

I love my house. It is just over 200 years old. It is actually the house that stood where the former rectory, the Boyd House, is today. When the Boyd House was built, my house was moved down the hill. At least a couple times a week, I am reminded of the previous owner Lynn who did an amazing job restoring the house. She opened up fireplaces that had been sealed and stripped away paneling that covered the bannister railings. There are so many loving touches all over the house and since I knew her, I can say that she didn't just do it for her family but for the next one to come. And so from time to time as I live in my house, I remind myself that this is not mine forever. It is only for a time and that I am one of many who have lived in this house for the past 200 years and will be joined by others in the future.

I will care for my house the best that I can. I may be the owner of the house although one could argue that the bank is also the owner of the house, but in reality I am one of the caretakers, the stewards of the house.

This is what the tenants in the parable this morning have forgotten. They are not the owners. They are the caretakers whom the owner of the vineyard has entrusted to take care of his property. They decide to act as owner and when the actual owner sends messengers to collect his part of the harvest, they beat, them, stone them and even kill them. The owner sends his son thinking his son will command respect. This is not the case and the tenants kill the son thinking this will guarantee their ownership of the property.

At this point in the telling of the parable, Jesus asks the people listening what the owner will do. They say "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."

As I said at the weekday service, this parable has the makings of a Quentin Tarantino movie. There is no good end. It is a mess. Messenger dead. Son dead. Tenants dead. Are we to be left quaking in fear over our tendency to want to be owners rather than good tenants? I appreciated David Lose's <sup>1</sup>commentary about this parable. *"In the end, you see, this parable isn't about wicked tenants... or Pharisees... or Matthew's community... or even us. It's rather about God. God the one who entrusted us with all good things, blessing us beyond the dreams of our grandparents. God the one who, even when disappointed by what we do with those blessings yet comes to us in love. God the one who weeps over the injustices of the world, embraces those who fall short, and promises to never, ever give up on anyone."*

God loves us even when we get it all wrong. And yet while God will always love us, I think when we forget we are not the owners but the tenants or the caretakers, we end up in a mess. We make this world a mess.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.davidlose.net>

Think about it. What has God given you to take care of? Let's start with the talents were you born with. Do you sing beautifully? Are you good with numbers? Maybe you good at organizing? Or teaching? Or looking after children?

All these are gifts from God – our creator. How are we caring for them? How are we sharing them? I believe part of the caretaking God asks of us is giving back and sharing our gifts with the world. When we keep them for ourselves and don't share them, we make a mess. God doesn't come for us to take us out, but when we act as owners and not caretakers of our gifts, the world is less beautiful – not the way God dreamed it to be.

What else have we been given to take care of? This earth. Our children. Our homes. Our church. Our ministries in the church. So much and none of it is ours. None of it for us to keep for ourselves. All these things are given to us to care for and give back to the world. It is a wondrous thing to pause and reflect on all that God has given us.

You may think well I worked hard to buy my house. Yes. But where did you get the skills or the drive or the mind to do that work? See what happens when you take some time to ponder all that God has given you to take care of whether it is the place you live or gifts you have been given or the work you do in you daily life.

Hopefully, this week you received the introductory letter for our pledge campaign. If you haven't, I have a few extra here. The letter introduces our theme for this year – Gratitude and Faithful giving – hand in hand. Also included is a post card with the words, 'What are you grateful for?' for you to reflect on. I want to take those words into the context of this gospel because when I stop to consider all that God has given me, I find myself grateful. And when I am grateful, I am more likely to act as a good steward or tenant of what God has given me.

Think about what you been given by God to care for? Ponder those gifts and your gratefulness for them. Think about how you give back of those gifts to the world, because I suspect that when you do you make this world more beautiful – more the way God dreams it to be.