

Trinity Episcopal Church

Cranford, in the Diocese of New Jersey



“The Wicked Husbandmen” by The Brothers Dalziel

The Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

With the Blessing of the Animals

Rite I Holy Eucharist

October 4, 2026 at 8 AM — Proper 22

The Reverend Andrew David Kruger, Rector & Presider

Anthony Rafaniello, Director of Music

Casey Woodruff, Senior Warden & Kathleen M. Murray, Junior Warden

Welcome

Andrew Kruger

The bell is rung and the People stand.

Gathering Sentences

BCP 323

Presider Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
People **And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever. Amen**

Presider There is one Body and one Spirit;
People **There is one hope in God's call to us;**

Presider One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism;
People **One God and Father of all.**

Collect for Purity

BCP 323

Presider Let us pray.

People **Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hid:
Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love thee,
and worthily magnify thy holy Name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Kyrie

BCP 324

Presider Kyrie eleison.
People **Christe eleison.**
Presider Kyrie eleison.

Presider The Lord be with you.

People **And with thy spirit.**

Presider Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God,
who art always more ready to hear than we to pray,
and art wont to give more than either we desire or deserve:
Pour down upon us the abundance of thy mercy,
forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid,
and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask,
but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord;
who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The People sit.

First Reading

Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20

Reader A reading from the Book of Exodus.

God spoke all these words: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they were afraid and trembled and stood at a distance, and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die."

Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid; for God has come only to test you and to put the fear of him upon you so that you do not sin.”

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 19

Cæli enarrant

BCP 606

1. The heavens declare the glory of God, *
 and the firmament shows his handiwork.
2. One day tells its tale to another, *
 and one night imparts knowledge to another.
3. Although they have no words or language, *
 and their voices are not heard,
4. Their sound has gone out into all lands, *
 and their message to the ends of the world.
5. In the deep has he set a pavilion for the sun; *
 it comes forth like a bridegroom out of his chamber;
 it rejoices like a champion to run its course.
6. It goes forth from the uttermost edge of the heavens
 and runs about to the end of it again; *
 nothing is hidden from its burning heat.
7. The law of the Lord is perfect and revives the soul; *
 the testimony of the Lord is sure
 and gives wisdom to the innocent.
8. The statutes of the Lord are just and rejoice the heart; *
 the commandment of the Lord is clear
 and gives light to the eyes.
9. The fear of the Lord is clean and endures for ever; *
 the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.
10. More to be desired are they than gold, more than much fine gold, *
 sweeter far than honey, than honey in the comb.

11. By them also is your servant enlightened, *
and in keeping them there is great reward.
12. Who can tell how often he offends? *
cleanse me from my secret faults.
13. Above all, keep your servant from presumptuous sins;
let them not get dominion over me; *
**then shall I be whole and sound,
and innocent of a great offense.**
14. Let the words of my mouth
and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, *
O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

Second Reading

Philippians 3:4b-14

Reader A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Church in Philippi.

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

Reader The Word of the Lord.
People **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel

Matthew 21:33-46

Presider The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to St Matthew.

People **Glory be to thee, O Lord.**

Jesus said, "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. When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way.

Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.' So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" 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."

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'? 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. The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls." When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

Presider The Gospel of the Lord.

People **Praise be to thee, O Christ.**

Homily

Andrew Kruger

Affirmation of Baptismal Faith

The Presider moves to the Font, and the People stand.

Friends in Christ, Baptism is not the rite of a moment but the commitment of a lifetime. In baptism, God calls us out of darkness into his marvelous light. To follow Christ means dying to sin and rising to new life with our Lord.

Therefore let us reaffirm our Baptismal Vows together with all those who celebrate the anniversary of their baptism this month.

Do you reaffirm your renunciation of evil
and renew your commitment to Jesus Christ?

I do.

Do you believe in God the Father?

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

**He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.

**He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.**

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

I will, with God's help.

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

I will, with God's help.

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

I will, with God's help.

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as your self?

I will, with God's help.

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

I will, with God's help.

Blessing the Water

Celebrating Common Prayer

Let us give thanks to the Lord:

God is worthy of all thanksgiving and praise.

Blessèd are you, Sovereign God of all, to you be glory and praise for ever! You are our light and our salvation. From the deep waters of death you have raised your Son to life in triumph. Accept our sacrifice of praise, we pray, and sanctify these waters of your new creation, that we, with all who have been born anew by water and the Spirit, may be renewed in your image, walk by the light of faith, and serve you in newness of life; through your anointed Son, Jesus Christ, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit we lift our voices of praise, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Blessèd be God for ever.

The Presider sprinkles the people with the aspergillum.

Blessing of the Animals

Presider Let us pray together the Collect for the Feast of St. Francis

**Most high, omnipotent, good Lord,
grant unto thy people grace to renounce gladly
the vanities of this world;
that, following the way of blessed Francis,**

**we may for love of thee delight in thy whole creation
with perfectness of joy;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.**

The Presider moves among the congregation to bless the animals.

“N., may you be blessed in the Name of God who created you,
and may you and your owner enjoy life together with our God.”

Prayers of the People

BCP 328

Let us pray for the whole state of Christ’s Church and the world.

Almighty and everliving God, who in thy holy Word hast taught us to make prayers, and supplications, and to give thanks for all humanity: Receive these our prayers which we offer unto thy divine Majesty, beseeching thee to inspire continually the Universal Church with the spirit of truth, unity, and concord; and grant that all those who do confess thy holy Name may agree in the truth of thy holy Word, and live in unity and godly love.

Give grace, O heavenly Father, to all bishops and other ministers especially Sarah, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Sean, the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, Sally our Bishop, and Andrew our Rector, that they may, both by their life and doctrine, set forth thy true and lively Word, and rightly and duly administer thy holy Sacraments.

And to all thy people give thy heavenly grace, and especially to this congregation here present; that, with meek heart and due reverence, they may hear and receive thy holy Word, truly serving thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life. We beseech thee also so to rule the hearts of those who bear the authority of government in this and every land especially Donald, our President, Rebecca Michelle, our governor, and Kathleen, the mayor of this town, that they may be led to wise decisions and right actions for the welfare and peace of the world.

Open, O Lord, the eyes of all people to behold thy gracious hand in all thy works, that, rejoicing in thy whole creation, they may honor thee with their substance, and be faithful stewards of thy bounty. And we most humbly beseech thee, of thy goodness, O Lord, to comfort and succor all those who, in this transitory life, are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity.

And we also bless thy holy Name for all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear [*especially...*], beseeching thee to grant them continual growth in thy love and service; and to grant us grace so to follow the good examples of all thy saints, that with them we may be partakers of thy heavenly kingdom. Grant these our prayers, O Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our only Mediator and Advocate. **Amen.**

Confession of Sin

BCP 331

Let us humbly confess our sins unto Almighty God.

The People kneel.

**Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against thee
in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved thee with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of thy Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in thy will,
and walk in thy ways,
to the glory of thy Name. Amen.**

Absolution

BCP 332

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who of his great mercy hath promised forgiveness of sins to all those who with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and bring you to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Comfortable Words

BCP 332

Hear the Word of God to all who truly turn to him.

Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden,
and I will refresh you. *Matthew 11:28*

God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the end that all that
believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. *John 3:16*

Peace

BCP 332

The People stand.

Presider The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People **And with thy spirit.**

Announcements

Andrew Kruger

Offertory Sentence

BCP 344

Worthy art thou, O Lord our God,
to receive glory and honor and power;
for thou hast created all things,
and by thy will they were created and have their being.



*The Ushers pass the collection plates among the People.
Alternatively, you may give to Trinity online:
scan the QR code and go directly to our Breeze link.*

The Presentation of Gifts

1 Chronicles 29:14b

Presider All things come of thee, O Lord:

People **And of thine own have we given thee.**

Eucharistic Prayer II

BCP 340

Presider The Lord be with you.

People **And with thy spirit.**

Presider Lift up your hearts.
People **We lift them up unto the Lord.**

Presider Let us give thanks unto our Lord God.
People **It is meet and right so to do.**

It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto thee, O Lord, holy Father, almighty, everlasting God, who by water and the Holy Spirit hast made us a new people in Jesus Christ our Lord, to show forth thy glory in all the world. Therefore with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious Name; evermore praising thee, and saying,

**Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts:
Heaven and earth are full of thy glory.
Glory be to thee, O Lord Most High.
Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

All glory be to thee, O Lord our God, for that thou didst create heaven and earth, and didst make us in thine own image; and, of thy tender mercy, didst give thine only Son Jesus Christ to take our nature upon him, and to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption.

He made there a full and perfect sacrifice for the whole world; and did institute, and in his holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that his precious death and sacrifice, until his coming again.

For in the night in which he was betrayed, he took bread; and when he had given thanks to thee, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take, eat, this is my Body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Likewise, after supper, he took the cup; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink this, all of you; for this is my Blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins. Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me."

Wherefore, O Lord and heavenly Father, we thy people do celebrate and make, with these thy holy gifts which we now offer unto thee, the memorial thy Son hath commanded us to make; having in remembrance his blessed passion and precious death, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension; and looking for his coming again with power and great glory.

And we most humbly beseech thee, O merciful Father, to hear us, and, with thy Word and Holy Spirit, to bless and sanctify these gifts of bread and wine, that they may be unto us the Body and Blood of thy dearly-beloved Son Jesus Christ.

And we earnestly desire thy fatherly goodness to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, whereby we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, our selves, our souls and bodies. Grant, we beseech thee, that all who partake of this Holy Communion may worthily receive the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son Jesus Christ, and be filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction; and also that we and all thy whole Church may be made one body with him, that he may dwell in us, and we in him; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord;

By whom, and with whom, and in whom, in the unity of the Holy Ghost all honor and glory be unto thee, O Father Almighty, world without end. **AMEN.**

Lord's Prayer

BCP 336

And now, as our Savior Christ hath taught us, we are bold to say,

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Breaking the Bread

BCP 337

The Presider breaks the consecrated bread. A period of silence is observed, then the Presider says

Presider Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

People **Therefore let us keep the feast.**

Prayer of Humble Access

BCP 337

The Presider and People say

**We do not presume to come to this thy Table,
O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness,
but in thy manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs
under thy Table.**

**But thou art the same Lord whose property is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ,
and to drink his blood,
that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us.**

Amen.

Invitation

BCP 338

Presider The Gifts of God:

People **For the People of God.**

Holy Communion

The ushers guide the people to receive Holy Communion. All who hunger for God, including children, are cordially invited to share the Gifts of God offered at this table. Whoever you are, wherever you are in your life's journey, you are welcome here.

All persons may, but no person must, receive communion in both kinds to receive the full spiritual benefits of communion.

Wine is offered by way of a sip from the common cup. You may choose to receive only the host. Gluten-free wafers are available by simple request to the priest.

Post Communion Prayer

Traditional

Presider Let us pray.

The People stand, and all pray together

**Almighty and everliving God, we most heartily thank thee,
For that thou hast fed us with this holy sacrament,
to knit us in one with Christ our Savior,
and to grant us a foretaste of that Heavenly Banquet
which thou hast prepared for all peoples. Amen.**

Blessing

BCP 339

The Presider pronounces the blessing

And now may the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**

The ministers recess.

Dismissal

BCP 340

Presider Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**



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For Friends, Visitors and Newcomers

Welcome to Trinity Episcopal Church in Cranford, New Jersey. Thank you for joining us in worship. The bulletin is designed to make you feel at home and includes everything you need for the service (liturgy, hymns, rubrics, etc.). Please connect with us; introduce yourself to the ushers so they can make you feel more comfortable. Father Andy is in the narthex (entrance) at the end of the service; it is an opportunity to connect on a more personal level. All are invited to Fellowship Hour in Sherlock Hall immediately after the service.

An email blast is sent every Thursday by 2 PM with hyperlinks to sign-up sheets, methods to contribute to the parish or other charitable organizations, ways to contact individuals or receive information on events, etc. Please contact the parish office to receive it or alternative methods of communication.

Baptismal Anniversaries

When we think about birthdays, we immediately recall the date we were born and took our first breath in this world. But if we take a moment to reflect, we will realize that we have another “birthday” of even greater significance: the day we became members of the body of Christ – our Baptismal birthday. Through the waters of baptism, the Holy Spirit anoints us and sets our inner compass, to walk in a path that is pleasing to God, to do all good works that God has planned for us, and to “seek God’s face” [Psalm 27:8]. This is the path that ultimately leads us into abundant life both in this earthly existence, and in the world to come. Whether baptized as a child or an adult, we prayerfully grow in our understanding and appreciation of our baptismal identity, as individuals and as a community. Usually, on the first Sunday of every month, we acknowledge those who have a baptismal “birthday” during the month in question and share in their renewal of baptismal vows. This monthly recognition of our “birth from above” [John 3:3] allows us to develop a deeper appreciation for the essence of our baptism. Parishioners celebrating their Baptismal Anniversaries in October:

Emma Barone	Oct. 26	Terry Nechuta	Oct. 17	Harrison Guerrasio	Oct. 30
Mary Ellinger	Oct. 1	Anna Roberts	Oct. 22	Sal Brown	Oct. 19
Sarah Gluck	Oct. 22	Jim Willix	Oct. 5	Michael Nazzaro	Oct. 8
Allison Gluck	Oct. 9	Phoebe Frumolt	Oct. 31	Victor Broccoli	Oct. 19
Abbie Sassi	Oct. 6	Mary Kate Walch	Oct. 30		

What you need to know today...

Stewardship Season Collect stewardship letter and pledge card from the narthex, and commit to the financial flourishing of the parish.

Blessing of the Animals Today at both services. Bring your pets or photographs of your pets to both services. There is no Sunday School today during the 10 AM service; children are invited to remain in church for the blessing of the animals.

Fellowship Hour In Sherlock Hall, immediately after this service; coffee, tea and snacks are provided.

Outreach Committee Today at 11:30 AM, meeting in Witherington Hall.

Confirmation Class Today from 5 PM to 7 PM in Witherington Hall.

St. John the Divine The Trinity Choir is away today and will return next week; they were invited to sing at the Feast of St. Francis service at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine in NYC. It will be an extraordinary experience to sing in one of the great cathedrals of the world, as part of one of its signature celebrations. Please note there is no children's choir rehearsal today.

TEDS Aftercare Aides Needed Trinity Episcopal Day School (TEDS) is currently seeking aftercare aides to help supervise children in Kindergarten through 5th Grade. Aides must be 18 years of age or older and available to work from approximately 3 PM or 3:30 PM until 6 PM. This is a paid position. Responsibilities include supervising children during the aftercare program and assisting them with homework. Anyone interested in learning more is encouraged to contact Nancy Ditzel at teds205@gmail.com.

What you need to know this week...

The Daily Offices Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer are offered online from Monday-Friday at 8:30 AM and 5 PM. Add and update prayer requests online at the church website. The list is prayed twice a day at Morning and Evening Prayer.

Parish Office Hours Office Manager Marion Nechuta is available from Tuesday to Thursday from 12 noon to 3:30 PM.

Handbell Choir Rehearsals This Wednesday, October 7 from 7 PM to 7:50 PM in the church.

Trinity Adult Choir This Wednesday, October 7 from 8 PM to 9 PM in the church.

Compline This Thursday at 8 PM online. A contemplative Office that emphasizes spiritual peace.

Knitting Circle This Saturday, October 10 at 10 AM in Witherington Hall.

What you need to know in the future...

Trinity Women's Group Monday, October 12 at 7 PM online.

Trinity Fellowship Luncheon Thursday, October 15 from 12:30-2 PM in Sherlock Hall. Fr. Andy, will talk about his Sabbatical time in South Africa and our meal will be Halloween themed. Call Susan Nelson (908-397-3944) or Susan Olszewski (908-757-9561) for information.

Outdoor Eucharist & Spiritual Hike Saturday, October 17 at 9 AM. See below for details.

Acolyte & Thurifer Training Sunday, October 18 immediately after the 10 AM Eucharist for all current and aspirant acolytes.

TESY's Fall Fellowship Event Sunday, October 18 at 1 PM in Witherington Chapel.

Family Game Night Saturday, October 24 from 5 PM to 8 PM in Sherlock Hall. All ages are welcome. Enjoy a light dinner, play an old favorite, learn a new game, or bring one to share.

All Souls Service Wednesday, October 28 at 7:30 PM; remember all those whom we love but see no longer.

The Sacrament of Baptism Baptism will be offered on the Feast of All Saints (observed on Sunday, November 1).

St Mark's Gospel Saturday, November 28, 10 AM to 12:30 PM in Witherington Chapel. The Gospel will be read from cover to cover.

Outdoor Eucharist and Spiritual Hike

Experience a unique encounter with the Eucharist celebrated in the splendor of God's creation. This popular semiannual event returns for the fourth time against the backdrop of stunning fall foliage, on Saturday, October 17 at 9 AM. Everyone will meet in front of the Trailside Nature Center, 452 New Providence Road, Mountainside. From there, it is a very short walk to a seating area where a special outdoor Eucharist liturgy will be celebrated. An easy one-hour hike will follow. Those who choose not to hike can sit quietly in the beauty of the Watchung Reservation after the service. This is a great activity for families and has always been a memorable event for everyone who attends. Please contact Senior Warden, Casey Woodruff (woodruff5073@gmail.com), to register or with any questions.

Today's Gospel and "Supersessionism"?

For much of Christian history, the Parable of the Wicked Tenants has been read in a supersessionist way. "Supersessionism" is the belief that because Israel rejected Christ, God rejected Israel and transferred Israel's covenantal place to the Church. The parable can seem to invite that conclusion. The vineyard recalls Isaiah 5, where the vineyard is explicitly Israel. The servants readily suggest the prophets, the son is Christ, and after the son is killed the vineyard is entrusted to "other tenants." Matthew then adds Jesus' warning: "the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom."

It is therefore not surprising that many early Christian interpreters heard the parable in this way. John Chrysostom speaks quite starkly of "the calling of the Gentiles" and "the casting out of the Jews," while the medieval *Catena Aurea* preserves interpretations in which the vineyard passes from the former people to the Gentiles or to the apostles. This reading became deeply embedded in Christian preaching and was often used to support the claim that Judaism had been superseded and the Jewish people displaced in God's purposes.

Yet the parable itself gives us good reasons to resist that conclusion. The most important is almost embarrassingly simple: the owner does not replace the vineyard. He replaces the tenants. The vineyard remains God's vineyard. Indeed, Chrysostom himself notices an important distinction between Jesus' parable and Isaiah 5. In Isaiah, the vineyard comes under judgment; in Matthew, he says, Jesus "accuses in particular the rulers of the people." The problem is not the vineyard but those entrusted with its care.

Matthew makes that point explicit. At the end of the episode, "the chief priests and the Pharisees" realize that Jesus is speaking about them. The controversy is therefore first about leadership and faithfulness, not about the rejection of an entire people. Modern scholarship has also helped us remember that Matthew's Gospel arose from a profoundly Jewish world. Anthony Saldarini, among others, argues that Matthew's fierce polemic is best understood as conflict within that world over faithful leadership and the meaning of Israel's vocation, rather than as Christianity simply standing outside Judaism and announcing its replacement.

There is also a wider biblical reason for caution. In Romans 11, Paul asks directly, "Has God rejected his people?" and answers, "By no means!" His image is not of one tree uprooted and another planted in its place, but of Gentiles being grafted into Israel's olive tree. And he warns Gentile Christians not to boast over the branches. The New Testament therefore does not permit the easy conclusion that God has discarded Israel and handed everything over to us.

What, then, is being transferred in Jesus' parable? Responsibility. Stewardship. The privilege and burden of tending what belongs to God. The tenants' great sin is that they forget the difference between being entrusted with something and owning it. They receive a vineyard they did not plant, surrounded by a wall they did not build, furnished with a winepress and tower they did not make. Yet when the heir arrives, they say, "Let us kill him and get his inheritance." They try to turn gift into possession.

That is where the parable becomes a word not against someone else, but against us. The Church does not own the vineyard any more than the first tenants did. God's people, God's Gospel, our own lives, and the creation entrusted to our care remain God's. Perhaps the most faithful Christian reading, then, is not: "They lost the vineyard, and now it is ours." It is: "The vineyard has always belonged to God." Our calling is to receive what God entrusts to us with gratitude, tend it faithfully, and return its fruits to the One to whom it has always belonged.

Lectionary

In today's liturgy, we have a parable warning us as God's people to be faithful to God, lest God turn away from us. This parable may have been a simple story about the need to seize the opportunity God holds out. Matthew has taken images, especially from today's Old Testament reading, and allegorized the original story to make a point which the Church in his day needed to hear and which we need to hear today.

For months, we have been reading the history of the establishment of God's people, beginning with Abraham and Sarah. It has led us to the Exodus from Egypt. Today the journey through the wilderness has come to Mount Sinai. Here God establishes the law by which his people are to live in the giving of the Ten Commandments. Paul calls on the church in Philippi to hold fast to their faith and practice. We are not to be anxious about anything, rather we should expend our energy reaching out to be the kind of people God calls us to be. For we are citizens of heaven, Paul tells us, and we are destined for glory.

God's people need the warnings of the prophets and of Jesus to balance our knowledge that we have been redeemed. While God's action of redeeming us is set and established, we must nevertheless live the lives of redeemed people. Our weekly gatherings in Eucharist are not meant to lull us into complacency but to strengthen us and equip us to follow the Way of Christ.

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