

Pentecost 18 10/8/17
Matthew 21:33-46 22A

THE STONE THAT THE BUILDERS REJECTED HAS BECOME THE CORNERSTONE; THIS WAS THE LORD'S DOING, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES.

I am going to begin this morning by mentioning football. No, I'm not going to talk about the game of football or even mention the Green Bay Packers, but I am going to talk about a man, a Christian man, who happens to be a football player. Namely, one Carson Wentz, of Bismarck, North Dakota; the NDSU Bison, currently of the Philadelphia Eagles; and devoted Christian. In fact, if you attended the Medora Musical this summer, you heard Carson, in his own voice, tell you that his hero is his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Carson does not hesitate to use the platform God has given him to freely confess his faith in Jesus, with the sure and certain hope that Jesus will confess him before the Father in heaven.

After the shootings in Las Vegas this past week – again, another stark reminder to us that the “thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy” (Jn 10:10) – Carson tweeted four words – THE WORLD NEEDS JESUS.

In the shooting in Las Vegas, we saw a glimpse – I should say “another” glimpse – of a world that has rejected its Creator and Redeemer. But, God does not want His creation cursed by sin. And so, HE SENT CHRIST TO BE THE CORNERSTONE OF OUR FAITH AND OUR LIVES.

The Sunday before Jesus spoke the words of our Gospel, He had ridden into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey. As Jesus was teaching in the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority? (Mt 21:23). He tells them the parable of the Two Sons, and

then, immediately, tells them the parable of the Tenants before us in our Gospel this morning. And, the Evangelist tells us “When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived he was speaking about them” (v. 45).

That’s right, Jesus was speaking about them, because they had rejected Jesus, the Savior God sent. Much like the world in which we live.

I. We see the fruits of that rejection all around us.

When tragedies like Las Vegas happen, the mantra that you often hear in the media is “Why?” We have to find out why this happened? If we want to know “why,” all we have to do is listen to the words of Jesus, “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person” (Mt 15:19-20).

Why did Cain kill his brother Abel? For the same reason that shooter in Las Vegas murdered his neighbors and harmed many of his neighbors in their bodies. It all begins HERE – in the heart. Out of the heart, comes hatred, and anger, and emotions that we cannot even describe with words, but are known to God. And, they are not God-pleasing.

We selfishly murder unborn babies so that we can live the life and the lifestyle we want. A kindergarten class is aborted every week in Fargo, ND. That’s right, the number of babies murdered in Fargo, North Dakota, every week is equal to the size of an average kindergarten class in North Dakota.

We have made a mockery of marriage, pretending that two men or two women can be united in holy matrimony.

And, greed and coveting lead people to steal our identity and try to gain access to our financial accounts to rob us blind.

That's the fruits of a world without Jesus. But, Dear Christian, before you decry the world, allow me to ask you a question: what are the fruits of your life showing? What about the times you refuse to take up your cross, and follow Jesus?

You hate your neighbor. Sure, ya do. You keep a record of wrongs. You refuse to forgive and be reconciled in Christ. And what does the Bible say, the Bible you read? "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him" (1 Jn 3:15). Your hating your neighbor is as much a sin against the 5th Commandment, as the shooter in Las Vegas committed.

What about the Friday night get-together or at work, and the off-color joke is told? And, you laugh hysterically. You think it's funny. But, God, who instituted marriage and gave us the 6th Commandment, calls it ... sin, just like the two homosexuals thinking they can enter into marriage.

Oh, and your greed. It shows itself in your grumbling and complaining. Your neighbor gets new and bigger and nicer ... whatever...., and you don't have it, so you get angry and are filled with self-pity. You accumulate more and more earthly stuff, because you really don't believe God will open His hand and satisfy your every need of body and soul. And, the Lord your God says, "You shall not covet".

II. The GOOD NEWS of the Gospel is that God sent His Son into this world to be sin for you.

Into this world, Jesus came to this earth for you as a little baby, born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus took from you all your evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immortality, theft, false witness, slander ... all your sorrows, all your griefs, all your worries and all your fears, He took from your all your sins and carried it all to the cross of Calvary. There, He suffered the loss of

His life for you, as the payment and sacrifice for all your sins, so that you are forgiven.

And, then He rose the 3rd day to win for us the victory of sin, and death, and hell itself. Jesus Himself says it this way, “The stone that the builders rejected has become our cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes” (v. 42).

III. God has prepared our hearts to produce the fruit of faith.

After David sinned with Bathsheba, he cried, “Create in me a clean heart, O God.” We sing those words in our liturgy because the Christian life is the life of repentance. In the new birth of your baptism, God replaces your heart of sin with a new heart, the heart of Christ Himself. A heart that delights in doing God’s will.

What does this mean? Living, and moving, and having our being in Christ, our Cornerstone, we produce good works of thought, word, and deed, that glorify our Father in heaven and serve your neighbor.

Think of it this way...After Bible class this morning, you will get in your car, or pickup, and drive home. How fast will you drive? The answer: The speed limit. Why? 4th Commandment. The 4th Commandment teaches you to obey those in authority over you. Just like if you are a student and the teacher says, this is your assignment, turn it in Monday. So, you do it, and you turn it into your teacher and, in doing so, live a God-pleasing life.

You wouldn’t think of hurting or harming your neighbor in their body by any means, and you don’t hate or want to remain angry at your neighbor. Rather, you forgive, as God in Christ Jesus has forgiven you.

You honor marriage as a God-pleasing estate, because that pleases God. You don’t throw rocks through your neighbor’s windows because you help your neighbor to improve and protect their property and income. You

don't gossip, but speak well of your neighbor and put the best construction on everything. And, you are content with the life and stuff that God has given you, for what pleases God, that pleases you, Dear Child of God.

These are the fruits of faith and you are a people producing them because that heart God gave you in your baptism, He continues to feed with His grace in the preaching of the Word and in the eating and drinking of Christ's life-giving body and blood, equipping you with "everything good that you may do His will, working in [you] that which is pleasing in His sight," so that you can produce fruits in keeping with repentance. (He 13:20-21).