

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 22)

- October 4, 2026 -

⁴³ Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. ⁴⁴ And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him. ⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them.

- Matthew 21:43-45 -

These verses conclude the parable of the tenants with a warning of pending judgment. In the preceding verses, the master of a house leased his vineyard to tenants and went away to another country. At the time of the harvest, he sent servants to collect the produce from the tenants. However, the tenants beat and/or killed these servants. The master then sent even more servants, but the tenants treated them the same way. Finally, the master sent his son, thinking that the tenants would surely respect his son. Instead, the tenants killed the son in order to get his inheritance and thereby claim the vineyard for themselves. In response, the master decides to kill the tenants and rent the vineyard to others.

This parable describes the rebellious history of, and the consequent judgment upon national Israel. Israel had abused and killed the prophets whom God had sent to them, and they would soon kill God's Son. As a result of this treachery, God would take the kingdom away from them and give it to others producing its fruits. Thus, when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard this parable, they knew that Jesus was pronouncing judgment upon them.

Yet, in God's providence, this judgment upon national Israel would open the way for the salvation of all people, Jews and Gentiles alike. In the Old Testament economy, Israel was both a chosen people and a chosen nation. They were supposed to be an example to the other nations. And since God's presence dwelled in the Temple, Jerusalem was the spiritual center of the world. There was thus an inward orientation toward this spiritual center, even though spiritual blessings were supposed to flow outward from national Israel to the broader world.

However, when Jesus died, the curtain separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Temple was torn from top to bottom in two. Thus, through the shedding of Christ's blood, the barrier separating God from sinful humanity was removed. As a result, there was no longer a geographic spiritual center on earth. Rather, there was an outward movement from Israel to the ends of the earth, resulting in a polycentric economy where God's Spirit would dwell in every believer's heart. So, by killing God's Son, national Israel brought God's judgment upon itself, yet in a way that universalized God's salvation and calling for all people, Jews and Gentiles alike.