

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for September 24, 2017

Mark 12:1-12
A Revealing Parable

I. The rental (12:1)

And he began to speak to them in parables. "A man planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a pit for the winepress and built a tower, and leased it to tenants and went into another country.

- This takes place immediately after Jesus reveals the chief priests, scribes and elders' inability to admit Jesus' authority
 - Jesus did this through highlighting their unbelief since John the Baptist's ministry three years ago
- Now Jesus begins to teach the teachers of Israel
- Jesus goes on the attack (counter attack)
- Jesus chooses to speak in parables
 - Why?
 - Similar to original purpose of parables?
 - Mark 4:10-12 "And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. 11 And he said to them, 'To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, 12 so that 'they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.'"
 - Original purpose of parables was for Jesus to teach His followers while keeping unbelievers in the dark
 - Parables revealed truth to the faithful while concealing truth from the faithless
 - However, this was not the intention of this particular parable
 - Mark 12:12, "And they were seeking to arrest him but feared the people, for they perceived that he had told the parable against them. So they left him and went away."
 - Jesus in fact intended for this parable to be understood by the religious leaders present at that moment
- This is a parable about a vineyard
- The owner did much to start this vineyard
 - Planted it
 - Put a fence around it
 - Dug a pit for the winepress
 - Built a tower for it
 - Security, storage and shelter
- Owner then leased it out to tenants and left for another country

II. The rebellion (12:2-8)

2 When the season came, he sent a servant to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. 3 And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 4 Again he sent to them another servant, and they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully. 5 And he sent another, and him they killed. And so with many others: some they beat, and some they killed. 6 He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 7 But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' 8 And they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.

2 When the season came, he sent a servant to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard.

- Some reasonable time must have passed, since the season came to get fruit from the vineyard
- The owner naturally sent a servant to the tenants in order to obtain some fruit

3 And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed.

- These tenants prove to be evil since they beat the servant and sent him away without any fruit

4 Again he sent to them another servant, and they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully.

- The owner now sends a second servant to get some of the fruit from the tenants
- The tenants respond similarly by striking the servant on the head and treating him shamefully

5 And he sent another, and him they killed. And so with many others: some they beat, and some they killed.

- Even after two failures, the owner still sends more servants
- The tenants more outrageously continue their unacceptable behavior
- The tenants kill the third servant
- Additionally, the more servants that come, the tenants beat and kill them as well
- These tenants are persistently evil and unwilling to give the fruit that the owner deserves

6 He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'

- The owner even more outrageously still has not given up on these tenants
- He identifies His beloved Son as One whom the tenants will respect

7 But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.'

- The tenants continue their evil plotting upon seeing the son
- The tenants feel threatened by the son's position, since the son is the rightful heir of the vineyard and its fruit

- Thus, the evil tenants plot to kill the son in order to acquire the inheritance for themselves

8 And they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.

- The wicked plot of the tenants turns into reality
- They take the son, kill him, and throw him out of the vineyard
- This story is ludicrous and absurd
- The behavior of these tenants is unrealistic and unacceptable
- The point is that the feeling that you and I have upon reading such a story is exactly what Jesus was trying to create
- The feeling of outrage at these “tenants” parallels the feeling that God has toward the leadership of His people
- While Jesus does not give a breakdown of who represents who in this parable, there are obvious connections
 - Owner → God the Father
 - Tenants → Jewish religious leadership
 - Servants → Prophets
 - Beloved son → Beloved Son of God
- This parable summarizes God’s disappointment with the leadership of His people
- 2 Chronicles 36:15-16 “The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. 16 But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord rose against his people, until there was no remedy.”
- This unacceptable behavior of the tenants will culminate in their killing of God’s own Son

III. The removal (12:9)

9 What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.

- After such ridiculous behavior from the tenants, there is one obvious question
- What will the owner do???
- Jesus gives the obvious answer, “He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.”
 - Matthew 21:41 “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.’”
- Is this a statement in support of replacement theology?
 - Replacement theology is the belief that God’s time working with nation of Israel or ethnic Israel is done
 - This theology says that God is now working with you and I as Gentiles in the church, but He will not return to physically and literally fulfill the promises of a

physical and literal Kingdom for the nation of Israel as promised in the Old Testament

- “*Here is a biblical ‘replacement theology,’* and it is Jesus himself who enunciated it: *National* Israel, except for its elect remnant, would be judged, and the special standing that it had enjoyed during the old dispensation would be transferred to the already existing and growing *international* church of Jesus Christ (whose roots go back to Abraham, indeed, to the divine promise of Gen 3:15) made up of both the elect Jewish remnant and elect Gentiles.” (Robert L. Reymond in “Perspectives on Israel and the Church”)
- “What shall we Christians do with this rejected and condemned people, the Jews? Let us apply the ordinary wisdom of other nations like France, Spain, Bohemia, et al., who made them give an account of what they had stolen through usury, and divided it evenly; but expelled them from their country; For as heard before, God’s wrath is so great over them that through soft mercy they only become more wicked, through hard treatment, however, only a little better. Therefore, away with them!” (Martin Luther)
- “... I shall give you my sincere advice: First to set fire to their synagogues or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn, so that no man will ever again see a stone or cinder of them. This is to be done in honor of our Lord and of Christendom, so that God might see that we are Christians, and do not condone or knowingly tolerate such public lying, cursing, and blaspheming of his Son and of his Christians. For whatever we tolerated in the past unknowingly—and I myself was unaware of it—will be pardoned by God. But if we, now that we are informed, were to protect and shield such a house for the Jews, existing right before our very nose, in which they lie about, blaspheme, curse, vilify, and defame Christ and us (as was heard above), it would be the same as if we were doing all this and even worse ourselves, as we very well know.” (Martin Luther)
- This replacement theology and any form of theological anti-semitism is absolutely ridiculous
 - We can reject the view of replacement theology based upon the specifics of our text and Scripture as a whole
 - First, our text is not describing God’s condemnation of Israel but God’s condemnation of the Jewish religious leadership
 - Near context reminds us of the chief priests, scribes and elders of Israel as the specific audience
 - Jesus’ parable is targeting the leadership of Israel
 - In fact, verse 12 tells us that the religious leaders perceived that Jesus told this parable against them
 - Second, the Bible affirms God’s future plans for Israel

- The Old Testament prophets expected a physical and literal King to come to the earth and reign over the Kingdom from Jerusalem
 - Paul affirms this future reality for the Jewish people in Romans 11
- If the owner gave the vineyard to others, who are these “others”?
- It is safest to say that Jesus was raising up new leadership in the disciples who became the Apostles of the early church, the authors of Scripture and the foundation of the church
 - Ephesians 2:19-20 “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,”

IV. The rejection (12:10-11)

10 Have you not read this Scripture:

“ ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;

11 this was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’”

- Of course, this story of God’s disapproval and punishment of the Jewish leaders is not a surprise to God
 - He is not adjusting and responding to things as they happen
 - Instead, this story of Israel’s failed leadership was fully known by God
 - In fact, God actually utilized this stubborn leadership as the means to cause His Son to suffer and die so as to bring salvation to all mankind!!!
- In order to prove this, Jesus now turns straight to Old Testament Scripture in Psalm 118:22-23
- He further explains by quoting the Old Testament
- What is the content of this quote from Psalm 118:22?
 - Builders rejecting a stone
 - Stone becoming the cornerstone
 - In this new metaphor of a building project, the builders or Israel’s leadership failed to identify the most important material, the Cornerstone
 - In rejecting Jesus, the Jewish religious leadership rejected any chance of building and maintaining God’s house
- What does Psalm 118:23 contribute?
 - Lord has worked all of this
 - The people are amazed
 - Despite this epic fail on behalf of Israel’s leadership, God has actually planned for this rejection
 - This rejection of Christ the cornerstone has allowed God to build His people upon the foundation of Christ’s suffering on the cross
 - This was no mistake in God’s plan, this was a purposeful shift to reach the Gentiles through the rejection and death of Christ

- This is undoubtedly amazing and marvelous to the eyes of mankind
- What wisdom in the plan of God!

V. The reaction (12:12)

12 And they were seeking to arrest him but feared the people, for they perceived that he had told the parable against them. So they left him and went away.

- The Jewish religious leaders reacted with obvious hostility in their hearts
 - They perceived well enough that Jesus had spoken this parable of the wicked tenants against the chief priests, scribes and elders
 - While parables normally revealed truth to the faithful and concealed truth from the faithless, this particular parable was understood by faithless leadership
 - Their understanding increased their desire to have Jesus arrested
- However, their dependence upon the people and fear of the people caused them to simply leave the scene