

Luke 20 - Rejecting the King

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[0 : 00] We've been looking at a short series of parables from Luke's Gospel, and we look at the final one from Luke 20 that we've just read together.

You can listen to the others back online on our church website. I encourage you to look at that and any feedback we always appreciate.

Well, let's pray. Before we look at God's Word together, let's do that now. Our Father God, we have been reminded, as we've gathered today, of how fragile our lives are.

And Father, we recognize too that one day we will come to an end on this earth.

And so we pray and we ask that you will not let these moments or days pass us by without us reflecting and thinking hard about our own lives today, how we live for you, and what is to come.

[1 : 27] And we pray that by the power of your Holy Spirit, you would take your Word, and you would drive it deep into our hearts and into our lives, so that not one of us will leave this building without meeting the Lord Jesus Christ, our King, our Saviour, our Father, and our Lord.

So, Father, please, do your work amongst us. Rebuke us where we need to be rebuked. Comfort us where we need that comfort.

And build us up in the faith, we pray. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Not long after Barack Obama was elected president for the very first time, I met a businessman from the US. And to make conversation, I asked him, what do you think of your new president? He replied rather angrily, he ain't my president.

He then proceeded to explain how he never wanted him and never voted for him. However, even though he doesn't like Obama, he is still his president.

[3 : 05] No amount of rejection can actually change that fact. Now, in a universal sense, Jesus has been appointed King over all peoples and over all nations.

We might not like that he is King. We might not have voted him in as King. But he is our King. This became crystal clear when Jesus arrived into Jerusalem as he was riding on a colt. That very act of riding towards Jerusalem on a colt fulfilled God's promise of an appointed king that was to come.

We can read about the crowd's reaction in chapter 19 of Luke, if you just flick back a page. Luke chapter 19, verse 38. Here's the crowd's reaction as Jesus came.

Luke 19, verse 38. Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest as the crowds celebrated the arrival of King Jesus.

[4 : 19] Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, Teacher, rebuke your disciples. Tell them to stop behaving like this.

I tell you, Jesus replied, if they keep quiet, then the stones will cry out. In other words, he's being very pointed towards them.

He is saying, you might not like the fact that I am King. You might reject my kingship, but there is nothing and there is no one who can stop me being King.

Of course, this only intensified Jesus' relationship with the religious leaders. It brought them into great conflict. In verse 47 of chapter 19, we read that every day, Jesus was teaching in the temple, but the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him.

So the big question that is being put to us in these couple of chapters is, are we as people going to accept or are we going to reject Jesus as King?

[5 : 36] Now Jesus confronts us with this head on. He tells us a parable in chapter 20, verse 9, that we had read to us.

Have a look at verse 9 with me of chapter 20. He went on to tell the people this parable. A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers, and went away for a long time. Now this whole theme of vineyard that we have through the parable is not just a nice way of introducing a story. It was intentionally confrontational on Jesus' part. Have a look back. Keep your finger in Luke 20 and flick back to Isaiah chapter 5, verse 1, where we see the significance of what the vineyard actually means and what it was all about. and why Jesus chose that particular symbol. Isaiah chapter 5. And we'll read at verse 1. [6:51] Verse 1 reads, I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard. My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside.

And the question we need to ask, well, who or what is this vineyard? Well, the answer came, didn't it, at the very end in verse 7. The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the house of Israel. And the men and women of Judah are a garden of his delight. And what did he want from this vineyard, from this people? Well, he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed. He looked for righteousness, but heard only cries of distress. Back to Luke 20. So as Jesus starts out on this story, this parable of the vineyard, Jesus is talking specifically to the religious leaders. And they're listening very carefully. And as Jesus is talking to them, it's beginning to twig. The penny is beginning to drop. They're thinking, well, we're Israel. We're God's people. [8:03] We are the vineyard. This story that Jesus is telling us is a story about us. And as the story progressed, they did not like this story.

Verse 19. The teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. Now, what Jesus was speaking pointedly to the religious leaders, he is now speaking directly to us. You see, this story is also our story too. This is a story about our response to King Jesus, whether we accept him or whether we reject him. So there's three big things that we're going to look at as we look at this parable together. First, we see the King's persistent grace towards us. Look at verse 10. At harvest time, he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. [9:17] But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Now, if it was you or I who were telling this story, if it was us who had made it up, we probably would have gone straight into verse 15.

Have a look there in verse 15, the middle part of verse 15. What then will the owner do? What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and kill those tenants. I think that would be our response. We would show no mercy. They had their chance. They didn't do it. They beat up the servant. Well, now we'll take it out on them. But I want us to notice that that's not how God deals with his people. He is persistent. He is never giving up. He is longing that people will change their lives and turn to him. So after he has sent the first servant, what do we read in verse 11? He sent another servant. But that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed. But he persists. He doesn't give up. [10:24] Verse 12. He sent still a third. And they wounded him and threw him out. You see, throughout history, God has pursued his people through his word.

That's in effect the big story of Israel throughout the Old Testament. We read time after time that God kept on sending his servants. He kept on sending his prophets to teach them, to warn them, to call them to himself. One after another they came. Century after century, calling the people, come back to your king. Come back to your true king. But they refused to listen. This persistent grace of God is reflected in the very words of Jesus. Have a look back in Luke chapter 13. Jesus knew the significance of the servants who kept coming and the prophets who kept teaching. Listen to what Jesus says in, sorry, it's Luke chapter 12 and verse, no, Luke 13, verse 34. [11:39] Sorry, Luke 13, verse 34. As Jesus looks over Jerusalem, the city and its people, this is what he says, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But you are not willing. And I think that's the pattern of God with us. He continues to pursue us.

He persists in grace while we resist in rebellion. Day after day, year after year, God in his faithfulness has provided those who will lovingly teach God's word.

For some of us, that's from the very beginning within our own homes, through Sunday school, within the church family, God has intervened time and time again, persisting with his grace.

God in his grace brings his word, longing that we would gather to him, just like a little chick finds its shelter under its mother's wings.

[13 : 09] But the depth of this pursuit of God's grace is seen in the sending of his very own son. Back in Luke 20, he sent one servant, then another servant, then still a third servant, and then in verse 13, we read this, then the owner of the vineyard said, what shall I do?

I will send my son, whom I love. Perhaps they will respect him. But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over.

This is the heir, they said. Let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours. So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

Now it's not hard for us to see what Jesus is saying here, is it? God has not withheld his love from us.

He has given to us the ultimate prophet, the final word, Jesus Christ himself, the God-man who came into this world, the one, the person in whom we find forgiveness, peace, and joy and eternal life.

[14 : 22] He gives to us his own son. But those who listened didn't want to hear what Jesus had to say.

They didn't want Jesus as king. And the great tragedy of this story is that they began to act out this story in real life.

the tenants became real. Within three days of Jesus telling this story, the same people who listened had Jesus hanging on a cross.

Now we need to be so careful that we don't become like them. You see, to reject God's word, to ignore what God has to say to us through his son is to kill him.

Look what they say in verse 14. This is the heir. Let's kill him and the inheritance will be ours. We don't want Jesus ruling us.

[15 : 31] We want to be the boss. And so we kill him. We shut him out of our lives. We close over his word. We neither look at it, read it, nor listen to it.

We crucify him so that he has no part in our lives. But what seemed to be such a tragic death as Jesus died on the cross was actually God's ultimate and greatest act of grace towards us, his people.

Through his death, Jesus was taking the blame for all the times we have rejected him and ignored him. This king came down and he died for us so that we could be forgiven and know his good and kind and loving rule.

God has been persistent in bringing his word and giving to us of his son. So he is persistent in his grace.

But there's a second thing. There is the king's irreversible judgment upon us. You see, while God is persistent with his grace, it will not be available forever.

[16 : 53] Eventually, a time will come when rather than us experiencing his grace, we will experience his judgment.

Look at verse 15. So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them?

He will come and kill those tenants. You see, God is patient. God is long-suffering. But the day will come when his patience has run out.

He will bring his judgment on all those who have refused to bow the knee and acknowledge him as king. Now let's remember, God is not some mean and capricious, violent God who wakes up having a bad day and decides to take it out on his people and go, oh, I'll just strike that one down or I'll strike that one down.

No, God's judgment comes at the very end it is a culmination of a long, long process of pursuing grace down through the years.

[18 : 08] It is his very last act of work. You see, God's judgment is God giving to us what we have asked for.

If we persist in rejecting him, he will eventually reject us. If we tell him often enough, I don't want you, he will separate us from him for all eternity.

C.S. Lewis put it like this, there are only two kinds of people, those who say, thy will be done to God, or those to whom God in the end says, thy will will be done.

God in the end in other words, all that are in hell choose it because they have rejected Jesus as king.

Our judgment, if it were to come, is ultimately deserved. We only have ourselves to blame. And part of that judgment will also mean the removal of God's grace.

[19 : 25] Look at these searching words again in verse 15. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and kill those tenants, there will be punishment, and give the vineyard to others.

Now let's remember who Jesus is speaking to. He was talking to the people of Israel and to her leaders. They were a rich and privileged people.

God had chosen these people out of all the nations of the earth. He had set his love upon them. He had rescued them. He had provided for them. He had given them blessing after blessing.

But they had stubbornly refused his grace. You see, to refuse his grace means he will remove his grace from us and give it to others.

And if God did that with Israel and opened the doorway to the Gentiles, to people like you and me, do you not think that God can do the same again with his church, with his people?

[20 : 38] You see, just as God looked for fruit from the leaders of Israel, he looked for righteousness, but he heard cries of distress.

He looked for justice, but he saw bloodshed. He looked for those who would produce fruit, a life in keeping with a follower and a disciple of Jesus. He looks for it. Verse 10, at harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard.

He has entrusted to us the church with the blessing of his grace. If you are a believer today, if you are part of God's family, God has given you and entrusted his grace into your life to work it in your own life, to share it to the world.

And if we fail to use that grace, if we fail to put that grace to work in our own lives, he will take it and he will give it to another.

God does not owe us. We have no special claim on God. The great tragedy is that those who have had a taste of God's grace, but do not produce fruit.

[22 : 04] He will remove that grace from us and give it to one who will produce fruit. Are you ignoring God's grace in your life?

Are you persisting in sin and disobedience and walking your own way? God's grace will be very, very careful that you do not misuse or abuse his grace.

So God is persistent. The king will come to judge. And third, the king's eternal rule over us.

Those who listen to Jesus may have rejected his rule. They may have killed him and hung him on a cross. But he still rules over us.

He rules by his resurrection. Look at verse 16. We'll read the middle of verse 16. When the people heard this, they said, may this never be.

[23 : 15] In other words, they couldn't contemplate that God would ever, ever remove his favour or his grace from them. God's not going to have the last say. We'll have the last say.

We'll kill him. Verse 17, Jesus looked directly at them and asked, then what is the meaning of that which is written?

The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone. The imagery is so striking. The one stone that the builders throw into the waste pile and see no use of has become the most important stone in the whole building.

The capstone was that last and final stone that went on the top and held everything together. And Jesus is saying, I am that stone. You found no use for me.

You didn't want me. You rejected me through your life, but I am the capstone. I am the one who rules and who reigns over you. And I think Jesus is pointing very clearly to his resurrection.

[24 : 23] In three days of Jesus telling this story, Jesus was rejected. He was tossed to one side, rejected, killed, and hung on a cross by the people.

But three days after that event, Jesus rose victoriously from the grave over his enemies, defeating death, triumphing over the grave.

By his resurrection, Jesus has become the capstone. He rules over all. But it is not just his resurrection.

He rules on his return. You see, not everybody sees it this way. not everyone except that Jesus rose and that he is king.

They still go on rejecting and refusing his kingship. But the risen king will come again. And all who have resisted him will see and will know that he is king.

[25 : 32] Verse 18. Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces. But he on whom it falls will be crushed.

You see what it's saying? If we persist in our rejection, if we continually push against his gentle spirit, it will be like walking into a large stone or rock.

It will break us and destroy us. Verse 18. Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces. In fact, if we continue in our rejection of him, if we insist on ignoring his grace and favour towards us, then we will not only be broken, we will be crushed.

Look at the end of verse 18. But he on whom it falls will be crushed. One day the risen Lord Jesus will come again and establish his eternal kingdom and he will bring all his people who love him and know him and they will be part of that for all eternity.

But those who have stood opposed to him, those who have fought against him, who have resisted his spirit and his grace, all who have used and abused his grace, will be crushed beneath his power.

[27 : 09] This week, as I had time with Mrs. Daunt and as I've been talking with Jean, it's been a privilege.

For somebody like Mrs. Daunt, she's now with her king because she trusted in her king. A simple faith and that is where she is with the Lord today.

Last night some of us were with Jean and in her confused mind she still was able to utter the words, I know where I'm going. Isn't that great?

She trusts her king. She has accepted her king. she knows grace in her life. The question is, do we all know that grace?

Have we taken it in and accept Jesus' rule over every aspect of our life, letting him rule as we submit to him?

[28 : 18] Don't let these days pass without God doing that work in your life. let's pray. Lord Jesus, we bow before you in humility for you are king.

You are our lord and you are our savior. We thank you so much for your persistent and amazing grace, continually chasing after us, longing that we would gather to you, just like the chick gathers under the wings of its mother.

We thank you that we can find safety and security, joy and peace within you. And father, we pray that if we have not yet trusted or if we have been resisting, that you would break our spirit, that we would bow and accept you and love you and adore you.

And we pray that we ourselves would have opportunity that we may share of this grace with all those that we meet this coming week, opportunity to share of the hope that we have in Christ and the joy that it brings.

Please help us, father. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We're going to sing together a hymn about the kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[30 : 29] Behold our God, seated on his throne. Come, let us adore him. If Jesus is your king and you know his grace, then sing it out loud to encourage one another as we give our praise to the Lord.

Let's stand together as we sing.