

Growth Group Questions

19th Sunday after Pentecost, October 8, 2023

Introduction

If you worshiped on Saturday, you might have noticed that we lit the *Paschal* candle. We light this candle for baptisms, funerals, and during the whole Easter season. What's the connection between those three special times? Can you think of other symbolism in our church building?

Into the Word – Isaiah 5:1-7

1. There's little doubt that Jesus was drawing on this part of Scripture when he told the crowd the parable of the tenants we heard as our Gospel reading. In essence, Jesus is quoting himself. How is that so?
2. Isaiah lives about 725 years before Jesus' birth. What blessings had God given to his people that would lead to the description Isaiah makes of a loving vineyard owner?
3. The book of Isaiah begins with a series of judgments God is going to make against Jerusalem and Judah. Look up the rest of the chapter and, starting at verse 8, find parallels to our own nation. Would God judge us any better?

Into the Word – Philippians 3:12-21

4. In Paul's picture of running the race of faith, are we striving ("pressing on") to earn a prize we earn or a prize that has been earned for us? Use verses 12, 14 and 16 to explain that we are saved by God's grace alone.
5. WELS pastors and leaders are reluctant to encourage members to follow their example. I understand the humility behind that sentiment. In what ways/situations might it be good for leaders to follow Paul's example in v. 17 and encourage people to imitate them?

6. Explain the stark contrast between the lost (described in v. 19) and the saved (described in v. 20).

Into the Word – Matthew 21:33-43

7. The landowner in the parable plants the vineyard, builds walls and a watchtower, and digs the winepress. That's everything a vineyard needs to succeed. What similar things has God done for us to succeed?
8. "This is God's world – we just live in it." Explain as many different ways as you can how this is true.
9. What are some ways that we sometimes "kill the messenger" from God, as the tenants of the vineyard did?
10. The thinking and logic of the tenants is twisted and corrupt. Who would think you could inherit a vineyard by killing the owner's son?! Think of examples, though, of how the world's thinking is twisted and corrupt in spiritual matters.
11. This parable is unique, in that it is the only one where Jesus asks the crowd to explain its meaning. Usually either he tells the meaning or leaves it for us to figure out. Not a question, just an interesting fact.
12. Verse 44 might not be original to Matthew's Gospel. It is in Luke's account though, so it really doesn't matter. "**Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.**" Explain the difference between those who "fall" on Jesus and those on whom Jesus "falls."

Closing Prayer

Father in heaven, your patience leads you to wait as the world continues in sin and stray ever further from you. Thank you for calling us to faith and bringing the truth of Christ to us. Move us to take your gospel to others that they might have our peace. In Jesus' name, Amen.