

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



OCTOBER 8, 2023

REJECTED

and the morality of rejecting in return

by Drew Downs

Many people of faith idolize martyrdom. Perhaps without using those exact words. They place a premium on conviction over safety. The hope, of course, is finding virtue there. Even in death.

On the other side of conviction, then, is a made virtue of rejection. We don't want to be rejected, of course. Nobody wants it directly. But indirectly... well, it can be a sign of godliness and favor.

Today, some Christians seek out rejection. Not merely as a personal badge of honor, but as proof of the sincerity of their conviction and the rightness of the work. This is problematic enough. But in rendering rejection righteous, we make *rejecting* the same. Particularly as we reject the rejectors.

Jesus first goes to the *actual* rejected. Not the moralist with a persecution complex. But even he might still have a chance.

ORDINARY TIME

2023

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Our Common Story

This Sunday will be full of celebration and expectation! We will gather for Holy Eucharist at 10:00 and then afterward for a big potluck. Our special guest and host for the gathering will be the bishop-elect of Southern Ohio, Kristin White! She will lead our congregational conversation, exploring our values and dreams as and for the community.

As a project, these gatherings serve to remind us of the range and fidelity that makes our very lives *common*. That we, as individuals, may hold something close to ourselves. Something that might feel very personal. While also knowing it is something common to the community. That we all might hold the same thing. A memory, conviction, or a dream, perhaps.

There is also the sense of common—that we *do* share these things—and some aren't for us to keep, but reflect the very nature of the community. Much like family memories held differently, but arising from common experience of the same event.

Please join us in this endeavor! Our common story is written from our profound and mundane moments shared in common. A story that has a brilliant beginning, great spirit in it's 183 years, and is, God-willing, so very far from its ending. And we all are blessed that you are a part of it. Whether you've spent your whole life at St. Stephen's. Or an hour. You are a part of our story.

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

2023

FOR SUNDAY

Proper 22A

October 8, 2023

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we to pray, and to give more than we either desire or deserve: Pour upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things for which we are not worthy to ask, except through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Savior; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

Matthew 21:33-46

Jesus said, "Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.'" So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time."

Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures:

'The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord's doing,
and it is amazing in our eyes'?

ORDINARY TIME

Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.”

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

Reflection

How do we respond when we realize a challenging parable is about us? Do we reflect on it, trusting that Jesus has told us something invaluable?

Nah. We probably get mad.

Jesus’s criticism of the Temple leaders is withering. It leaves them to stew in inept rage.

But this parable comes when those leaders hold all of the legal power; and are looking to use it. Jesus, on however, had the authority with the people. Of course, these measures aren’t equal. Authority isn’t going to keep him from the cross.

It is hard to cast this in our own lives. We have far more freedom than the Hebrew people did. And most of us would align with the Temple leadership if this were our church.

For people of faith who read the gospel of Matthew, we’ll find that most of Jesus’s teachings in his final week seem dark. Almost like a collection of what-not-to-dos. We receive them when we’d rather think about what-to-dos. Hear, then, a command to love. To be generous. Trust. Reject greed and self gain; choose community gain and hope. Be the grace you long to receive.

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