

The title for today's message is: **This Very Stone**

Jesus said: ***And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.***"

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Reading once again from the Gospel of Matthew, our Lord said: ***The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?***

It was very early in the morning, the day after Jesus cleanses the temple by turning over the tables at the temple, driving everyone there out.

And apparently He had spent the night in Bethany, most likely with Lazarus, and his two sisters, Martha, and Mary.

Jesus got up early that morning, probably, so not to disturb His hosts. Or maybe so He wouldn't have to defend His decision to return to Jerusalem.

Now—talk about nerves of steel! Jesus not only goes back to Jerusalem, but also returns to the temple again.

And, on His way back from Jerusalem, He is met by the chief priests and the elders, who demand to know by what authority, He did these things.

But, Jesus answers them, with yet another parable. Actually with a series of parables.

Now, as Jesus talks about a vineyard, most likely, the Chief Priests were thinking about what Isaiah said about vineyards.

Isaiah said: ***The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant planting.***

Now, the prophet Isaiah was inspired to speak of Israel as a “vineyard,” tenderly cared for by God Himself, yet it bared bad fruit.

And fresh in their minds, would have been what Jesus had done to the fig tree that had no fruit to eat. He cursed it and it withered away.

So, just as Jesus cursed the tree which bared no fruit, He also curses fruitless Israel, by removing its protections.

Jesus said: ***“Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.***

So, today we need to ask ourselves, “just how much of God’s protection and security do we think our nation can expect.

I mean, how can we expect any blessings at all from God, when the streets of our nation run red in the shedding on innocent, pre-born human life?

Do we feel safe from our enemies when the institutions of law, tell us that evil is good, therefore good is evil.

Its true, God tended, and blessed our nation, when it was first formed, by giving us very godly, Christian leaders.

And because of the Christian leaders the vineyards were evenly measured, and trimmed including the trenches and the size of the winepress.

There was careful descriptions outlined how to prune the vines, including directions on where, and where not, to plant the vines.

And like our ancient brothers and sisters, we knew, what were the best, and the worst varieties of vines to plant, or not to plant.

Simply put, a lot of care went into our nation, just as God so carefully tended to His people, Israel.

But what did He get for all His loving care, both from Israel, and our Nation? He got, injustice, unrighteousness, bloodshed, and shouts of disobedience!

Look, God could have cursed Israel to death. But He wanted the vineyard to prosper! So He sent His servants, the prophets, to plant good seed.

Jesus says in the parable, the tenants beat one, stoned another, and killed yet another. Beat one, this represents any number of the prophets.

Stoned another, Tradition says that the prophet Jeremiah, was killed by stoning.

And killed another, Amos is believed to have been killed by the use of a club. And Isaiah was killed when he was actually sawed in two.

Now, as Jesus continues with the parable, the priests, and others, begin to recognize that they are the tenants who persecuted the prophets of God.

They know Jesus claims to be the Son of God, and in several passages of the Bible, we're told that they wanted to stone Jesus, for that claim!

Non-the-less, Jesus continues telling His parable, turning their attention now to the Son of the Vineyard.

Jesus said: ***Last of all, he sent his son to them. `They will respect my son, he said.***

So, the question is; did the tenants, and the rulers of Israel, recognize that Jesus was in fact, the Son of God?

Well, the suggestion here is, they did! So why did they crucify Him? Why do people continue even today to crucify Him through their sins?

Its simple, like the people in our text, many people today don't want the King's Son! They don't want the Lord of Life, to be the lord of their lives!

Today, we continue to live in a public square where the wants of individuals are valued to the exclusion of, moral decency and justice.

Its clear, an increasing number of our leaders today want Jesus, and His followers out of their way, wanting to build America according to a godless standard.

For example: A federal judge has ruled that a tiny fish on the official municipal seal of Republic, Montana.

That its unconstitutional because it indicates Christianity as the city's religion. Then there's a film entitled It's Elementary.

Which is being used extensively in public schools, to promote unbiblical lifestyles, while at the same time, taking jabs at Christianity.

Of course, then there is the first grader in Philadelphia, whose parents have gone to court. Why?

Because his teacher wouldn't let him read a favorite story from the Bible to his class, nor allowed him to put up a picture he drew of Jesus.

Even though the assignment was to draw a picture of someone or something the students are thankful for.

Sadly, the Bible cannot come into public classrooms, yet, students can bring books that depict how great Adolf Hitler's rule was.

Look the truth is, the Son of God is daily being rejected by our culture. And yet, note what Newsweek admitted in a March issue, and I quote:

“By any secular standard, Jesus is also the dominant figure of Western culture.

Like the millennium itself, much of what we now think of as Western ideas, inventions, and values, finds its inspiration from Christianity.

Art, and science, self, and society, politics, and economics, marriage, and the family, right, and wrong, body, and soul.

All have been touched, and often radically transformed, by Christian influence.” (End of quote)

Like the Jewish leaders, who were standing before Jesus as He told this parable, a growing number of our leaders.

Who have called organized religion a “sham”, and a “crutch,” want to get Christ out of the way too.

Jesus knew then, as well as today that the multitudes would reject Him and His Word’s.

The Bible says that as the end of time draws close, the majority of people will reject Jesus as they also, persecute His followers.

Yes, we have suffered rejections, and yes, we may suffer even worse in the future.

But one thing the enemies of Christ cannot do, they cannot remove how perfectly God fits us into His eternal plan, and Kingdom.

Jesus, you see, is the cornerstone that knits us all together, so were told by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians.

Paul said: ***built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.***

Jesus is the Servant King who came into the vineyard of this world, suffered and died for our sin, and then rose bodily from the grave so that He could prepare a place for us in heaven.

May the Living Lord continue to inspire each of us not to push Him out of our lives.

But to receive Him, and all His benefits, so that we might have forgiveness of sins, joy, life and salvation.

The way may be hard in this world for the workman of God. Never forget, however, that what we are building will outlast the sands of time.

To God in Christ Jesus, be the glory, and the honor, and the dominion now and forever!

Amen.

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