



Over the past month we've seen three stories Jesus told about vineyards (in Matthew 20:1-16, Matthew 21:28-32, and Matthew 21:33-44). The stories show that it's to our benefit to work in God's kingdom, even though the work is hard and sometimes dangerous or fatal. Even though it's hard, working in God's kingdom provides a benefit beyond the pay at the end of the day; the work is valuable on its own.

Jesus referenced Psalm 118 when he concluded the last of these three stories. Read Psalm 118:21-24 NRSV:

I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.
The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.
This is the LORD's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.
This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Our sign on La Jolla Boulevard today says, "Build your life around Jesus."

A cornerstone is something around which all the other stones are aligned. When you align yourself with Jesus the cornerstone, you will be at a different angle than other people, but you will be aligned with God's truth, mercy, justice and love.

What are some things you have noticed about people who align their lives with Jesus the cornerstone?

Read Matthew 21:42-43 NRSV:

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.

Jesus says it's important to produce the fruits of God's kingdom. What are some of these fruits?

Luke 9:18-20 NRSV:

Once when Jesus was praying alone, with only the disciples near him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" They answered, "John the Baptist; but others, Elijah; and still others, that one of the ancient prophets has arisen."

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "The Messiah of God."

Who do you say Jesus is? It's probably the most important question you'll ever answer.

The question is not just "Who do you *think* Jesus is?" – an important question, for sure.

But more than that, when you're called to give a public account of your faith (or lack of it), when you're out in public and others are listening and your reputation is on the line – Who do you *say* Jesus is?

The public witness we are called to make can be risky. Read Acts 5:40-42 NRSV:

When they had called in the apostles, they had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. As they left the council, they rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name. And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease to teach and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah.

The punishment and the warning did not stop James and John. They were "all in" with Jesus. Every day in the temple (before lots of witnesses, including people who would have been in on the flogging) and at home they continued to proclaim Jesus was the Christ.

How about you? What helps you to testify in public what you think about Jesus?