

“THE VINEYARD”

The vineyard is a popular Christian symbol. It appears a number of times in the New Testament, and we have the pleasure, once again, of its company this weekend.

Very simply, the earth is the vineyard. We are workers in that vineyard. There were workers before us. There will be workers after us.

While we are in the vineyard, we are called to tend it and to bear fruit. One day, for each of us, there will be an accounting of our efforts in the Owner's vineyard.

God is the Owner. We are the workers. We are God's stewards. We get ourselves into trouble when we begin to create illusions that we are the owners.

Failing to recognize that all is pure gift, and that we enjoy the gift just for a short time, we fantasize that we own things; that these things, whatever they may be, belong to us.

We get caught up in our ownership and begin to use God's vineyard for our own purposes.

We cloud our vision with ownership. We clear our vision with stewardship.

When we, deep in our hearts and souls, come to the realization that we are just “passing through” the vineyard, as invited guests of the Owner, we begin to see clearly.

Our time, our talent, and our treasure are products of God's vineyard. It is the “stuff” of the vineyard, the Owner's “stuff” that has given us the ability to create our time, talent, and treasure.

To be in right relationship with the Owner, we must recognize the Owner and carry an attitude of praise and gratitude, and a desire to give back what has been given to us.

The Scriptures remind us over and over again that the “first fruits” belong to the Owner, they belong to God, and they become our gift of praise and thanksgiving. The “first fruits” keep us sensitive to the fragility and timeliness of life, remind us that we are stewards, not owners, and help to keep our vision clear and crisp.

As we continue our journey through these weeks of Stewardship, may each of us take time to reflect upon our relationship with God, and rededicate the “first fruits” of our time, talent, and treasure to the Owner of the vineyard!

F. Mike