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Sermon for World Communion, October 2, 2011

Sermon Text: Isaiah 5: 1-7
Matthew 21: 33-43
Philippians 4: 4-9
Sermon Title: "A Land of Sour Grapes"
Sermon Topic: Rejecting the Lord
Sermon Purpose: To make the people realize we are no better than the people of Isaiah's time or those to whom Jesus spoke.

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Sermon Prayer: Lord Jesus, we know you as Savior, but we have not always listened to your word. Enable us to see God's Will and the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in this time, together. Amen.

Jesus told a parable that **horrified** the people! "Here is a great **teacher**, the man who had **fed** the **multitude**, the **only** one with the power to cast out **demons**, a **healer**; why it's **even** been said He can calm the troubled waters of the **sea**. He says God is sending His Son and we will **kill** him!?! Why would we **do** such a thing?"

But, at **that very moment**, the scribes and the Pharisees were **plotting** against **Jesus**.

The fact that God had sent His Son is proof that God loved the people of his creation. Jesus was sent to **teach, to heal, and to feed** those who were spiritually starving. **And** He was sent to **die!** He **had** to die, that we might have the opportunity to live a new, rich, and full life.

Sometimes, something has to die before things can get better. Our death grip on **tradition** has to die before we can open our arms to receive God's **new** plan for our future. I had to run my Chevy Citation until it fell apart before I could enjoy driving my Malibu. The fear, guilt, and pain in an **abusive** relationship must die before we can enjoy the love and compassion of a **healthy** relationship. **Jesus** had to die, in order for us to experience being welcomed into heaven.

Paul said, "... whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ ... I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."

"Rejoice in the Lord always" ... and **don't lose heart!** When this is accomplished, the God of peace will be with you always.

But, do we listen to all of this? How many haven't!

Remember that when we come before God we bring our guilt along, and it is only by His love shown to us through Christ that we are made worthy.

When we come to the Table of our Lord, and receive the elements of His sacrifice, remember that God gave us the Garden of Eden; which represents a gift God has given to only **one** of His creations - humankind. That freedom is the freedom of **choice**. But, that wasn't good enough. We wanted **more** and, in the end, we rejected **all** of His gifts.

He gave us the **prophets**, but we didn't listen to them.

He gave us His **Son**, but we **killed** Him.

He gave us the **power**, by faith, to be the Body of **Christ**; representing the love, the healing



ministry, and the teacher of God's **truth** in the world. Is that **true** of us, here, today? Do **we** represent love?

Do we of the Linden community represent a **Healing Ministry**?

How many hours of meeting time are actually spent in planning for the healthy spiritual life of this congregation? How many other things have become distractions? Those distractions need to be allowed to die so we can move forward in ministry, in witness, and in service.

My friends, if we are to be representative of the truth of the Gospel; God's truth; we must show it in word, deed, and by **example**. If no one knows us to be Christian by **watching** and **hearing** us, how can they learn the message **we** are to **carry**; "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever **believes** in Him should **not** perish but have everlasting life?"

If the vineyard of our lives yields the sour grapes of the sins of the world, how can the **wine** that we produce - how can our **witness** - be any better? We are called upon to show a better life in Christ Jesus, not make a **mockery** of Him. We drive the Bible out of our homes and out of our thoughts, and we **kill** Jesus by our deeds.

Honest confession of sin, true repentance, and the love of Christ make us worthy to come to the Table. Acceptance of Christ as Lord of our lives makes the Sacrament mean **more** than the eating of bread and the drinking of wine. This is the body of **Jesus** laid before us, **broken** for us. Will we **devour** it like **vultures**? It would be better to cast it to the four winds; giving it back to God. We are the tenants of Christ's ministry, of God's love. He gave us **salvation**. Will we **accept** it? If we **reject** it, it shall be taken from us and given to a nation who **will** care.

When we come to the Lord's Supper, we receive what is ours; not because we **deserve** it or because we have **earned** it, but because it has been **freely given** to us by a loving God. Accept it in **that** light. **Don't throw it away!**

Let us come together in prayer:

Most gracious and beneficent Father, Who has given us **all** that we have and could ever hope to **receive**, we praise You for this chance to be freed from the ways of the world, and to be restored by Your grace. We ask that the words and teachings we have received through Your Son Jesus Christ be made heavy on the hearts of those who have yet to come before you. We pray for guidance that this community of faith be enriched with the power to lead your children home. All this we ask in the name of your dear Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

