

Willow River Parish

Title: Rejected Stone, Jesus Christ

Scripture: Matthew 21:32-46

³² For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.

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. ³⁴ When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. ³⁵ But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶ Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. ³⁷ Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ ³⁸ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.’ ³⁹ So 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?” ⁴¹ 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.”

⁴² 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’?

⁴³ 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. ⁴⁴ The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.”

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

Good morning Church! Today is World Communion Sunday. In the world, there are diverse Christian denominations. There are also several denominations in Clear Lake. Right? Even though we have all confessed Jesus as Christ, we could not unite together for a long time because of the differences of the traditions and doctrines of each church. I googled about the history of World Communion Sunday. According to Wikipedia, “World Communion Sunday was started in 1933 by Dr. Hugh Thomson Kerr who was a Presbyterian pastor. It was then adopted throughout the US Presbyterian Church in 1936 and subsequently spread to other denominations. In 1940, the Federal Council of Churches (now the National Council of Churches), led by Jesse Moren Bader, endorsed World Communion Sunday and began to promote it to Christian churches worldwide.” Therefore, on the first Sunday of October, all Christian churches in the world offer a communion service beyond tradition and doctrine.

The Holy Communion means the Lord’s Supper, or the Last Supper Jesus had with His disciples before he was captured. The Last Supper time was Passover. Passover is very important for Jewish. When the Israelites escaped out of Egypt, God allowed the ten disasters in Egypt. At this time, the last disaster was the death of the firstborn in Egypt. Due to this disaster, every firstborn in the land of Egypt died. However, the Israelites did not suffer from the disaster because they observed the order of God and put the blood of sheep on the two doorposts. They still observe Passover and remember the meaning of the salvation God gave them.

In Luke 22:19-20 (NRSV), “Jesus took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ And, he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.’” Holy Communion is a ritual to remember the life, death, resurrection, and presence of Jesus Christ. Paul also says that “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he

comes.” (1 Cor 11:26, NRSV) In the early church, worship consisted of words and fellowship. If the words are the current sermon that interprets and proclaims the word of the Lord, the fellowship meant the Holy Communion. Therefore, participating in the Holy Communion means that all church members sit around the table, regardless of their economic, financial, social, and marital status or whether baptized or not, and they become brothers and sisters in Christ. Returning to the World Communion Sunday (the first Sunday of October), it includes meaning that every church in the world is brothers and sisters in Christ by participating in the Holy Communion. What is the way to spend this day well? First of all, we should participate in the Holy Communion, right? Next, we need to think about what the unity in Christ means. Finally, we can participate in the missional giving as the body of Christ. I hope you too spend this day well in Christ.

According to the Gospel lesson we read today, Jesus speaks of the parable of the wicked tenants. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He leased it to tenants and went to another country. (33) When the season of fruits had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. (34) But, the tenants grabbed his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another not to lose the produce. (35) The owner sent other slaves again, and they treated them in the same way. (36) Finally, he decided to send his son to them because he thought they would respect his son. (37) Contrary to his expectations, they kill even his son to take over the vineyard. (38-39) The vineyard means this world, the owner of the vineyard means God, his slaves mean the prophets sent by God, and the tenants mean Pharisees and teachers of law, and his son means Jesus. Jesus, who was innocent, suffered, died on the cross because of the sins of human: greed, envy, jealousy, anger and hatred, and he resurrected.

In a word, the event of Jesus’ resurrection is the event that the stone rejected has become the cornerstone. (Psalm 118:22-23; Matthew 21:42) Jesus confesses this by quoting Psalm 118, “the stone that the

builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” For believers, the center of faith is the cross and the resurrection. Jesus' crucifixion was a miserable event to be rejected and killed by people. However, the tragedy was reversed by the resurrection of Jesus. The parable includes surprise that the stone that the builders treated as useless, but the owner of the house valued it and reused it as cornerstone. Jesus was abandoned by the world, but now every church takes the cross of Jesus Christ as cornerstone and confesses His suffering and resurrection.

What is the relationship between Jesus who died on the cross and me? This is the most important question in Christian faith. Jesus of Nazareth, who died on the cross; Jesus of Nazareth, who was rejected by the world; He is the Son of God and our Christ and our savior, and redeemer. God restored Jesus' death through resurrection. In 1 Peter 2:4 (NRSV), Peter invites people, saying “Come to Jesus Christ, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight.” Our faith is built on this love of the cross. We must always renew our confession that the Lord on the cross is my Lord through all worship. The cross is a sign of the Lord's suffering, far from glory. It should also be the place where life was born through pain and suffering, and where a forgiven sinner starts a new life. I hope we can have a time to look back on our lives through the Holy Communion. We can ask ourselves if we have done our best to live by God's word. The Holy Communion is time to remember the life, death, resurrection, and presence of Jesus Christ. By eating and drinking Jesus' flesh and blood, we must break away from the position of sinners and pledge a new life as children of God. Everyone can participate in the Holy Communion, and all who participate are family members, brothers, and sisters in Christ. As God first loved us, may we love each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. Amen.