

The Owner of the Vineyard *Mark 12:1-12*

Good morning.

Imagine owning a business for a long time and all of sudden, you have to leave town for an extended period, for some reason.

You have poured your heart, soul, and all of your energy into this business, so it means everything to you.

Since you have to leave, someone needs to run your business while you are gone, but you want the people you ask to run it, to do a good job and operate it like it was their own business.

So, you decide to make the people who will run the business a great offer; they can run the business as if they owned it, and then they will simply share some of the profit with you.

After a couple of years, you send some people to collect your share of the profits from the company, but the people running the business treat your messengers poorly and even kill them.

How would you handle this situation?

Please open your Bibles to the ***Gospel of Mark 12*** as we continue in a verse-by-verse study of that Gospel.

Last week in ***Mark***, we learned about forgiveness and Jesus' authority, as the King of the kingdom.

Mark 11 does not say our eternal destiny is contingent on forgiving others.

Mark 11 teaches that our relationship and prayer life with God, can be **hindered** if we refuse to forgive others.

Withholding forgiveness from others will cause a person to miss the joy of grace, as they refuse to extend grace to others, because unforgiveness causes **bitterness** and it can bind a person up.

The day after Jesus cleansed the Temple, the King arrived at the Temple, His own **royal** house again, and the religious leaders questioned Jesus' authority, so, Jesus answered with a question.

If what John the Baptist said was true, then Jesus had all **authority** over the Temple, the Word of God, and over them.

If the religious leaders would not accept the words from John the Baptist, why would Jesus give them any further revelation.

The religious leaders said, "***If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From men'" — they feared the people, for all counted John to have been a prophet indeed.***"

We do not know was their response to Jesus' question and this showed that these men were not sincere seekers of truth.

We ended saying, "***Just as a lack of faith is an obstacle to effective prayer; refusing to forgive or holding on to bitterness can also hinder our prayers.***"

Today, Jesus uses a parable to describe Israel's rebellion against the Lord and then the religious leaders try to set another trap.

I. How Israel treated the O.T. Prophets.

Read *Mark 12:1-5*

Crop sharing was used in ancient Israel, and it is still used in some farming communities today.

A crop share lease is an agreement between the landowner and a farmer who is willing to farm the land while splitting the expenses as well as the crop harvested, with the landowner.

The Lord was specific with Israel about the produce produced from their land. Listen to what was written in the Law to Jewish people, about the produce harvested from the land.

Leviticus 19:23 'When you come into the land, and have planted all kinds of trees for food, then you shall count their fruit as uncircumcised. Three years it shall be as uncircumcised to you. It shall not be eaten.

Leviticus 19:24 But in the fourth year all its fruit shall be holy, a praise to the LORD.

Leviticus 19:25 And in the fifth year you may eat its fruit, that it may yield to you its increase: I am the LORD your God.

Warren Wiersbe said, “In order to retain his legal rights to the property, the owner had to receive produce from the tenants, even if it was only some of the vegetables that grew between the rows of trees or vines.”

This explains why the tenants refused to give him anything: They wanted to claim the vineyard for themselves.”

Question: *Why did Jesus use a vineyard for this parable?*

Psalm 80:8 and Isaiah 5 call Israel the Lord’s vineyard.

Isaiah 5:4 What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?

Isaiah 5:5 And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; and break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.

Isaiah 5:6 I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned or dug, but there shall come up briars and thorns. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain on it.”

Isaiah 5:7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression. NKJV

Leon Morris explained, *“In a day when title was sometimes uncertain, anyone who had, had the use of land for three years was presumed to own it in the absence of an alternative claim.”*

Throughout the O.T., the Lord sent many prophets to Israel to warn them of the upcoming consequences for their rebellion.

But the people forsook the Lord and continued in their rebellion, as they hardened their hearts against God and His prophets.

The persecution of the Old Testament prophets happened in different ways; whether it was by rejection, being imprisoned, being ridiculed, physical violence, and even **death**.

Elijah was threatened by the wicked queen Jezebel after the Mount Carmel experience, and he ran away and hid in a cave.

Amos was insulted by the chief priest in Bethel and was told never to prophesy there again.

Zechariah was stoned to death for correcting the people who worshipped Asherah poles and idols. The people of Israel persecuted and killed many other prophets.

Jesus Himself told the religious leaders in *Matthew 23:31*, ***"Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. NKJV***

Before the religious leaders martyred Stephen, the first person martyred for being a Christian, he gave a speech.

Stephen said to the religious leaders in *Acts 7:51*, ***"You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.***

Acts 7:52 Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers,

Acts 7:53 who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it." NKJV

Here in our passage, the owner of the vineyard was patient with the tenant farmers as He sent messengers to collect rent.

But, because the landowner was not physically there, the vinedressers thought he would not retaliate against them.

How can we apply this parable to our lives today?

Today, the Lord is still pursuing lost people as He sends messenger after messenger to them, communicating His unfailing love, forgiveness and **offering** the lost eternal life.

Jesus wants lost people to recognize their own independent attitudes and self-sufficiency, so they will come to the knowledge of the Gospel and be saved.

II. The final messenger from God.

Read ***Mark 12:6-9***

Remember what the Law said about the Jewish people and their harvest in ***Leviticus 19:23, Three years it shall be as uncircumcised to you. It shall not be eaten.***

Leviticus 19:24 But in the fourth year all its fruit shall be holy, a praise to the LORD. NKJV

Warren Wiersbe said, *“If Mark 12:2–5 covers the three years when the fruit was not used, then it was in the fourth year that the beloved Son was sent.*

“This is the year when the fruit was devoted to the Lord (Lev. 19:24), and it makes the sending of the Son even more meaningful.” (Wiersbe)

If the owner of the property had nothing to do with the land for long enough, he was in danger of losing any claim to it.

In this parable, the tenants believe if they kill the heir to the property, enough time will pass that the owner of the vineyard would lose his claim on the property.

They apparently thought if they killed the owner’s son, the owner would just give up and forfeit the vineyard.

As Jesus is telling this parable, He knows He is the beloved Son of God who owns the earth and its fulness. Jesus came to the vineyard owned by the Father, and yet Israel wanted to kill Him.

For the religious leaders, it was not a matter of not believing in Jesus, they did not want to lose their power and positions.

John 11:45 Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him.

John 11:46 But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did.

John 11:47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs.

John 11:48 If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." NKJV

C.H. Spurgeon said, *"If you do not hear the well-beloved Son of God, you have refused your last hope. He is God's ultimatum. Nothing remains when Christ is refused.*

"No one else can be sent; heaven itself contains no further messenger. If Christ be rejected, hope is rejected."

Notice ***Mark 12:8, So they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard.***

Jesus knew He was the Son of God who would soon be killed, but notice what Jesus asks the religious leaders in ***vs. 9, "what will the owner of the vineyard do?"***

When asked this same question, In ***Matthew's*** account...

Matthew 21:41 They (religious leaders) said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons." NKJV

Here in ***Mark*** Jesus said the same thing as they said in ***Matthew***.

Notice again ***Mark 12:9b He will come and destroy the vinedressers and give the vineyard to others. NKJV***

III. The Cornerstone.

Read ***Mark 12:10-12***

Warren Wiersbe said, “*The Stone*” was a well-known symbol for the Messiah.”

“*The Servant-Judge announced a double verdict: They had not only rejected the Son, but they had also **refused** the Stone! There could be only one consequence—judgment.*”

Here in the ***Gospel of Mark***, Jesus is quoting ***Psalm 118*** which most commentators believe was written by King David.

By the way, ***Psalm 118*** is the same ***Psalm*** that was fulfilled, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem, on the foal of a donkey and the people shouted Hosanna.

Psalm 118:22 The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. NKJV

Psalm 118:23 This was the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

Psalm 118:24 This is the day the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. NKJV

This is so important, in fact, no other text in the Old Testament is quoted more in the New Testament than ***Psalm 118:22***.

Peter quoted ***Psalm 118*** while addressing the Sanhedrin in ***Acts 4***, and Paul quoted this in ***Romans*** and in ***Ephesians***.

Jesus finished telling the religious leaders the parable of the vineyard and how the vinedressers killed the vineyard owner's son.

There is a prophecy in *Daniel* about a stone after the dream from Nebuchadnezzar and the great image.

Daniel 2:34 You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay and broke them in pieces.

Daniel 2:35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found.

Daniel 2:35b “And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. NKJV

The stone cut *without hands* shatters a confederation of kings, represented by the feet of the image and after the defeat of this final Gentile kingdom, God's Kingdom will dominate the earth.

Jesus is the Rock who will smash the feet and the toes of the Gentile image at the battle of Armageddon.

Isaiah 28:16 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation. NKJV

Here in the *Gospel of Mark*, Jesus is obviously claiming to be the Chief Cornerstone that the builders rejected.

The stone is Jesus Christ, who was rejected by the builders, which represents the religious leaders.

Jesus is the chief cornerstone, who made the world, He was rejected by the world He created, but He will come back in victory some day!

There is an interesting story about the building of Solomon's temple told by several commentators.

There was a quarry in a different location than the temple and the stones were brought to the temple site and set one upon one another.

These stones were designed and hewn so well that they did not need mortar, but they just would interlock and would lie flat and you could not even put a knife blade between them.

Each stone was marked for its place on the building, before being brought to the building site.

The story says that a specific stone was sent from the quarry and the men working on the temple didn't understand where it went.

This stone didn't fit in the natural progression of the building, so they didn't know what to do with it and they just tossed it aside.

As the men were building the temple, finally they came to the completion of the building, but the chief cornerstone was missing.

According to the story, they sent a message to the quarry to ask for the chief cornerstone.

The men said, "*We want to complete the building, and have its dedication so, we need the chief cornerstone.*"

The foreman of the quarry checked his records, and said, "*It's already been sent.*" And they said, "*We don't have it.*"

The foreman said, "*Well, we've already sent it to you.*"

Then someone remembered the stone they tossed aside, but it had bushes grown over it, so they dug the rock out.

Sure enough, the stone that was rejected by the builders was the chief cornerstone of the building. Some say this story of the stone and the Temple is what *Psalm 118* is written about.

C.H. Spurgeon said, "*Still do the builders refuse him: even to this day the professional teachers of the gospel are far too apt to fly to any and every new philosophy sooner than maintain the simple gospel, which is the essence of Christ.*"

...nevertheless, He holds His true position amongst His people, and the foolish builders shall see to their utter confusion that His truth shall be exalted overall."

Notice, "***They knew He had spoken the parable against them.***"

The Holy Spirit **convicted** these religious leaders that Jesus was who He claimed to be; but notice what they did, instead of repenting, ***they sought to lay hands on Him.***

Then they went away plotted to murder Jesus instead of repenting.

The Pharisees regarded Jesus as a dangerous revolutionary who needed to be put to **death**, but they had witnessed the miracles and the fulfilled prophecies, so they had to know who Jesus is.

Their motivation is shown again in *John 11:48, If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.*" NKJV

IV. Practical Application.

Israel had a history of ignoring the Lord's prophets as well as other times God communicated to them. When Israel was in the desert, they complained against the Lord due to a lack of water.

Paul said in *1 Corinthians 10:1 I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea,*

1 Corinthians 10:2 all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 10:3 all ate the same spiritual food,

1 Corinthians 10:4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. NKJV

Despite all the blessings and spiritual privileges, the Israelites did not trust the Lord, and He was not pleased with them.

When *Matthew* recorded this parable from *Mark 12*, he added...

Matthew 21:44 whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder." NKJV

The **choice** given to these religious leaders, in the parable of the wicked vinedressers, is the same choice given to every person in this room, as well as to every person in the world.

When Jesus was explaining to His Disciples that He was leaving and going back to heaven, He promised His followers to send them the Holy Spirit as a helper.

John 16:7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.

John 16:8 And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

John 16:9 of sin, because they do not believe in Me;

John 16:10 of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more;

John 16:11 of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. NKJV

When the Holy Spirit convicts us of our need for Christ, we can be broken in humble surrender before God, or we can refuse and end up being completely broken in judgment.

Jesus predicted the kingdom would be taken from the religious leaders and it was, literally and spiritually.

The Gospel was preached to the Jews first, but once they rejected the Gospel, it went to the Gentiles.

Jesus as the Creator of the world is the Cornerstone of everything. God the Father is the owner of the vineyard.

If you receive Jesus' pardon and free gift of salvation, you are essentially falling on the Rock and you will be **broken** of your pride, but the power of sin and shame will be broken.

If you receive Christ, you get a new, full, rich life, but if you refuse His salvation, He will fall on you in judgment.

You have a choice of the kind of relationship you have with Jesus, either as Lord and Savior, or as your Judge.

We are qualified to receive every blessing from the Lord, not because of what you have done, but based on what Jesus did.

Colossians 1:12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

You are not qualified with Jesus based on your performance, but you are qualified by God when you received Jesus.

Being righteous, or having a right standing with God, is the only qualification we need. Righteousness is a **free gift** we receive when we receive Jesus Christ, who becomes our righteousness.

God has provided everything we need by His grace, totally undeserved by us, as a free gift. Our access to our qualification comes by faith in Christ's finish work on the cross for us.

Christ is our firm foundation and Cornerstone, don't reject Him.