



**Sunday 4 October 2026 to
Sunday 11 October 2026**



**LUTHERAN
CHURCH**
OF AUSTRALIA

Sunday 4 October 2026

That's ridiculous!

by Kathy Matuschka

Then he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son' (Matthew 21:37).

Read [Matthew 21:33–46](#)

Jesus' parables can be confusing, but this one seems straightforward, at least from our perspective as Christians. There seems to be an obvious, one-to-one correlation between the story as Jesus told it and God's salvation story, as many of us have been taught all our lives.

The vineyard owner (God) established a vineyard complete with a fence and a tower (abundance). When the vineyard was under threat by bad tenants (the Jewish leaders at the time), the owner responded by first sending his servants (prophets), and then eventually his son (Jesus), to restore order (redemption).

But this story isn't just a clever way of tricking the Jewish leaders into judging themselves, so that Jesus can 'one-up' them. It's more than a shrewd response to their challenges to his authority.

This is an announcement – to *all* the powers of this world and beyond – of God's ridiculous rescue plan for this world!

I mean, how ridiculous is it that the owner of the vineyard would send his son when the bad tenants have already killed his servants? Who would do that? A smart landowner would surely send an army and wipe out the opposition once and for all.

That's how ridiculous God's rescue plan was. And still is for us today. But unlike Jesus' parable in our text today, God's rescue story doesn't end with the son being killed. God's Son – our brother, Jesus – willingly became weak and vulnerable, and died ... but then was raised from death. All praise and thanks to God!

Who would think that the creator of the universe, the author of all power, would act like that?

That's ridiculous.

That's love.

***Amazing love! How can it be that you, my God, should die for me (Charles Wesley)?
Amen.***

Kathy is learning to give up her struggle to make sense of God and God's world, and instead rest in the mystery of love that holds her each day.

Monday 5 October 2026

What are the names of your little foxes?

by Kathy Matuschka

The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away (Song of Solomon 2:13).

Read [Song of Solomon 2:10-15](#)

Do you have some favourite places in nature? Do you recall happy memories of sharing special places with loved ones?

A vineyard provides the setting for our reading, as it did yesterday. But today, rather than being an object of power and control, this vineyard is an intimate place, highlighting the freshness and delight of new love.

When our hearts connect with another (whether romantically or platonically), the connection we feel seems enhanced by being in the beauty and simplicity of God's creation. The author of our text today expresses their extreme delight in the fine spring weather, the appearance of flowers, the cooing of doves, the fruit of the fig trees and the blossoming of the vines. For those in love, it seems no one else has ever beheld the beauty of the earth in the way that they do!

The author goes on to speak about little foxes – little threats to the bliss God offers us within our human relationships. Left to grow, these 'foxes' can damage and even destroy our ability to connect with one another – even with those in whom we once delighted!

There are so many little foxes, but I'll name a few. There is perfectionism: sometimes we get so carried away with creating a perfect experience that we forget to rest into what God has so abundantly provided without our assistance.

Perfectionism can be related to inadequacy: the little voice that tells us we are not enough as we are. It urges us to produce more and achieve more.

Then there are little foxes that cause division, like misunderstanding, judgement, unforgiveness and bitterness. Those are busy little foxes!

Do you know the names of your little foxes?

Loving God, you made me to enjoy relationship with you, others and myself. By your Spirit, please release me from the power of the little foxes that limit and harm those relationships in my life. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Settled

by Kathy Matuschka

I will plant them upon their land, and they shall never again be plucked up out of the land that I have given them, says the Lord your God (Amos 9:15).

Read [Amos 9:13-15](#)

Some of my ancestors settled in South Australia's Barossa Valley – which is known for vineyards and winemaking – after they emigrated from what is now Germany.

Unfortunately, the place they chose to settle, Hoffnungsthal (Valley of Hope), flooded, and so they moved elsewhere and started again. Generations later, my parents moved into the Barossa, so I grew up back where our families began their time in Australia.

The vineyards in today's texts are described as fruitful, just as in the readings we heard yesterday and the day before. After all, a vineyard's purpose is to produce grapes.

Today's vineyards are so productive that the reapers are said to overtake the sowers – obviously an exaggeration intended to highlight the vineyards' fruitfulness and the delight this brings.

But ultimately, there is something more wondrous than the vineyard's productivity: its location. This vineyard is back home, in Israel! It fulfils Yahweh's promise through the prophet Amos that although the Hebrew people will be taken into exile in a foreign land, they will later return. Both the people and their vineyards will be planted in their own land again.

Settled.

I grew up in a time of rich harvest for my denomination. As the daughter of Lutheran teachers, I witnessed the growth of Lutheran schools and the effort it took to achieve this growth! I viewed the mission harvest God gave us as normal because I had never known anything different. I felt settled.

Things have changed in more recent decades, and I have felt *unsettled*; I'm not sure where we are as a church now, and what the future might hold. My questions are being answered in the increasing number of stories of congregation members turning up to share God's love in practical ways with new generations. Have you noticed it, too?

Loving Creator, because your dear Son Jesus rose from death, I am settled in you – forever. Through the power of your Spirit, I praise and thank you – forever. Amen.

This isn't smelling great!

by Kathy Matuschka

He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it' (Luke 13:8).

Read [Luke 13:6-9](#)

So far this week, a vineyard has featured in every Bible reading. The vineyard has had a versatile role, covering the thriller (bad vineyard tenants), romance (Song of Solomon) and historical (return of the exiles from captivity) genres. Today, the vineyard plays a supporting role, with a fig tree taking centre stage in a parable.

The fig tree is planted in a vineyard. While it offers shade for the workers, it fails to produce fruit for the owner, who instructs his worker to cut it down. The worker begs for one more chance: he will dig around it and apply fertiliser. Then, if it still doesn't fruit, they'll cut it down.

The story's context is that Jesus has just been teaching about the end times. Reflecting on recent tragedies, he assures his listeners that the people who died were not worse sinners than anyone else. Jesus challenges them to remember that death comes to everyone, and so they should repent (learn to see things God's way) while they still can.

Like the vineyard worker, God is patient and merciful, but there is a hard deadline for them – and for us. The deadline is our common humanity: we all die.

Life and death are unpredictable. Death often comes suddenly. The drama of the fig tree is left in suspense: Will the tree bear fruit, or is it in its final year?

As Christians, we live with this suspense. We are not always confident about our fruitfulness. Sometimes God digs around our base, which leads us to feel wobbly and uncertain. Sometimes God allows something in our lives that doesn't smell like it would be good for us (like fertiliser)!

Jesus urges us to repent. As individuals and communities, God's Spirit calls us to see things in a way we haven't before. So that we can produce fruit that we never imagined we could.

Dear God, thank you for your patience and mercy. Thank you for what you are doing in my heart right now. Please help me to bear good fruit. Amen.

Thursday 8 October 2026

Pruning season

by Kathy Matuschka

He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit (John 15:2).

Read [John 15:1-16](#)

Yesterday, we finished our reflection imagining ourselves as fig trees in need of digging and fertilising so that we might bear more fruit. You don't mind if we continue that train of thought, do you? (Ouch!)

Today, we zoom in to consider one plant in a vineyard. Jesus describes himself as the vine, and those who follow him as its branches. (Paul does something similar in Romans 11:17, when he refers to us Gentiles as wild olive branches grafted into a cultivated olive tree through Jesus Christ.)

The verse above has been very important at different times of my life. I first encountered its power as a young adult, when I wondered why serving God was not bringing me greater joy and satisfaction. I thought I was following Jesus, but I continued to struggle with depression, shame and self-doubt. What was going on?

One day, as I was reading this passage, I noticed that God cuts off branches that bear no fruit (I remembered that bit), but there was more! The branches that bear fruit are pruned *so that they can bear more fruit*. With the help of God's Spirit, I saw I was being lovingly pruned so that I could bear *more* fruit. It still didn't feel great, but what a comfort it was to know my loving Lord cared enough about me to personally intervene in ways that would enable me to become more fruitful!

This passage continually comforts me when pruning time comes around. I'm learning that pruning time is a time to be still. It's not time to concern myself with how fruitful I am or where this is leading, but to rest in God's wise and loving care.

Dear Jesus, thank you for coming to live with us and doing all the work so we can be connected to you forever. Thank you, Holy Spirit, for empowering us to grow in fruitfulness. Amen.

Where is the vineyard?

by Kathy Matuschka

But the residents of the city were divided: some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles (Acts 14:4).

Read [Acts 14:1-6](#)

Every reading since Sunday has included (and even featured) a vineyard. Where is our vineyard today? The only organic elements seem to be people! And the people are in a muddle, to put it mildly. The community is not in a healthy way.

When Paul and Barnabas visited Pisidian Antioch during Paul's first missionary journey, almost the entire city listened to them speak (Acts 13:44). While not all were converted, many Jews and Gentiles became followers of Jesus.

As they continued to Iconium in the same region, Paul and Barnabas were met with increasing opposition. While some locals were interested, others plotted to stone them. So they continued to Lystra, where they sadly *were* stoned!

As we read, we might wonder whether their mission to this region will bear fruit. But already in Acts 14:21,22, there is evidence of new shoots appearing: Paul and Barnabas returned to Iconium and encouraged those who had become followers of Jesus!

Later, Paul visited the region with Silas, and we read that one of the converts was Timothy, who joined them on their missionary journey. And so, the church grew.

It's easy to judge the Jews who refused to recognise the coming of the Messiah and the fruit of God's Spirit among them, resisting a new message from God to the point of violence.

But how often do we encounter division *within* Christian churches, *between* followers of Jesus? People feel passionately that either something needs to change or that it needs to remain unchanged. Each person believes themselves faithful to God's word. Anxieties manifest themselves. Tensions increase as people choose sides. Judgements get made, and we hurt one another.

Dear God, thank you for planting me in the 'vineyard' where I am. Please forgive me for the times I judge my fellow believers harshly. Please help me to see the ways I inadvertently encourage misunderstanding or division in your church. Renew my heart and mind. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Pursued by goodness and mercy

by Kathy Matuschka

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long (Psalm 23:6).

Read [Psalm 23](#)

Sometimes (not always), my hospital chaplaincy conversations turn to matters of Christian faith, and the person I am visiting indicates they would like me to pray with them. It's not unusual for the conversation to continue like this:

'Shall I read from the Bible before we pray? Do you have a favourite text?'

'Er'

'How about Psalm 23 – The Lord is my Shepherd?'

'(Big smile) Oh yes!'

I used to think that the frequent choice of Psalm 23 for funerals, as well as TV and movie depictions of church services, was a cliché. I imagined that people chose it because it was the only Scripture they knew.

But since I've been a hospital chaplain, I've become convinced that this choice comes from somewhere important and real. Maybe it comes from a connection with the faith of a loved parent or grandparent, or perhaps it expresses a faith that transcends organised religion for the person I'm sitting beside, or maybe they are a regular churchgoer. It doesn't matter: Psalm 23 offers a map of real life and a statement of trust in God's loving presence.

Psalm 23 levels the playing field: whether your faith is simple and earthy, or you have a PhD in theology, it's like the manger: we come with nothing to give and everything to receive. I love the imagery in verse six above of goodness and mercy pursuing us. We like to think we can keep our eyes on the Shepherd ahead of us and simply follow, but in fact, we need training to stay on track. Like a sheepdog nipping at our heels, goodness and mercy chase us down again and again, drawing us to rest in God's presence.

Dear loving Shepherd, you know what is on my heart and mind today. Please hem me in with your goodness and mercy, so that I can rest in your presence as I continue on my way. Amen.

Kua rite katoa; haere mai (Everything is ready; come)

by Mark Whitfield

Look, I have prepared my dinner ... and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet (Matthew 22:4b).

Read [Matthew 22:1-14](#)

Our family is preparing for our daughter's wedding early next year. There is something wonderful about getting ready for such a celebration – the invitations, the planning, the food, the service order and all the little details that need to be prepared. Then comes the moment when all the preparations are complete, and the guests are invited: 'Come!'

That is the invitation Jesus places before you today.

It's easy to imagine that before God can welcome you, you need to get your life in order. Perhaps you think you need to become a better Christian, overcome your failures, pray more, believe more strongly or somehow make yourself worthy of God.

But listen again to Jesus: 'Everything is ready; come.'

The invitation begins not with what you have done, but with what God has done for you. God has prepared the feast. In Jesus, he has dealt with your sin, carried your guilt and opened the way for you to live in his grace. You don't have to make yourself worthy before you come. You don't have to arrive with your life neatly sorted out.

You simply come.

In Māori, we hear the invitation: '*Kua rite katoa; haere mai*', which means in English, 'Everything is ready; come.'

Perhaps you need to hear those words personally today. Whatever you are carrying – your regrets, disappointments, doubts, weariness or sense that you have not done enough – Jesus invites you. The invitation is not a demand to become someone different before God will love you. It's an invitation to receive the love and grace God has already prepared for you in Christ.

So, come. Come as you are. Receive his forgiveness. Rest in his grace and rejoice in his love. And having received this gracious invitation yourself, become someone who gladly says to others: 'Everything is ready; come.'

Lord Jesus, thank you that everything is ready, not because I have earned it, but because you have prepared it for me. Help me to receive your grace, trust your promise, and rejoice in your invitation today. Amen.

(Christchurch) on New Zealand's South Island. He is bishop emeritus of the Lutheran Church of New Zealand (LCNZ), has served on the LCA Commission on Worship and represents the LCNZ on the Roman Catholic–Lutheran Dialogue Commission. He is married to Leanne and is dad to Chelsea (and Tim), Brittany and Charlotte. A musician (organist, pianist, singer and composer), Mark also enjoys gardening, making people laugh and following sport, especially cricket and rugby. And when the opportunity arises, he loves eating rollmops on fresh bread with his father-in-law, Kevin.

Sermon
19th Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 22)
Light Lutheran Church
October 4th, 2026

Matthew 21:33-46 “We Stand Together Upon the Cornerstone”

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be blessed in Christ Jesus, Amen. Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

There's something special about this time of year in the Barossa and surrounding districts.

The crops keep growing. The paddocks are looking promising. Some of us have welcomed rain at just the right time, and we look towards harvest with a sense of anticipation and gratitude.

For our farmers, it's a time of watching, waiting, working and hoping. There's plenty of hard work involved, but ultimately, we know that the growth comes from God. We can prepare the ground, sow the seed, tend the crops and pray for rain, but we cannot make the seed grow.

And when the harvest comes, we give thanks to God for his goodness.

But here's a question worth asking this morning: What does God want us to do with the harvest he gives us? Not just the harvest from our paddocks, but the harvest of our lives, our families, our congregations and our communities. Jesus gives us an answer in today's Gospel, although at first it might not sound particularly encouraging.

He tells a story about a vineyard, a landowner, some tenants and a harvest and it's a story about God's generosity, human rebellion, judgement and, ultimately, the extraordinary grace of God in Jesus Christ.

The vineyard belongs to God

Jesus tells us about a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a fence around it, dug a winepress and built a watchtower. He did everything necessary to make it productive.

Then he leased it to tenants and went away. When harvest time came, he sent his servants to collect his share of the fruit. But the tenants refused to give him what belonged to him. They beat one servant, killed another and stoned another.

The landowner sent more servants, but the tenants treated them just as badly. Finally, he sent his own son.

“Surely,” he thought, “they will respect my son.”

But the tenants saw the son as an opportunity. They killed him, thinking they could take his inheritance for themselves. Now, Jesus wasn't telling a story about ordinary farmers who had a disagreement with their landlord. He was speaking directly to the religious leaders of Israel.

The vineyard represented God's kingdom and his people. The landowner represented God the Father. The servants represented the prophets whom God sent to call his people back to faithfulness. And the son? He was Jesus himself.

God had given his people everything. He had rescued them, established his covenant with them, given them his commandments and promised to bless them. He called them to live as his people, to worship him alone, to love their neighbours and to reflect his goodness to the nations. But time and again, they turned away.

They wanted the vineyard, but not the landowner. They wanted God's blessings, but not his authority. They wanted the harvest for themselves and when God sent his prophets to call them back, they rejected them. Now God sends his Son, and they will reject him too.

The uncomfortable truth about us

It's tempting to hear this story and think, “Well, thank goodness we're not like those wicked tenants!” But let's not be too quick because Jesus' story speaks to us as well. How often do we enjoy God's gifts while forgetting the Giver? How often do we want God to bless our plans, our families, our work and our congregation, but we'd rather keep him out of the driver's seat? We can become so caught up in our own interests that we give little thought to God's portion, God's glory or God's purposes. We can treat our time, our abilities, our money and our relationships as though they belong entirely to us.

Even our congregations can become our own little vineyards, where we expect things to happen our way, where we protect what we have rather than ask how God wants us to serve others. And when God sends someone to challenge us, to call us back to his Word, or to remind us of our calling, we might not actually welcome the message. That's God's Law speaking to us.

God doesn't owe us his vineyard. We don't deserve his blessings. We haven't always given him the honour, gratitude and faithful service that belong to him and if we stand before God based on our own fruitfulness, our own goodness or our own achievements, we have a serious problem because the truth is, we have all fallen short.

But here's the good news: God doesn't abandon his vineyard and he doesn't abandon us.

The rejected Son becomes the Cornerstone

Jesus asks the religious leaders what the landowner will do to those tenants.

They answer that he will bring those wicked tenants to a terrible end and lease the vineyard to others who will give him his share of the harvest.

Then Jesus quotes Psalm 118 to them:

“The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvellous in our eyes.”

Here is the heart of the Gospel. The builders rejected the very stone that God chose to hold everything together. Jesus knew what lay ahead. He knew that the religious leaders would reject him. He knew that they would hand him over to the Romans, and that he would suffer and die on the cross. Yet God would take that rejected, crucified Son and raise him from the dead. The stone the builders rejected would become the cornerstone and that changes everything.

Jesus is not simply another prophet sent to remind us to behave ourselves. He is God's own Son, the promised Messiah, the Saviour of the world. He is the one who fulfils God's promises and brings God's kingdom to us. He is the one who fulfils the Law perfectly on our behalf.

Think about the Ten Commandments. They show us how God wants us to live: loving him above everything else and loving our neighbour as ourselves. Jesus did exactly that. He loved his Father perfectly. He loved his neighbours completely. He gave himself for sinners, even those who rejected him.

Where we have failed, Jesus has been faithful. Where we have turned in on ourselves, Jesus has given himself for us. Where we have earned judgement, Jesus took our sin and its consequences upon himself and the Apostle Paul reminds us in Romans 5: "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

That's grace!

God doesn't wait for us to become good tenants before he loves us. He comes to us in Jesus while we are still sinners. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, God forgives us, reconciles us to himself and makes us his own and through baptism, faith and the gift of the Holy Spirit, he brings us into his kingdom.

Our confidence doesn't rest on the quality of the fruit we produce. It rests on the cornerstone, Jesus Christ, who has done everything necessary for our salvation. We stand together upon that cornerstone. Not upon our traditions, our buildings, our history, our achievements or our personal goodness. We stand upon Christ alone.

New tenants, a new purpose

So, what happens to the vineyard? Jesus says that the kingdom of God will be taken from those who reject him and given to a people who will produce its fruit. That doesn't mean God has abandoned his promises or that we have somehow replaced his grace with our own good works. It means that God's kingdom belongs to those who receive his Son in faith and live from the forgiveness and new life he gives and that's where we come in.

We who once lived for ourselves, who gave little thought to God's glory or his purposes, now receive a new calling. We become tenants in God's vineyard, not to earn his favour, but because he has already shown us his favour in Jesus and the fruit he seeks from us grows out of that Gospel.

The Holy Spirit works through the Word of God to create faith in us and to produce love, kindness, generosity, patience, forgiveness and service. He turns

our eyes away from ourselves and towards our neighbour. He gives us opportunities to share the good news of Jesus, to care for those who struggle, to forgive those who hurt us, to welcome those who feel left out and to serve our communities with the gifts God has given us. That's our vocation and it doesn't require us all to become pastors or missionaries.

For some, it means faithfully caring for a spouse, a child or a grandchild. For others, it means lending a hand to a neighbour, supporting someone through a difficult season, working honestly, encouraging a young person or helping for the good of the congregation.

For our farmers, it means using the gifts of the land responsibly and recognising that the harvest ultimately belongs to God. For our congregation, it means looking beyond our own needs and asking how we can share the love of Christ with the people around us, and for all of us, it means living as people who know that God's grace is greater than our failures.

A harvest for the Landowner

Now, as we look around our region this spring, we see a year full of promise. The crops continue to grow. The rain has come to some at just the right time. There is much for which we can give thanks. God is good to our farmers, our families and our communities, but Jesus' parable reminds us that God's blessings always come with a purpose. The landowner expects a harvest and the harvest God desires from his people is not something we produce to pay him back for his generosity. It is the fruit of the Gospel at work in us.

As we receive God's gifts, we return thanks and praise to him through lives of faith and love. We gather around his Word. We receive his forgiveness. We share in the body and blood of Jesus at his table and then we go out into the world to serve our neighbours.

We don't do this alone. We stand together upon Christ, our cornerstone. He holds us together as his people. His Word gives us direction. His forgiveness restores us when we fail and his Spirit equips us for the work he gives us to do, and when we stumble, when our fruit seems small, when we wonder whether we're doing enough, we look again to Jesus. Our salvation doesn't depend on the size of our

harvest. It depends on the Son whom the Father sent, the Son whom the builders rejected, the Son whom God raised from the dead.

In him, we have forgiveness, life and a future and unlike the tenants who rejected the Son and lost the vineyard, we have received him by faith. We belong to him, and he calls us to share in the work of his kingdom.

So, brothers and sisters, as we give thanks for the harvest growing in our paddocks, let us also give thanks for the harvest God is growing in our lives and communities. Let us use what he gives us for his glory and the good of our neighbours. Let us encourage one another, forgive one another, and serve one another in the freedom of Christ. And above all, let us stand together upon the cornerstone – Jesus Christ – crucified and risen, the one who was rejected but whom God has made the centre of everything. For the vineyard belongs to God. The harvest is his and by His grace, we belong to him too.

Amen.

We Pray:

Heavenly Father, thank you for Jesus Christ, our rejected and risen Cornerstone. Through him, forgive us, unite us and make us fruitful in faith and love. Help us serve one another and our community, returning to you the harvest of our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.
