

# Parable of the tenants

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now, this week, from both passages, they touch on something that I think the majority of ministers will only discuss when it comes up in the book of the Bible.

It's not a go-to topic. Because it's quite clear what it's talking about. It's talking about judgment. It's specifically God's judgment of those who turn away from Jesus, reject his authority and reject him as king.

That's what this parable is about. Jesus says, I think it's in Luke's Gospel. He says, whoever welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me.

Whoever welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me. Which means when you turn that around, whoever does not welcome Jesus, whoever shows him the cold shoulder, does not welcome him, shows a cold shoulder to the God who made them.

Which means that if in life you don't welcome God, if you don't welcome Jesus, if you don't welcome the life that he offers to the full, he won't offer the same back to you.

[ 1 : 24 ] Because it's what you wanted anyway. Separation from God is what you wanted. Having your own authority is what you wanted if you're not turning to him.

And so, rejecting Jesus just leads to him rejecting you. And this is a hard thing for us to think about this morning. It's never easy to think this through.

But it is important that we do. It is important that we do. It is part of God's word for a reason. It is as a warning. Like we said last week, that the warning signals on your car that tell you something is wrong, so have a problem or you'll break down.

This, again, is a big warning signal. So that everyone would consider how they relate to the living God. How they relate to Jesus Christ.

Welcoming him or giving him a cold shoulder. Welcoming him or giving him a cold shoulder. And this is what we're going to be thinking about this morning. We're going to look at it three points.

[ 2 : 27 ] The greedy tenants, the furious owner, and the vindicated son. The greedy tenants, the furious owner, the vindicated son. Now, before we jump in, we just a brief reminder of where we're all at. This is the final sort of section we're doing in Matt's Gospel.

It focuses on the last week of Jesus' life. And he's in Jerusalem. And the passage we're in this morning, it follows on directly from the verses from last week.

The religious elite, the Pharisees, they're angry, remember. Verse 27. Jesus arrived in Jerusalem. He's walking. And the elders, the teachers of the law, the people from the temple, the elders, they come to him and they're said to him, by what authority are you doing these things?

You may remember, the reason they're angry is because he's just turned over the tables. And they say, who do you think you are? Come in, doing all this. By what authority do you do this? Who does this bloke from Nazareth think he is upsetting the way we do things in Jerusalem?

They reject the offer of repentance. He holds it out to them. Will they acknowledge his authority?

And they say, they turn it down. Because they love the power they exert over the people too much.

[ 3 : 40 ] Now, we're still in that same conversation. He's answered them once. They've rejected his offer to have a relationship with him. And Jesus won't answer them where he gets his authority from.

Instead, he tells them this parable. A parable, as we know, a story with a deeper spiritual meaning. And it's about them. And it's about what's really going on.

What's quite unique about this parable is it's prophetic. Because it pronounces what's going to happen in the future, judgment on them. And it also is ultimately what he says is what's going to happen at the end of that very week.

It's his last week of his life. So firstly, let's dive into it. The greedy tenants. And as you might have picked up, the reading that we had earlier, Isaiah 5, the imagery and the picture language used in this parable is directly lifted from Isaiah chapter 5.

We read it earlier. The vineyard is the people of God that God grew, that he did everything for. In Isaiah 5, it said that God cleared it of stones. He planted it with the choicest of vines, that he did everything for his people.

[ 4 : 52 ] God went down to his vineyard. And what did he find? He didn't find good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit in Israel. And you see how similar this parable we have in Mark's gospel.

It's almost the same language, almost word for word. Verse 1, a man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the wine bris, built a watchtower.

He's put everything in place for the vineyard for it to grow and bear fruit. Everything that is needed. Mark's gospel repeats the imagery. The vineyard is still the people of God, Israel.

But there is a difference. End of verse 1, then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. And what we see as this parable is laid out is the parable becomes a history of God dealing with his people.

It is a ployed history from a certain perspective. Verse 2, At harvest time, he, that's the man who represents God, who built this vineyard, he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard.

[ 6 : 01 ] That pattern's repeated. Verse 4, he sends another servant. Verse 5, still another. He sent many others. More and more servants need to be sent. Why do they need to be sent? Because they don't return with good news.

They don't return with news that the vineyard is bearing fruit. The servants are seized, they're beaten, sent away empty-handed, struck on the head, treated with shame, and many of them killed. Who are these servants? In the history of Israel, it is God's people that he sends, he sends the prophets to the people in the Old Testament. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, they amongst others. And what happened to those prophets? Exactly what happened when he's saying that. They were ignored, they were beaten, and sort of been killed. From a certain perspective, this is what happened in the history of Israel.

And then we come to verse 6. After all these prophets have gone, they've been ignored from all of God's people. Verse 6, he has one left to send, a son, whom he loved.

[ 7 : 10 ] He sent them last of all, saying, they'll respect my son, but the tenants told him, this is the heir, come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.

So they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. And the parable, he's talking about them. The religious elite, the Pharisees, this conversation is still going on with Jesus. And this is the way Jesus responds. The Pharisees, those in charge of leading God's people, those who are in charge of growing the people of God, the vineyard, seeing fruit, are the final group of tenants.

They should be making it grow, but they want the son's inheritance for themselves. And so they take him, kill him and throw him. The tenants kill the son.

Why? We said, because they want the inheritance for themselves. They want what rightfully belongs to the son. We just need to pause and answer that.

[ 8 : 13 ] What is the son's inheritance? What do they want from him? On the night before Jesus dies, when he's praying to his father, this is one of the things he prays.

It's a big, long prayer. John 17. There's a line in it, and he prays this. He says, I pray for them. I'm not praying for the world, but for those you have given me.

He prays this to his father. For those you have given me. The son's inheritance, what Jesus will inherit, it is the people of God.

God the father gifts. He gifts to Jesus the people of God. That is what Jesus receives as his inheritance. What he's looking forward to receiving is the people for himself.

And it's that that the Pharisees and the team people of the temple, more than anything else, is to have God's people for themselves. They're greedy to maintain the power and control over them, which they've had for so long, using God's law and rules not as a way to bless people, but as a way to maintain and exert authority and keep them under their foot as like a vice.

[ 9 : 30 ] That is the reason they killed Jesus and will fulfill the prophecy contained within the parable. Because Jesus will take that power and control over them. They won't God's people for

themselves.

And you see what he's saying in addition? He's saying, you're no different. You're no different from the wicked ancestors who killed God's prophets. You're no different. You're not in the line of Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, and Isaiah, and the prophets.

If you'd like to think, you're no different to those in the history of Israel who you would condemn. You're no different. The living God still has a good idea.

It's the church. He loves his people. He loves the church. It is very precious to him. The church, God's people, it is a gift from the Father to the Son.

We are you. Do you realize, you are Jesus' inheritance. Jesus will inherit you as his gift.

[10:42] The Father gifts you to the Son. You're the apple of Jesus' hand. You are the gift. And Jesus still sends people to tend to it.

He sent prophets in the Old Testament. He sends the Son to bring that kingdom. He says pastors and ministers in one sense. And in another sense, every member of the church is sent to nurture, to tend to the vineyard, to tend to one another.

And one day the Son, Jesus Christ, will come again to his vineyard to collect it as his inheritance for the Son for All. Which means, this is what it means, it means this, that how someone treats the vineyard or Jesus' inheritance, the ones that are precious to him, is a direct reflection on how they would treat Jesus himself.

It's a direct reflection. Because the people, the Old Testament, the prophets in the Old Testament, were beaten and killed.

Jesus has killed himself. And now Jesus has sent his spirit into his people to minister to one another. When God's people are mistreated, it demonstrates that they would do exactly to the same to Jesus if they were in their child.

[12:04] There are a few things to say. First thing, the first thing to note is that this did, as we noted, this has happened through the entirety of the Bible. So, at one level, when we see it, we shouldn't be surprised that greed for power and wanting to own the people of God, wanting to exert power over them still exists today.

Because it always has. So, at one level, we shouldn't be shocked when we see it. It is opposition and rejection of Jesus' authority, but it's always happened. And so, it will continue to happen until he returns, that there will be people, unfortunately, who may infiltrate the church and try to have that power for themselves.

There will even be good, godly people who might try to do, who might mistakenly try to do that as well. But we have the offer of forgiveness when that happens. The second thing I want us to say is that it should be a warning, and especially to leadership, how you treat, how we treat what is precious to Jesus with us.

Because how you treat what is precious to Jesus reflects how you treat him. If Jesus inherits what he loves, what is given to him, what he looks forward to receiving is mistreated by leaders.

Those who do that are acting just like the leaders in Jesus' day and follow that wrong line of leadership. It's a warning. It's like the alarm going off.

[13:36] In your car to remind you to do something about it. So we've thought about the tenants and the leaders. What does Jesus say God will do about it? And this is where it gets difficult.

The second thing we're going to look at is the the the the livid owner. The livid owner. The angry the anger of the owner.

The judgment of the owner perhaps. Killing the son is the final straw. It's worth noting before we get there how patient God has been. The owner has been. Surprisingly patient.

You notice he didn't just send one servant but when we read he sent another one and another and another. He's very patient. They kept coming competing and some of them killed but he kept sending another servant. We read many in verse 5.

Each servant that gets sent in that moment the people of God have an opportunity to do the right thing. Perhaps this time goes the people or the leaders will listen to my servant and turn from their wickedness and produce fruit.

[14:38] Perhaps they'll live as my people but every time it's one big massive disappointment. The son last of all surely they'll listen to him. Surely as God's people they'll lay a red carpet but they act just the same.

And we get to that part in verse just verse 8 just before verse 9 when we wonder perhaps we're asking the same question what will the owner do when he finds out what's happened to his son? Verse 9 what then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill the tenants and give the vineyard to others. Does that seem harsh?

Is that what you expect in the story? Is that what you would expect in a if you heard that on the news that somebody's son had been killed who owns something if you heard that story on the news would you expect to hear that or would you think that's harsh?

every person is given a lifetime to consider Jesus every day is a day that turning to him and acknowledging him as the authority and the saviour is on offer everyone can turn towards him for life and relationship or can turn away from him in the parable the rejection and murder of the son end in their destruction when it comes to spiritual reality spiritual life turning away from Jesus does mean that he turns away from you he is patient and whilst you're on breathing your lungs the opportunity never goes away to acknowledge him admitting that you've made a mess of things and that you've not acknowledged Jesus as you should you can do that today we saw that the Pharisees had that they had that decision to make but they chose to turn away however the warning is that if you decide during your life that you never want a relationship with Jesus it means very simply that when

[16:49] Jesus returns or when you breathe your last in eternity you get what you want to do so what you receive is what you have in this life you receive an existence that is as far removed from life and relationship and love and the compassion of Jesus as you love it every good thing from God in this life points to what heaven would be like every good thing every good thing heaven shows us that all the muck and the mess and the horror the brutality the war all the destruction the misery the depression all of that is gone in eternal life if you have a relationship with the son but it means that the opposite is also true it means that an existence apart from him is in one sense an intensification of all that we see that is connected to sin in this world it means instead of relationship there will be isolation and loneliness instead of love just hatred and anger instead of joy just endless sadness and depression that is the future of eternity without

Jesus call it whatever you want but that is what it will be like you still might be saying at this point is that fair is it fair I want to I want to suggest to you why the rejection of the woman who is of infinite value who created you is fair that this is what happens I want to consider this if I kill a spider in my house Annabelle will praise me for it because spiders have little value and we don't like them yet I have killed something so kill something with no value and praise for it but if I increase the value of the thing that I do something towards then there becomes automatically what happens to me changes if I could say someone's dog

I'm not allowed to kill someone's dog it has a higher value in fact if I kicked someone else's dog I would get into trouble you see you can't kick people's dogs you see I've not killed it I've done you know I can't even kick a dog I get into trouble increase the value let's take someone's child now I can't do any of those things but I can't shout at someone else's child because they're of a higher value than a dog if you really shouted at a child somebody might even call the police on you or they might investigate like if he's like that with someone else he's going to have his own case social services called out you see what I'm saying is the value of the thing goes personal the object goes up the sinner that is acceptable against them is less less is acceptable less is tolerated the punishment increases

I've gone from killing a spider to shouting at a child that's not accepted! the first one is it's more serious now you extend that to the God who created and made you who is of infinite value infinite he's far more important he's of infinite value whatever value you place on him if you place higher if you can even put a number on how you place him he's higher you can't place the value of him infinite value if you do anything remotely against him it has an infinite consequence!

so you reject him if you reject him if he's going to reject you that's not just he's going to reject you infinitely which means that you have an infinite eternal rejection is for the rest of all the time you see how it works when you realise that you see actually it is fair because Jesus and the living God are infinite value there's another warning by pay attention how do you treat Jesus do you welcome him or do you show him the culture so we looked at the greedy tenor we looked at the furious owner finally the vindicated son and what we see is Jesus connects what he's been saying to verses from psalm 118 we sung these verses this morning psalm 18 psalm 118 he says it in verse 10 he says haven't you read this passage of scripture the storm the builders rejected has become cornerstone

the lord has done this and it is marvellous in our eyes to understand what's properly going on we must pause at least for a moment to take a deeper look at what psalm 118 is really all about psalm 118 is written about a king who was victorious in bloody battle against the ox it's written and we sung this morning in praise and thanks to the lord because of what the lord has done through his king through their king through our king we sing it now achieving a great victory when the victory comes in this psalm it is for this king that is written about in the context it is a victory that nobody expected he's surrounded by other nations and he knows that trusting in the size of his army is useless and he has to trust in the lord and yet victory happens because it's the lord's plan the verse is that

[ 22 : 50 ] Jesus repeats to them in the psalm it's after this victory of this king the stone that the builders rejected the king basically that no one believed in has become the corner stone this king has become the most important stone in the building here translated as corner stone literally in Hebrew that word for corner stone is the head of the corner which means actually the corner stone of the Hebrew building or the head of the corner is not a stone in the foundations as you might think it's not that everything is built on this important stone the head of the corner is the stone that is lifted up in the building to the place of prominence when the building is finished that everyone would see that gave the building or the temple here the wow factor that it is finished the impressive stone in the psalm this is the moment when the king would have been given the place on the throne all of God's people are celebrating this great victory he's sat on the throne he's in the temple the center of Jerusalem everyone can see the king of Israel he's the most prominent place on his throne and his victories have vindicated him that's why this picture language is used the king is like the corner stone he's the head of the corner a place of prominence everyone can see this king you see what Jesus is saying when he quotes this time he's saying I'm the king taking the place of prominence in Israel I'm the corner stone I'm the head of the corner of the temple of God's house of his temple for everyone to see and yes you are the Lord's hands and of course Jesus rejection at this point has not finished his victory has not yet been complete but he will be lifted within a week to a place of prominence for all to see he will become the head of the corner the corner stone and it will be the Lord God's biggest victory through his king Jesus coronation his corner stone head of the! moment does not come on a throne in Jerusalem on a cross outside of the city walls he's lifted high for all to see he is most like the corner stone the head of the corner when his place of prominence where he's on display is treated as a slave hanging on a cross of wood where he does indeed have a crown put on his head it is his obedience vindicates and we say this is the Lord's plan the Lord has done this and it is marvellous in the eyes it is marvellous in the Lord's greatest victory in the line of the king becomes when he is lifted high on a cross of wood and so as we draw in for conclusion we've considered what it means for people who reject

Jesus Jesus says whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me and so whoever gives Jesus the cold shoulder gives God who sent Jesus the cold shoulder as well Jesus is the one who is of infinite value and to reject him to give him the cold shoulder comes with it comes with separation misery for eternity but the good news this is the good news is that Jesus is the cornerstone he's the most prominent stone lifted high for all to see being crowned hung on a cross which means that if you have rejected him whilst you still have breath in your lungs he gives all of us everyone here the chance of turning to him so that his death his victory!

over death can be yours on that cross he experiences everything that those who turn away from him would experience for eternity what does he experience he experiences separation and isolation from his father he's completely alone full of pain misery anxiety depression even the anger of God at sin everything wrong in our world is poured out on his own son he experiences it only he does it so that we can have the future to save us that's why he wants everyone to be included in his inheritance he wants to give the father wants to gift you to his son to delight in you to make you precious to know that the father and the living blood and the holy spirit think that you are precious in his son so he wants the people the father gives to his son almighty god it is hard to think of these things and yet we know it is good and we know it is good that you judge all sin and yet judgment is a hard topic to address we thank you for the goodness of the gospel we thank you that

[ 28 : 35 ] Jesus is the cornerstone he is the one lifted high for all to see taking our sin taking our taking the taking the anger of God the one who is isolated feels pain and misery is anxious and depressed and experiences misery so that we won't so that all the good things that you have promised will be received by us and that we get the gifts fit for a king given to us your people I thank

you that you delight in us that we are precious to you but as we hear this we also mourn because we know what we know in our families and we know those people that we love the people on our streets street commons it mourns our hearts

Lord aches our hearts we pray that you say we pray that while there is breath in their lungs that they will take and that they will become precious in your son we ask for this the amen