

*The heavens declare the Glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
Day after day they pour forth speech, night after night they reveal knowledge.
They have no speech, they use no words, no sound is heard from them. Yet their
voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the end of the world. Psalm 19*

Let us pray:

O Mighty King,

your crystal heavens shine upon us the light of your glory:

every night you enfold us with the comfort of your love.

Every morning you surround us with the freshness of your grace.

**Without words you speak of your love for the world, in timeless silence of
beauty and hope.**

**You are the Alpha and Omega, sunrise and sunset, the birth and rebirth of the
world.**

You meet us in the morning as the dew on the grass.

You nourish us as the corn of the field.

You treasure us as the apple of your eye.

**Though we run from your presence, and are afraid to be loved,
yet in your time**

your light shines in every corner, and your peace stills every storm.

Your breath is the life of all living,

your words are perfect, fulfilling, complete:

a staff to the frail, a guide to the lost, wisdom to the world.

We offer hearts and lives in praise and prayer

for we know you to be our God.

Hear us, see us, touch us, O friend and King;

receive our gifts of praise and need, and meet us in this hour. Amen (J. Hulme)

Sing, read or listen to: <https://youtu.be/prEq8NOx3vs> Jesus is Lord (StF 353)

Read: Isaiah 5: 1-7 The song of the unfruitful vineyard

Sing, read or listen to: <https://youtu.be/Hw5En1VoYYw> You are the vine, we are
the branches (StF 258)

Read: Matthew 21: 33-46 The parable of the tenants.

Who's in charge?

Why does Jesus tell this story? It is part of his response to a question posed by the chief priests and elders asking "By what authority are you doing these things?" This question of authority boils down to "Who is in charge? God or human beings?"

Jesus is using this parable to reflect the song from Isaiah – where God's chosen people are represented as an unfruitful vineyard. In this Old Testament song God is seen to act directly in causing the destruction of the vineyard because it bears the wrong fruit.

In Jesus' parable God (the owner of the vineyard) gives the tenants a chance to improve their stewardship of vineyard, firstly by sending servants (prophets?) and then by sending his own son (Jesus?). In the end it is the tenants who are foreseen as destroyed rather than the vineyard.

If this story really does portray all these levels of interpretation it is in fact an allegory and not a parable. A parable should have one clear central message.

What is the theme here? God *should* be in charge, not those who think they are the boss. The representation in the story has changed from the Old Testament song where the people are the vineyard to a story that represents the vineyard as the kingdom of God. It will be taken away from those who do not produce it's fruit.

Jesus then goes on to talk of the cornerstone of faith – the one that was rejected, the son sent to collect the fruit who will become the weight that will fall on them. The one that they thought they had killed would be their judgement and penalty.

The Pharisees and chief priests knew that he was talking about *them*, but is he also talking about us? What is the state of our vineyard – the world around us. Have we been good stewards and tenants?

**Let us pray: Creator God,
we pray that we may bear your fruit;
the fruit of obedience to you:
the fruit of justice, compassion and peace
that will make this world your kingdom.**

We pray for the world...

Saviour God,

we pray that we may bear your fruit;

the fruit of life made new in you: @the fruit of self-giving and unconditional love

that bears witness to your message of salvation.

We pray for those finding life hard...

Indwelling God,

we pray that we may bear your fruit;

the fruit of your life in us:

the fruit of unity, faith and joy

that suffuses our life together.

We pray for the church...

Christ is the true vine

we are the branches.

Source of all life,

keep us growing in you

that we may bear fruit

to Christ's glory. Amen

(Christine Odell)

Sing, read or listen to: https://youtu.be/5bC0tgG_ble **Christ is made the sure foundation (StF 677)**

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. Amen.