

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Quincy, IL  
Rev. Martin Eden

Pentecost 19  
Saturday, October 7, 2023, at 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday, October 8, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.

# “You Are Extraordinary”

Matthew 21:33-46

Today we celebrate LWML Sunday and recognize the work of the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League. Having attended the LWML Fall Rally a few weeks ago, I was once again amazed by the great need and encouraged by the great accomplishments concerning mission work locally and overseas. We heard from Dr. Bahkou, who is originally from Syria and ministers to Muslims here in the USA, produces material for outreach to the Muslim community, and it reminded me of the great work we have seen done in Uganda, as Our Savior Lutheran Church in Magamaga is in a predominantly Muslim area. There is so much work to do in the Kingdom.

The LWML has been instrumental in providing for those spreading the Gospel. Providing for missionaries, providing for physical needs like clothing and shelter; teaching skills, educating, praying, and all the other work the ladies of the LWML accomplish by the power of the Holy Spirit is truly amazing.

What strikes me most about their work is that such great and mighty tasks have been accomplished within the Kingdom through such seemingly ordinary ladies (as if any child of God can be called ordinary.)

But that brings us to our text today. In our Gospel reading, Jesus tells a parable that explains the history of God and His extraordinary people. God is the landowner who planted the vineyard, built a wall around it, dug a winepress, and built a watchtower. After all of the real work had been done, then He rented the vineyard to some people to use and produce fruit. Because the landowner was away on a journey, He sent servants to collect the portion of the harvest due to Him.

When we look at Holy Scripture to see how God deals with His people, God always works in the way that Jesus describes in this parable. God always redeems His people first, before asking us to do anything. God is the one who rescued the Israelites from the land of Egypt, provided for their every need, and promised to bring them into the Holy Land. It was only after all of this that God gave them any instructions concerning what He expected of them.

As we learn from the prophet Isaiah in our Old Testament reading, “the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel” [Is. 5:7]. God gave the children of Israel everything that they needed. God did all the work. He planted the vineyard and dug the winepress so that they would prosper. He gave them “a land flowing with milk and honey.” He built the wall and the watchtower so that they would be protected from every enemy. And all that He asked of them in return was for them to produce good fruit.

As we are the new Israel, it is very easy to see us working within that vineyard. As I said a few weeks ago, when you hear Jesus tell a parable, find

yourself in the parable, because you are there.

You are a worker in the vineyard. What is the good fruit that God desires for you to produce and freely give? It is more than just going through the motions on Saturday night or Sunday morning. Unlike the tenants in the parable, we must never forget that everything belongs to Him. We are only stewards of what God has given us.

When God sent His servants, His prophets, to the people of Israel, they killed some of them. They beat and persecuted others. They did not want to listen to what God was saying to them. They believed only what they wanted to believe and what was convenient for them. But when God sent a servant to show them their faults and show them how displeasing their sins were in the eyes of their Lord, they would not listen, and they were angry with God for doing that.

As I said, it is very easy to see us working within that vineyard. Our human nature likes to believe only what we want to believe or what is convenient for us at the time, but certainly not the things that point to our faults.

Take the 8th Commandment for example. How closely do you want God to look at your words when you know that God wants you to always defend your neighbor, to always speak well of everyone, and to say everything in the kindest way, or as the old translation of the Catechism said, “put the best construction on everything.”

I said before that those original workers in the vineyard were extraordinary just like you are extraordinary. Why were they extraordinary? God had

rescued them from slavery, provided them with everything they needed, had given them His Name, and had called them His own. They didn't do anything extraordinary. It was God's relationship with them that made them extraordinary, righteous, and saved. As I said last week, "the change inside of you has come from outside of you." It was only their rejection of that relationship that brought destruction.

God has given His vineyard to new tenants. We are the new Israel. We are the true children of Abraham. As the new tenants of the vineyard, we are called to do that which the old tenants did not do: to listen to God's prophets, and to listen to God's Son, and to look to God with the faith of Abraham. We recognize that it is God who has done all of the real work in preparing us for His kingdom. He has provided all that we need. And like Abraham, our faith is credited to us as righteousness.

I am so thankful for the joy and passion of the women of the LWML as they continue to tell others of how their loving Lord has done extraordinary things. Share that message. There are so many who do not know the love and mercy of Christ. Perhaps they have never known it. Perhaps they have just forgotten.

The work of the LWML and the work of all of God's children – inviting others into the vineyard – is an extraordinary work being accomplished by extraordinary people just like you. Amen.