



Why would you be a landlord?

Rev Linda Murphy

Year A, Ordinary 27

Matthew 21:33-46

8 October 2023

I have never been interested in being a landlord and after reading today's Gospel I most certainly won't be a landlord it seems far too dangerous.

This is another parable that Jesus gives as his ministry is coming to an end, he is angry as he is having to repeat his message and the chief priests and Pharisees now realise, he is talking about them.

The parables of Jesus are allegorical in the sense that numerous details in most of his parables stand for something else. So, let's unpack this parable: The landowner is God, the vineyard is the nation of Israel, the tenants are the religious leaders, the servants are the prophets, and the son is Jesus.

The parable begins with a situation that was normal practise in Roman-occupied Palestine. A landowner established a vineyard complete with a fence, a winepress, and even a watchtower quite a financial investment. Then the landowner became an absentee landowner, returning to their own country as often happened in the far-flung territories of the Roman Empire. The tenants oversaw developing the vineyard and paying their rent to the owner at harvest time, in the form of a share of the produce that would have taken at least five years.

When the owner's servants arrived to collect the landowner's share the tenants attacked them even killing one. The landowner just sent more servants they too were beaten and killed so he then sent his

son, and they killed him, and the tenants think they will inherit the vineyard how strange that they thought this was okay.

Did they really think that by killing the landowner's son they would inherit the vineyard? Perhaps these tenants have convinced themselves that the owner would never come back.

The chief priests and Pharisees probably see themselves in the role of the landowner, they would be able to own land and have others manage it for them. They would see the servants as their subordinates and themselves as the real victims of the unscrupulous tenants.

If this parable is about the chief priests and Pharisees, what does it teach us about ourselves? We can see what it teaches us about God. Jesus seems to be teaching us that we are now the tenants, the stewards of God's vineyard. We have been entrusted with this world, with all that we have, and are now called to care for it well, and to give our creator the fruits of our harvest.

I remember Helen Robinson announcing with great excitement and joy that we were Community Housing Providers (CHPs) when we were still in our old 140 Hobson St Building affectionately referred to as Hobbies. This was in 2017 when we were still planning and working out how to manage the operating of Homeground, and it has expanded in what is quite a short period of time. We are very unlikely to be attacked by our tenants when we request their rent as all tenants pay via a redirection of benefit or an automatic payment so that possibility is solved.

Te Tapui Atawhai is a landlord of many dwellings we have 80 apartments in Homeground, 60 apartments at Te Ao Marama, 3 Union St has 15 apartment and numerous houses scattered around Tamaki Makaurau. These are managed by a separate company ACM Housing Ltd. We also have transitional housing including James Liston Hostel and Te Whare Hinetore which is managed by Te Tapui Atawhai. Many of our whanau in transitional housing move

into Homeground or Te Ao Marama and continue to have support with their various needs.

Most of our tenants have keyworkers who support with their needs be it health related or social needs. There is the Supportive Housing Team which includes a Community Development Lead who is doing great things with this group. I was delighted to see how many came back from turning the compost here at St Matts this week and they had enjoyed doing this task.

There are challenges for both tenants and staff however after nearly two years we are finding ways to work with each other and empowering our whanau to live their best lives is such a joy to watch. Many are doing computer or literacy courses; some have joined book groups. The development of community includes lots of kia and shared cooking and this has become a focus of the community. The roof top garden on level 9 helps feed this community and is lovingly tended by many of them.

Since 2004 I have worked with the homeless of our CBD. This week one of our Streeties who has been homeless for years was housed in Homeground I meet him in the Laneway as I left work on Tuesday night. He had this huge smile and joy he was home. Hobbies had been home since the 80s and now he was truly home, and he was safe.

This was Dame Diane Robertson's dream. Sir Chris Farrelly continued this dream to its completion and now our Manutaki Helen Robinson continues the mission. I have been very privileged to have been walking this journey from the beginning. It has taken years and huge amounts of energy convincing governments that we needed this model of supportive housing to successfully integrate this marginalised population into a whare successfully. Getting the keys to a whare is not enough if you have been on the streets since you were nine years old. The concept of home is often a negative or violent one, so the streets are a safer option.

We are stewards of God's creation and this includes caring for each other not just our environment. Te Tapui Atawhai's mission is manaakitanga, rangapu and Atawhai this is what Jesus' Gospel message is about. This transformative power is who God is and what God does.

This puzzling parable pulls us forward toward that unknown future in which we will both be blessed and judged, and about which we know only that it is anchored in Jesus Christ.

Amen