

FATHER'S WILL MATTHEW 21:23-32

Today we will be looking at Matthew 21:33-46, the Parable of the Tenants. I want to take a minute to share some **rules of studying parables**. I will also spend some time placing today's parable within the **context of Jesus's ministry** in Jerusalem. Then I will explain what this parable **meant** to those listening that day and what it should **stir** in our hearts **today**.

Here are some basic rules of studying parables:

1. Don't force a meaning or assign a person to every aspect of a parable like you would to an allegory. Famous allegorical stories such as John Bunyan's pilgrim's progress and George Orwell's Animal farm are purposefully filled with characters, settings, and other events that represent other issues. Parables have a shorter and narrower focus.
2. Don't always assume yourself into the positive position in the parable.
3. Prayerfully search for the purpose, the main thrust of the parable.
4. The ending of a parable will explain a lot.

Now let me summarize the context of this parable.

Before the Triumphal Entry, Jesus reveals His **itinerary** to His disciples on the way to Jerusalem, "the son of man would be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and He will be raised on the third day". We must keep this death sentence in mind as we look at Jesus ministry in Jerusalem. His bold entrance was with a focused purpose to lay His life down. He had the authority to lay it down, He also had authority to take it up again. Jesus, the Lord of Lords and King of Kings walked into Jerusalem with all authority.

Everything He did and said revealed this final blow to those who assumed they had the authority. After His entrance to Jerusalem, He throws the money changers out of the temple with authority. Jesus then receives worship that only God or the Messiah could receive. He leaves Jerusalem that night to stay in Bethany 2 miles away just so He can wither the fig tree the next day. He enters the temple for the second time to preach with authority and is immediately confronted by the chief priests, elders, and Pharisees. "By what authority do you speak??" Jesus continues to reveal His absolute authority by answering them with questions, putting them on the defensive. "Was John's baptism from heaven or from man?" This questioning would have seemed so incredibly arrogant and inflammatory to the Pharisees. Jesus's questions were amazing. They forced the religious leaders to reveal their hypocrisy and their lack of understanding of scriptures. He would often finish working over their pride saying, "Have you never read the scriptures?" These men who expected constant respect and considered themselves the ones with all the scriptural answers, were publicly humiliated. They could feel their kingdom, so-called kingdom slipping through their fingers. He continues to humble them with the parable of the two sons. They acknowledged which son obeyed but failed to see they were the son who failed to obey the father. Jesus serves more humble pie and tells the tax collectors and prostitutes would go into the kingdom of God before them. The two lowest and most sinful professions in Israel would enter the kingdom before these self-righteous leaders. **This was some serious inflammatory speech.** Can you imagine if someone said this to you? Your Blood pressure **would explode.** Their only response would be to find a way to quickly **silence** Him.

Jesus boldly and prophetically began His path to the cross, never once losing His **absolute** authority over life, death and the world He created.

"Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a

winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants and went into another country. When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. ³⁷ Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.' And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons." 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 marvelous in our eyes'? Therefore, I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him." When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking about them. And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held Him to be a prophet.

For all of us to better understand the impact of this parable, we need to understand the mind of the Pharisee or chief priest. They **KNEW** the book of Isaiah. They would have been familiar with age old vineyards, stewards and the law of God that always had bearing on their community. Let's look at Isaiah 5 to reveal the **depth** of today's parable.

*Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill.
² He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out*

a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes.

And after some rebuke and heavy warning, Isaiah states this;

*For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant planting; and He looked for **justice**, but behold, bloodshed; for **righteousness**, but behold, an outcry!*

Jesus was using a story that would have been **so** familiar by way of scripture and community life. The Chief priests and Pharisees loved to answer questions, experts in the law and how it applies to life. They assumed they would catch Him in error and be quick to correct Him.

With this Parable, Jesus continues to address the religious leaders that challenged His authority in the temple. While He is addressing and questioning the leaders, many other people were watching and listening. Either rejecting Him or being drawn to Him. Jesus says to them, "Hear another parable." Like the first one didn't upset them enough. He continues to agitate them by revealing God's plan for humble followers **and** for those who reject Christ. This vineyard and the one in Isaiah 5 both reveal a lot of expectation for the vineyard. Imagine the time, energy, investment capital to get choice vines planted, the building of a fence, installing a winepress, and a tower. The owner had a plan to receive His portion of the fruit.

The Tenants and the owner would have come to an agreement that was mutually beneficial. Expectations would be clear. Fruit from the vineyard was to be enjoyed by both parties. The tenants in the parable represent the religious leaders in Israel. Their job was to ensure the worship of the God of Israel, and that God's law would be prescribed **justly** and in **righteousness**. The vineyard is Israel. The servants represent the prophets that were sent to Israel by God to correct and help lead. The son represents the Messiah, the

son of God. Do you remember some of the rules of parables? In the parable, the owner says, "They will respect my son." This does not accurately represent God the Father because His eternal purpose was to knowingly send His son to suffer and die. Another breakdown in the parable is the tenants recognized the son as the true heir of the vineyard. The reality is: Pharisees should have respected the Son of God and received Him as the true heir. The religious leaders rejected Jesus' claim to be the son of God. I believe the only inheritance they truly wanted was what they previously enjoyed. All the respect, honor, and control they had prior to Jesus drawing the masses away. To them, Jesus was going to inherit all their control and the perks they were accustomed to. John 11:48 quotes the chief priests and Pharisees discussing their concerns after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. "If we let Him go on like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."

So what is the main thrust of this parable? I believe it is found in the both the question Jesus asks and their (slide23) answer. "When the owner comes, what will he do to those tenants?" In typical fashion, they gladly applied the law of God to this story expecting to come out on top. Clueless that they were condemning **themselves**. Remember King David and Bathsheeba, when the prophet Nathan confronted David? Nathan used a parable of a man who **stole** and **killed** another man's prize lamb. David **angrily** condemns the person in Nathan's story, then Nathan told David, "You are the man!"

The priests and Pharisees arrogantly (slide24) answer, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons." Not only did they condemn themselves but they revealed God's justice to take the Kingdom of God away from them and give it to another people. After their answer, Jesus confirms the reality of their answer with prophesy.

“Have you **never** read in the scriptures?” Jesus quotes psalm 118 (slide25) word for word.

the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

This psalm agrees with (slide26) Isa 28:16 *Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation:*

Jesus states **he** is the Precious Cornerstone. Their rejection of him not only **fulfils** prophecy but warrants the removal of spiritual authority from the religious leaders. It is the deciding factor who will bear godly fruit of **justice** and **righteousness**. So who (slide27) is this people spoken of in verse 43? Jesus is explaining in this parable to both the Jewish **leaders** and to his **followers**, that the Kingdom of God is being taken from the people of Israel and given to a new people, a new nation, that will bear good fruit. The only people or nation that could produce good fruit was yet to be created. This new people would be made up of Jew and Gentile. After Pentecost, believers would receive the Holy Spirit. Salvation would come through faith, not of works, not of the Law, but just a gift. The New Testament Church, the bride of Christ would be formed and is now the vineyard for God. **His** chosen people. A **royal** priesthood. Don’t take my word for it. Hear these words from the (slide28) fisherman Peter. ⁷ *So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,*

“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word,

as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him

who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Recently, My friend Ivan and I rejoiced that we are part of a royal priesthood. This reality would have been so hard to understand for those following Jesus and those rejecting him. That God was going to reject Israel and create a new people to serve and worship him. An entirely new priesthood. The priesthood of the believer. Men and women, Jew and Gentile.

Jesus finishes this parable with a slightly confusing warning. "And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him. " This warning, has a stone below and one falling from above. (slide29) It is consistent with scripture that the lower stone is Jesus as the rock of offense, the stumbling block, the rejected stone that was causing them to lose their minds, to fall to pieces. The falling stone (slide30) speaks to Jesus as the returning Lord of Lords to justly deal with the wicked and to receive his bride, the church. Jesus, the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, savior and judge.

The ruler's reaction was of no surprise to Jesus. They wanted him arrested and silenced, but they feared the crowds, they feared the Romans. Jesus was ready for the cross. He was ready to continue his path rebuking the rulers and revealing his kingdom to his followers. Things were going just as planned. He was still the authority

So, what does this mean for us? What can we take from this parable?

I will speak to born again believers first. The Lord Jesus has saved us **to** a holy calling from our sin and the wrath to come. He has adopted us into his family, he has given us the Holy Spirit, **and** he has prepared good works for us to walk

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in, he expects fruit, fruit of his Spirit. My question to you; Have you slipped back like the Pharisees who went through the motions of religion, said the right things, did the right things, looked right, and were legally obedient in so many ways, but completely lacked a relation with God, lacked **good** fruit. Fruit produced by **faith** in God and not faith in your **own** religious strength.

On his majestic return, will he find you serving him in faith?

I am not trying to cause a fear of losing your salvation **but** a call to confirm your calling and election.

Now for anyone listening that is not sure if they know Jesus as their personal Lord & savior. This passage reveals how much God **opposes** the proud. **Please** know that Jesus is also so kind and so patient. Don't forget Nicodemus, a Pharisee who came to Jesus secretly. Jesus challenged his beliefs but Nicodemus humbled himself eventually and even brought 75lbs of Myrrh and aloes for the burial of Jesus. My suggestion to you this morning, is to humble yourself before a merciful God. Confess to him you are a sinner needing his forgiveness, needing his grace and mercy, confess him as your Lord, your master, and your savior.

When I was 16 my big brother Sean tried to preach the gospel to me. At that time I loved **sin** and was walking in **darkness**. Jesus was a foolish **stumbling block** to me. I was **offended** at the thought of my lifestyle causing me to go to hell. To be judged by God. I didn't want to lose what I had, to **lose control** of my life. Besides, there were a lot worse people than me. When I was 25 it was a different story. I was in such a **broken** and **humbled** place in life and saw the destruction of my sin. I learned and believed that someday, I would stand before the cornerstone, the judgement seat of Christ and be condemned for **rejecting** him. My fear of God and not man, drove me into the arms of Jesus who has loved me well for the last 22 years.

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Prayer

Benediction: Now unto him, who can make us whiter than snow, to the one who chooses to remember our sin no more, to him be the glory and honor.