

Pentecost XVI FLC A  
Matthew 21:33-46  
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### **WHEN THE OWNER OF THE VINEYARD COMES....**

Tom had written a letter to his friend, Fred. As Tom went into town he passed Fred's mail box and put his letter in it, thinking that this would save time and postage.

Two days later, Tom found this letter back in HIS box, marked: "Returned for postage due".

The next time Tom was in town, he talked with the Postmaster. "I put that letter in Fred's box to save time and postage, and you sent it back to me, costing me both time and postage!"

The Postmaster told Tom: "That mail box belongs to the Postal Service, not to you OR Fred". You have to pay the Postal Service to use that mail box. Tom was not happy, but he began to understand.

That winter, Tom went into town and stopped by the Post Office and told the Postmaster: "A snowplow took out Fred's mailbox, you people have to go out and fix it, it belongs to you."

No, said the Postmaster, that mailbox belongs to Fred, it doesn't belong to us!

Well, Tom reminded the Postmaster what he had said last summer, that the mailboxes belong to the Postal Service.

The Postmaster listened carefully then said: "Well, let me put it this way: The outside of the mailbox belongs to you to keep up and maintain. The inside of the mailbox belongs to the postal service for its use and its use only

I

Whenever I read this parable of the vineyard and tenants I think of this little story. The story is true and it is true to life in the church today.

We are tenants in this Church and this Church building. Some 50 years ago members of this congregation organized a fellowship and built a building, a good and worthy building, one of beauty and grace fit to reflect the beauty of the Kingdom of God. Then we did something startling, something almost unbelievable: We gave this building away: we gave it to God! Yes, we did, we gave it to God. We have bulletins on file of that event showing that we gave this building to God. We gave it away for God's message of the Kingdom.

We further made promises to God that we would be faithful stewards of this building and maintain it not only for ourselves but for the ministry, preaching, teaching, nurture and worship that will take place here. There was no ending date on that gift we made to God. The gift was open-ended.

## II

While it appears to us that we are responsible for the “outside of the church”, the “inside” of the Church is dedicated to God’s message for us and for all people. We are not the ones who determine what happens here, God guides what happens inside this building because this building is dedicated to share God’s message with all people.

We have been entrusted with the message of the Kingdom of God. As Isaiah has said “...for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. “ (56:7b) We have been called to bear fruits of the Kingdom of Heaven.

We are blessed: God has given us the inheritance of former generations who have built up this church building but also the congregation that worships here. We are blessed with the message of the Kingdom of God. We are blessed, yes, even entrusted with the message of the Kingdom of God. This is a message not for us alone, but for all people who come to worship God in this place.

## III

Our response then is a response to God, the giver of all good and perfect gifts. God has given us all that we have and all that we are. We are entrusted with the message of the Kingdom.

Two housekeepers are cleaning up the mansion of a wealthy man who recently passed on. One woman said” “George was wealthy all those years, how much did he leave? “ “All of it” was the reply.

We live our lives in the presence of God, the giver of life and our eternal rest. We rejoice that we have been entrusted with the gifts of the Kingdom, and respond to God with grateful hearts what God has first given us.

Our response may be in the form of prayer, it may be a response using our talents in praise, in music, our response may be in the form of time, given to further the Kingdom in this place. Our response may be in gifts of money to pay the commitments we have made for utilities, etc. Yet all responses are ultimately a response to God, for he has first given us the means to do these things.

I trust that our response will be made with a joyful heart for we have been abundantly blessed.