of a word; despise their Boss and His representative? They flay the servants, wound them and send them away empty handed! Unbelievable the gall of these wicked workers! The second shock hits you in the face when you notice the patience of the owner. He sends not just 1 or 2 servants but 3. After the first one I think all of us would call the cops or take matters into our own hands and make them pay for what they had done. But 3? That's just irrational, extreme patience and borders on spineless and wimpy. We may even wonder what's wrong with the owner for not bringing them to justice? He must be a wimp or a pushover or doesn't even care. But then the true shock hits us square between the eyes, the owner sends his son, "Perhaps they will respect him." Are you serious? "Perhaps? What father in their right mind who loved his son would send his son to these wicked ungrateful people? Then the light goes on, right?

What a tremendous picture of God's amazing love and patience for a world of wicked ungrateful people. We see it first in the history of the Israelites, that in spite of all of God's patience and mercy and love, they despised God's plan of salvation and His Word to them. They abused and misused God's representatives and His Word and they didn't give God the fruit of faith he expected and deserved to have from them. And ultimately they killed his one and only Son, our Savior outside of Jerusalem, just like Jesus predicted in our text, "This is the heir they said, 'Lets kill him and the inheritance will be ours.' So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him."

May we never! Never say never. We will never treat God's representatives and His Wishes like that and ultimately crucify the Son of God. Never say never. But how many times a day don't we choose to despise God's Word and disrespect His Word? How shocking is it to you that God gives you life on earth, eternal life in heaven and countless extras but you still treat him to your lies and deception and relegate him to leftovers? How shocking is it to you that you intentionally disobey God's Will for our life thinking to ourselves, God will never know, God will not punish me, no one will ever be the wiser. How shocking is it to you that you return to God empty-handed when he asks you to give him your best of your money, best time, our best abilities and our best wealth. How shockingly ugly it is of us to despise our loving and patient God's Word and Wishes.

Thanks be to God, he has unbelievable patience with us and doesn't immediately crush us for our insane disrespect of His mercy and His Word. Let us show our appreciation for the tremendous blessing of salvation we have been given as living stones in the house and family of God built on the perfect cornerstone of Jesus Christ by gladly hearing and learning God's Word, and then obeying it with our best. May we never reject the cornerstone and despise His Word. Never say never. Thanks be to God he is the only one we can truly say, "Our shocking sins are never too much for God's shocking mercy."