

Changing the Assumption U are at the Center

18 Pentecost A – Oct 3/4, 2020

Rev. Dr. David Gardner Tweed

Gospel: Matthew 21:33-46

[Jesus said:] 33“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. 34When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. 35But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. 36Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. 37Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ 38But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.’ 39So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. 40“Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” 41They said to Jesus, “The owner 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.”

42Jesus 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’?”

43Therefore I tell you, the dominion of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of it. 44The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.”

45When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. 46They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because the people regarded him as a prophet.

Jesus is now in Jerusalem in his last week alive. His mission has been to point to God’s way of living and being Present as well as the invitation to others to embrace, enjoy and experience that. He’s overturned the tables and made a mess of the outer courts of the temple demanding the corruption stop and a return to a recognition of the purpose of God’s house and role in life. The tension & conflict between him and the powers in control has reached a fever pitch especially as Jesus is now openly referencing the misguided leadership that the religious/political authorities have provided to the people. The power groups have demanded to know the nature & source of Jesus’ assumed authority (because it threatens their own and the system currently in place). Jesus offers 3 responses to that question: a question of his own about John the Baptist and his power/authority, a parable about 2 sons who express

their sense of power/authority in how they act, and now this parable about a landowner and his son. One key in these actions/stories is being able to see beyond one's own assumptions and understandings about who we are, what we have and how all of that has come to us. The gifts of our lives, world and knowledge especially those things that are most personal (our values, abilities, genetic characteristics, ability to earn a living and wisdom in making a life) are most often gifts from the legacy of those who came before us and ultimately the God who has brought into being all of this. Recognizing that reality, acknowledging that truth helps keep ME from getting sucked into the AssUmption that I deserve it, I own it, I earned it and its all MINE. Instead it become the wisdom and freedom of living in the loving generosity of the ONE who made it all possible in the first place.

1. Subtlest of Dangers: The Intractable ME, the AssUmption of U.

2. Awareness/Gratitude as Keys

3. Benefits of Living this Way