

## Shattered Dreams; Dreams Fulfilled

5<sup>th</sup> Sun. in Lent – 04/03/22 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Luke 20:9-20 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 17, “[The scribes and chief priests] **said, ‘Surely not!’ But [Jesus] looked directly at them and said, ‘What then is this that is written: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone?”’**”

### **Introduction**

- ✘ Most young children have big dreams as they are growing up. “I wanna play in the Final Four!” “I’m gonna swim in the Olympics!” “I’m going to be a fireman when I grow up.” “I’m going to be the first woman president!”
  - ➔ Yet as we all know, so many of these dreams don’t actually come about. Life goes differently than we might plan or dream it. Our gifts and abilities don’t match up with our desires. So at some point, those childhood dreams get shattered. In fact, we see that truth in life at any age, don’t we?
- ✘ Jesus’ parable of the vineyard reminds us that the dream envisioned is not always the dream fulfilled. Fortunately though, for those of us with faith, this truth also rings true: Where God shatters our dreams He also rebuilds them into something that is truly worth dreaming.

### **I. Like the tenants, we have dreams**

- ✘ As we consider Jesus’ parable today, we recognized that, like those tenants, we too may have our own dreams in this earthly life.
  - ➔ The primary dream, or maybe we should say, misconception, that we see with the tenants is that they did not want to give the fruit from the vineyard to the one who actually owned the vineyard.
  - ➔ They thought they had a pretty good thing going; a comfortable arrangement, where they seemed to consider themselves now to be their own master.
  - ➔ What they refused to acknowledge was all that the rightful owner had already done. He’s the one who put the money out to purchase the land, as well as planting the vineyard and setting everything up to be successful and bear much fruit.
- ✘ Just as with many people still today, in so many areas of business and industry, these tenants conveniently ignored who employed whom. Because the one who is the owner, the employer, the boss – in this case the Creator, is the one who rightly sets the ground rules and properly has the right to the fruit from his vineyard.
  - ➔ This is why we see in verses 10-12 that the owner sends his servants – three different times – to retrieve some of the fruit from his vineyard. He didn’t even want it all, just a portion of the crop.
  - ➔ Yet each time, the tenants sent the servants away empty-handed, beating them and treating them “shamefully” (v. 11).
- ✘ Finally, we see in verse 13 that the owner sends his own son; his blood relative and family representative. And what do these wicked tenants do? They say, “This is the heir. Let us kill him, so that the inheritance may be ours” (v.14).
  - ➔ Talk about dreaming a big dream. They have no right at all to any of it, yet they wanted and schemed to get the inheritance they did not deserve. What a foolish dream! Yet verse 15 tells us that they followed through and actually did kill the owner’s son!

- ⊗ Now we come to the real question in this parable. Will their evil dream; their wicked act of murder, make their dream come true? Jesus asks this question Himself at the end of verse 15, “What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them?”
  - Before we go on with the parable, let’s consider the application that Jesus intends not only for the Jewish scribes and chief priests before Him that day, but also for you and me.
  - Where ever it is that we hold positions of privilege or influence at the time, we still – every one of us – have dreams in this life. There’s no way that I can guess every one of those dreams among us here today. So I need you all to think honestly to yourself, what is it that you dream? What do you aspire to gain or accomplish that is not rightly yours to have?
  - Is it a position at work for which you are not qualified? Or a relationship with someone that would be inappropriate in God’s eyes? Is it the desire to get rich quick at the expense of others through gambling or some other scheme? Or...is your dream about something else that’s not according to God’s will in Scripture, like harm or ill will or an unfair advantage that you wish upon another person because of a grudge you are unwilling to let go of, or a matter of pride so that you refuse to repent of wrongs you have done, or refusal to forgive someone who has done you wrong?
  - Again those are only a few common possibilities. You need to ask the Lord to show you the dream or dreams that you are dreaming that is contrary to His will and to His desire for you as one of His redeemed children.

## II. Jesus’ parable shatters dreams

- ⊗ The thing is folks, Jesus’ parable and the surrounding text, as a declaration of law against sinful hearts and minds, is intended first of all to shatter the tenants’ dream and very possibly yours and mine as well.
  - As Jesus Himself said, the master, who is God, “will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard (which is His Church) to others.” When the self-proclaimed leaders of the church in Jesus’ day heard this, they said, “Surely not!” (v. 16).
  - They perceived correctly in verse 19 that Jesus had “told this parable against them”. Their dreams of running and ruling God’s church on their own, and apart from His will, would be shattered!
  - Their elaborate, law-based system of sacrifices and impossible-to-meet manmade rules that they had invented was about to come tumbling down, as would the temple and all of Jerusalem within the next 40 years.
  - Their comfortable arrangement, where they were in charge; where they enjoyed the adoration of the people, would soon be no more.
- ⊗ The thing is, Jesus’ goal for this parable was to lead these leaders, and us, to repent of their sinful dreams and turn back to the Lord. But repent? Turn away from the evil dream against which Jesus was warning them? We see in verses 19-20 how that wasn’t a part of their plans. Instead, they “sought to lay hands on Him at that very hour” and “sent spies...that they might catch Him in something He said...to deliver Him up to...the governor” (vv. 19–20).
  - These guys were bound and determined to cling to their dream and still try to seize the inheritance. And so what would they do? They would kill the Son!
- ⊗ But what they refused to believe and understand is that this son is the very Son of God, the promised Messiah. So His death at their hands would be no ordinary death. Their act of jealousy, vengeance, fear and spite would not and could not accomplish their dream.

→ As Jesus quotes Psalm 118:22 in verse 17, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone”. And that would mean that “Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him”(v. 18).

→ Ironically the old Jewish rabbis had a saying regarding this and other quotes like it in the Old Testament. They said, “If a stone falls on a pot, woe to the pot! If the Pot falls on the stone, woe to the pot! Either way, woe to the pot!” (*Luke 9:51-24:52*, Arthur Just Jr., *Concordia Commentary*, pg. 765, footnote #9)

→ That’s exactly Jesus’ point, “Woe” to any who murder the “cornerstone” of God’s holy Church, for “either way” it shatters the dreams of all who reject Him as Messiah and Savior, because He is so much more than just a lifeless piece of stone. He was raised from death after three days and now lives and reigns as the one sure foundation; the corner stone; the capstone of the “one, holy Christian and apostolic Church”; God’s Church in each and every age!

✘ Friends, this truth means that any and all of our godless and sin-created dreams are shattered as well – as they should be.

→ For the cross of Christ does not allow for things to be “my” way, for “my” glory above God’s. It does not ever allow dreams to be self-centered.

→ In fact the cross changes the picture entirely. It forces the end of “my” way; the end of self-centered dreams and schemes.

✘ As I mentioned at the very beginning of this message, children’s and adult’s dreams do get shattered. We find that there’s not enough spring in the legs; not enough speed in the stroke; not enough votes even for freshman class president. Instead the dreams are transformed and become much greater than we could ever have imagined without Christ.

→ Those dreams change to fit the personality and gifts that God has given to us. They change to fit, instead of “my” needs, the needs of society. A fireman, for example, becomes a foreman; swimming in the Olympics becomes teaching swimming lessons at the “Y”; president becomes addressing pressing issues of safety and fairness in your hometown; and a trip to the Final Four becomes finally seeing four kids that you’ve raised marry faithful Lutheran spouses and begin their own Christian families.

→ In this, instead of seeing my work and accomplishments as I first dreamed, I more gloriously see and revel in God’s work and I find far greater fulfillment in all that He accomplishes in and through me as His humble child and servant!

### III. Dreams Transformed and Fulfilled

✘ This, you see, is always God’s goal for His Biblical stories and parables like the one we have from Jesus here today, that God’s Law will shatter our *self-centered* dreams so that His Gospel will transform them all into *Christ-centered* realities and dreams that are fulfilled by His grace through His gift of eternal salvation and faith.

→ When this happens, our Lord transforms the entire way that you and I look at, and understand our lives right now today. No more are we dreaming, like the evil tenants, that “this is my vineyard, my church, my life to do with it as I choose”. No, instead we readily hear and embrace the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 where he says, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

→ Indeed, the price of your life, dear Christian, was the death of Jesus on the cross. For it is His cross that gives us all life; true life that is so much more than just some dream or fantasy

that we've made up out of our own imagination or has been dictated to us by our culture or others around us.

- ⊠ No, this life that you and I have now today is the life purchased and won by the holy precious blood and the innocent suffering and death of Jesus. He may have been rejected by the Jewish dreamers of His day, and even still rejected sadly by a growing majority of people today, but He has become our cornerstone.

→ And upon that stone, He builds us up, dear friends, together to be His Church. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." You and I – we are together "new"; being transformed into what God dreamed us to be now and forever in heaven.

- ⊠ The transformed dreams of your life are so much better than the sin-shattered death we lived before Jesus.

→ Now we get to experience, live, and care for others as God intended from the creation of the world. We get to see God's mission and be about His work in the vineyard of His Church where we have others in mind and not ourselves, our institutions, or our pride. We get to bear the fruit that God has cultivated ever since He planted His Church through His Son; the fruit that comes from a life connected to Jesus who said in John 15:5, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing".

## **Conclusion**

- ⊠ Yes, friends, in Jesus, God has shattered our dreams, and it is a good thing! For it is only in Jesus that He transforms them into a new and different life; the life you have today in Christ; a life that is definitely something worth dreaming! Amen.