

Luke 20:9-20  
“The Rejected Cornerstone”  
Fifth Sunday in Lent

April 7, 2019  
First Lutheran Church, Glencoe, Minn.  
Pastor Peter Adelsen

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

*[Intro]*

“The Stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”

Recently, I came across an article about a new Bible.

It reported: “Zondervan Publishing has announced a new Bible with micro-perforated, completely removable pages. This new edition of the Scriptures would allow Christians to remove doctrines, verses, and entire books of the Bible they find unpopular or inconvenient.”

“Don’t like some of the heavy-handed calls to repentance, whether in the New Testament or Old? Now, you can just rip that page out. The bottom line is, if you stumble across a snippet of the Word that’s hard to swallow; now you can just get rid of it.”

Also, according to Zondervan, the Bible will also ship with a quick-start guide for Christians, indicating which pages they should remove right way.

Does this article shock you? Well, it should. But, the good news is that this is from the Babylon Bee, a Christian satirical website, but this article does hold some truth. You see, deleting portions of the Bible for convenience is actually happening. Our sinful nature wants to put itself above what God says. Our sinful nature wants to be in charge, rather than repent of our sins against God. Our sinful nature wants to reject God.

*[What Authority?]*

During His earthly ministry, many people rejected Jesus. Today’s gospel lesson tells of some of the people who rejected Jesus — in particular the Jewish authorities, which included the chief priests, scribes and elders.

Rejection is nothing new for Jesus, for He had sent the prophets of old to preach repentance and prepare the Jewish people for His coming. These prophets faced rejection, ridicule and sometimes death, because many of the Jews did not care what God had to say.

Eventually the promised Messiah came and He faced the same rejection.

You see, the Jewish authorities loved the influence they had over the Jewish people and they didn't appreciate it when anyone shook their apple cart of power. This is why the Jewish authorities hated Jesus. They did not want to lose their power over the people. It was never about God. It was all about them.

So, one day as Jesus was publicly teaching in the temple many of the Jewish authorities showed up including the chief priests, scribes and elders who came up to Jesus and publicly criticized him saying, ***“Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who is it that gave you this authority!”*** (Luke 20:2).

That is to say: “Who are *you*?! And, who taught *you*?!”

You see, the Jewish authorities were really upset that any Jew would listen to a rabbi from the backwoods town of Nazareth, rather than listening to them. They felt threatened. They saw their power dwindling from them as more people were flocking to Jesus. They needed this Jesus stopped by any means necessary.

So with these Jewish authorities present, Jesus took this opportunity to teach everyone a parable.

Now, this parable left no one guessing on what it was about, because everyone knew.

Jesus began saying: ***“A man planted a vineyard and let it out to tenants and went into another country for a long while”*** (Luke 20:9b).

Then time came for the owner of the vineyard to send servants to the tenants so the owner could get some of the fruit of the vineyard. But these tenants beat each servant and gave them nothing.

Eventually, the owner sent his son and thought the tenants might respect him. Instead of respecting the owner's son, they thought: "This is the heir! Let us kill him, so that the inheritance may be ours!" So, they threw the son out of the vineyard and killed him.

Knowing what was on their hearts, Jesus looked right at the Jewish authorities and asked them a rhetorical question: "What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them?" [Pause] "He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others."

This fueled even more hatred at Jesus. "How could this Nazareth know-it-all say this about us?! What gives him the authority to call us out?!"

Then Jesus spoke again looking directly into the eyes of the Jewish authorities. "***What then is this that is written: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone'? Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.***" (Luke 20:17-18).

### ***[Cornerstone]***

Now, what exactly is a cornerstone? Well, this is a stone that is placed in the most prominent corner of a building. It also serves as a reference to all the other stones or bricks.

When the hearers heard this, they knew that the stone is Jesus and the builders are the Jewish authorities. Here, Jesus is saying that His rejection is how He will become the cornerstone and that God's glory will be manifested in His rejection.

In saying this, Jesus is also implying that these Jewish authorities are godless. Since they have rejected the beloved Son, they have also rejected the owner – God the Father. Jesus is telling everyone that these Jewish authorities only think about themselves and never about God.

Because of their rejection and unbelief, the power of the Jewish authorities is about to be broken to pieces under the rejected Stone.

In his parable, Jesus reminds everyone that it was God who planted the vineyard and that it was God who established Israel as His people.

God never asked the Israelites to volunteer to become God's people, instead He just chose them and not because they were godly. God chose Israel so He could set His love upon them.

The only thing God desires from Israel is their repentance, but Israel struggles even with that. Instead of repenting of their sins against God and giving thanksgiving to God for all they have, these Jewish authorities continue in sin and only praise each other.

They kill prophets when the prophet tells them to repent. They kill the owner's Son in hopes of taking all authority.

### ***[Today's Parable of the Wicked Tenants]***

This parable also speaks of today. You see, we still have wicked tenants. Instead of Jewish leaders, we have Christian leaders. Today's wicked tenants again make it about themselves, rather than Jesus.

This is prominent among the leadership in today's mainline Christianity as their leaders have moved their people away from Christ's teachings and instead show favor to man's teachings.

They refuse to recognize that today's vineyard is built on the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Instead, they say things about the Bible such as "That was then, this is now" to justify their false doctrine. And if they cite Jesus, they only focus on what they perceive as a good teaching. They use their opinion to say if a particular part of Scripture is true or not.

This is sin. This is breaking the First Commandment, since they are placing themselves above God.

### ***[We Can Become the Wicked Tenants]***

It's not just those religious leaders, but us, too. We also sin and want it our way, rather than God's way. So, like the wicked tenants, we are just as likely to reject Jesus.

We may take offense to what Jesus says about abortion, co-habitation, coveting, homosexual lifestyle, or even that unbelievers are damned. How can this be? I want to say Jesus loves everyone just the way they are.

Well, Jesus does love us, but He doesn't love our sin. You see, the power of sin separates us from God. Repentance, on the other hand, shows that we desire to be closer to God.

This is what Jesus is teaching in His parable. He is teaching that we are to listen to God's Word, rather than follow man's sinful desires. Jesus wants us to be prepared, so that when we hear false doctrine that we do not run toward it and accept it, but instead challenge the false doctrine with God's unchanging Word.

### ***[Christ Alone]***

The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. Jesus is the rejected son of the parable. Jesus is the cornerstone that the builders rejected. Jesus is the owner's son who was thrown out of the vineyard and killed.

The Jewish authorities rejected the prophets. They rejected Jesus. Likewise, when we desire to do the opposite of God, we have rejected Jesus.

As those unbelieving leaders rejected Jesus, their authority crumbled, but the cornerstone remained.

Jesus tells us, ***“Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him”*** (Luke 20:18).

Everyone will be broken and crushed, including those who believe in Him. For everyone must deny their sinful desires and fall into the brokenness of repentance in order to be raised again as new beings – the living stones of Christ – as the temple of God.

We must realize the brokenness of our sin against God in thought, word and deed. We must repent of those sins, so Jesus can raise us up to complete forgiveness.

You see, Christ — the cornerstone — builds up all believers through Law and Gospel. Christ is the cornerstone and we are His church. As His church, we are dependent on Christ. He holds us together as living stones to Him as He restores us in Word and Sacrament.

When we sin against God, and repent of that sin, Jesus again restores us as His living stone. Jesus alone holds us together as our one foundation and He strengthens us constantly when we repent of our sins and receive His forgiveness.

But as much as Christ loves those who love Him, this is the opposite for the unbeliever. Instead of restoring them, they are crushed under the weight of the Cornerstone.

Christ knew He would be rejected, but this did not stop Him from saving the entire world. Why us? We don't deserve saving. We would rather disobey God, rather than obey God. Why would He take our flesh and die? This is truly love unknown to us. He was rejected and yet He still loved us to become the eternal sacrifice for our sins as He was killed outside the walls of Jerusalem. It was then that He took on our filthy sin and made every believer in Him clean in righteousness through His suffering, death and resurrection.

God the Father even shows mercy to those who reject His Son, by giving them the same grace when they repent of their sins and trust in Jesus.

Through Christ's resurrection, all who believe in Him are raised up as living stones of His Church. We are given all the benefits as a beloved child of God.

We are righteous, because the rejected cornerstone laid down His life for you and for me. We are righteous, because through His resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven, God the Father has given us the vineyard! Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠