

A Gospel Parable

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[0:00] Okay, if you would open up your Bibles to Mark chapter 12. It's on page 1008 of your Pew Bible.

And I'm going to read this passage for us. So this is Mark chapter 12, 1 through 12. And he, Jesus, began to speak to them in parables.

Quote, 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.

When the season came, he sent a servant to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again, he sent to them another servant, and they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully.

And he sent another, and him they killed. And so with many others, some they beat and some they killed, he had still one other, a beloved son.

[1:17] Finally, he sent him to them saying, they will respect my son. But those tenants said to one another, this is the heir, come let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.

And they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.

Have you not read this scripture? The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

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.

May God bless the hearing of his word. Are you familiar with the fable of the tortoise and the hare? It is a great little story, and it teaches that slow and steady is better in the long run than fast and sporadic.

[2:28] We're familiar with stories that teach lessons. And that's exactly what a parable is. It's a made-up story that teaches a lesson.

The difference between a parable and a fable is a fable usually uses, like, animals as its main characters, but a parable usually uses people as their main characters.

And Jesus was the parable speaker extraordinaire. He is well known for his parables. Maybe you remember this one. The parable of the treasure hidden in the field.

It's Matthew 13, 44. There's a guy that goes out in the field, and he's digging in the field, and ding, ding, ding, he hits something, and he finds treasure. And then Jesus is very clear.

In his joy, he goes and sells all that he has in order to make that parcel of land and treasure his own. It's a parable of the kingdom of God about finding salvation.

[3:25] Maybe you're familiar with Luke 10, the parable of the Good Samaritan. It teaches us what a neighbor is, really. Maybe you've heard Luke 15, the parable of the prodigal son.

There's a reference to it in one of the songs we sang. I mean, we're all prodigals, right? And our great God is a father who's waiting and then runs to us. The parable of the soils in Mark chapter 4, where this sower sows the seed, and it's the word of the kingdom.

And it falls upon four different kinds of soils. Three having like no response, no fruit, and the fourth being incredibly fruitful.

Jesus was the consummate parable teller. He used parables to teach people about God and humanity and salvation, the kingdom of God.

So the parable of the tenants is a parable made up by Jesus to teach a lesson. One of the things about reading our Bibles is that sometimes we get bored reading our Bibles.

[4:40] And one of the solutions to Bible reading boredom is asking a lot of questions, to be curious. So let's ask some questions this morning of the parable of the tenants.

We're going to ask, when did Jesus speak this parable? It matters. Where did Jesus speak this parable? You're going to be surprised.

Who did Jesus speak this parable to? And you're going to find out that it was aimed. And one of the questions maybe you're asking right now is like, what was this parable all about?

What represents what? We'll get into the weeds of that. Why did Jesus speak this parable? What's he going after? But there's one other question that we're going to close on.

That's one of the most important questions we must answer. How do we respond to this parable today? What we're going to see in the parable of the tenants is actually good news.

[5:43] This is a gospel parable. A beloved son is killed for a vineyard. And it's marvelous in our eyes.

So let's hit question number one. When did Jesus speak this parable? And you might be familiar enough with the life of Jesus to be able to say, well, probably March, April 33 AD.

Okay, let's move on. Well, true. But the question I'm asking is more, when in the gospel of Mark did Jesus speak this parable? Well, it is towards the end.

True. There's a word in the gospel of Mark that gets repeated 41 times. It's the word immediately. In terms of the New Testament, immediately shows up 51 times, including Mark. So this is the 80% use of the word immediately is in the gospel of Mark.

[6:49] And it's not distributed evenly in the gospel of Mark. The first half of the gospel of Mark, the word immediately shows up 30 times. Do you know what that means?

When you're reading through the gospel of Mark, you're feeling like you're just being kind of like moved along from one thing to the next. And then in chapter 8, immediately stops showing up as frequently.

In fact, in chapters 8 through 11, it shows up five times. In chapters 12 through 16, it shows up six times. Interestingly enough, it shows up less when Jesus starts talking about in Mark chapter 8, that the Son of Man must suffer, be rejected, be killed, and be raised.

And the effect of that is this. As you're reading through the gospel of Mark, even though you may not realize it, you sense the story slowing down. And as the story slows down, it actually is designed to start to emphasize what you're reading.

And that's where this parable falls. Chapter 12. This is a climactic parable. It's accumulative, cumulating.

[8:15] This is going to be a confrontational parable. So when did Jesus speak this parable? Well, towards the end of his life, he will see where in just a second.

But it's significant. Where did Jesus speak the parable? Well, you'll notice chapter 12, 1 through 12, 1 through 12, it's like there's no explicit reference to where Jesus is speaking this parable.

So what does that mean? You need to be a sleuth of sorts, a contextual sleuth. And so you start looking for passages before and after that may give hints of where this is taking place.

And if you look up into chapter 11, verse 27, you're given a huge clue of where this is happening. First is this, and they came again into Jerusalem. It's they as Jesus and his disciples.

They're going in and out of Jerusalem. And they've come back in. And then we read, and as he was walking in the temple, the chief priests, scribes, and elders come up and say something to him.

[9:17] So not only in Jerusalem, which is kind of the center of Israel, he's in the temple. So he's going to speak this parable in the temple in Jerusalem.

Now here's what you need to understand. There's actually something more significant going on here. If you would flip your Bible over to chapter 11, verse 15, something else has happened here. And Jesus and his disciples came to Jerusalem, and he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple. And he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons.

And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. You see, what happened the day before he speaks this parable is he cleanses the temple. Remember when he comes in in

chapter 1, 1 through 11, and he comes in on a colt.

In verse 11, he goes right into the temple. He's there late. He looks around and he leaves without a word. Do you know why he leaves without a word? Because he sees what's going on in the temple. He sees that the place of God's dwelling has been made into a den of robbers.

[10:39] Look at verse 17. And he was teaching them and saying to them, again, this is in the temple. Is it not written, my house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations, but you have made it a den of robbers.

Amen. The temple had been defiled. It's being used for things that it was never intended for.

In fact, if you take a step back and you're familiar with the history of Israel, the people of Israel were to be a light to the nations. All the nations of the world were to learn about the God of Israel and come to worship Him.

And so when God says, my house is a house of the nations, God has always intended the nations to come and worship Him as the one true God. But they were using it for something else.

Money-making venture. Defiled it. Greed. But the thing you need to understand is that in order for these businesses to be taking place in the temple, someone had to have approved it.

[11:56] It had to have been okayed. So we've seen who or when, we've seen where, and now let's talk about who Jesus is speaking this parable to.

Jesus has just cleansed the temple, and again, we're not talking broom and dustpan, Windex and mop. What He's doing is He's getting rid of the greedy filth in the temple for using it for something it was never meant to be used for.

And what happens in verse 18 is that after He cleanses the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, they heard about it, and they were seeking a way to destroy Him.

Now who does Jesus speak this parable to? Chapter 12, verse 1, and He began to speak to them in parables. Well, who is that? It's the same people in verse 10.

Have you not read the Scripture? It's the same people in verse 27 and 28 of chapter 11. The scribes and the chief priests and the elders, they had just come up to Him and said, by what authority are you doing this?

[13:11] Who gives you the right to cleanse the temple? To mess up our operations? Jesus is speaking the parable of the tenants to the Jewish leadership.

The Sanhedrin. the leaders of Israel, the leaders of Israel, its shepherds, they okayed the temple to be used for greedy purposes.

We're not told explicitly they were getting kickbacks, but it's not hard to imagine. God wants the nations coming to worship Him, but the Sanhedrin has seemed to have made the temple complex more into a lucrative business venture.

So the parable of the tenants, Jesus is speaking to a select group of people. It's aimed. It's got judgment.

And the Sanhedrin, you can see in verse 12, they knew it. And they were seeking to arrest Him, but feared the people, for they, the chief priests, scribes, and elders, perceived that He had told the parable against them.

[14:45] So, this was not good news to the Sanhedrin, but what we're going to see, this is actually marvelous in our sight. So we've seen the when, we've seen the where, we've seen the who.

Now let's talk about what is this parable about? Well, on the most basic level, the parable is about a property dispute.

between a vineyard owner and tenant farmers over a vineyard. The conflict is over who the vineyard belongs to and who has rights to the fruit. That's, on the basic level, surface level, that's what this is about.

And Jesus has made this up. He's absolutely brilliant. So let's walk through it. Verse 1, there's this guy who develops a bunch of land into a vineyard to grow grape vines.

He puts a wine press in the middle of it. That's in order to produce wine. And so he has kind of made a turnkey business opportunity for someone. And he leases the vineyard to some tenant vineyard farmers.

[15:57] These are people who don't own a vineyard, but kind of lease it to use it to make money. And there are to be caretakers to produce a grape harvest in wine.

So that's where Jesus starts. In verse 2, we get a hint of the agreement. When the season comes, the harvest season comes, he sends a servant to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard.

So the agreement between the vineyard owner and the tenant farmers would be, hey, when the harvest comes, you give him, the vineyard owner, a portion of the harvest as payment for the use of the vineyard.

Because the vineyard belongs to the vineyard owner. Okay, so let's check out the cast of character so far in this parable.

It's an elaborate parable. We have the vineyard owner. Do you know who that represents? God the Father. We have the bad guys. The tenant farmers.

[17:06] Do you know who they represent? The scribes, chief priests, and elders. And then there's the vineyard itself.

Do you know what the vineyard represents? If you were to go in your Bible to Isaiah chapter 5, 1 through 7, you will see Isaiah speaking a passage about Israel that uses a lot of the same language.

God's people. That's the vineyard. And so the cast so far is a vineyard owner, God the Father, the vineyard, God's people, and the tenant farmers who were the leadership of God's people.

And then in verses 3 through 5, things start getting tense. Jesus inserts tension into this parable.

Verse 3, the owner sends a servant to collect some of the produce. That servant gets beat up and sent home empty-handed. no fruit for you.

[18:18] So the tenant farmers are actually denying the vineyard owner what's due him. It appears they're beginning to think that the vineyard actually belongs to them. Verse 4, the owner sends another servant who is humiliated and presumably sent back empty-handed.

No fruit for you. Denied. Verse 5, the vineyard owner sends another servant who's killed. And then he sends more servants who are also beaten and killed.

So the cast of characters expands. So, who are these servants? Anybody want to venture a guess? The prophets. The prophets of the Old Testament.

They're sent by God to his disobedient people, to the leaders of his disobedient people, to call them again and again back to him. Back to him.

What Jesus is doing here is absolutely remarkable. He's presenting a parabolic picture of Israel's unfaithfulness and God's faithfulness.

[19:33] Jesus is skillfully linking the Sanhedrin, the present leaders of Israel, to the past shepherds of Israel.

There's a passage in Jeremiah chapter 23. I'm going to read it for you. It's verses 1 through 6.

Jeremiah, God through Jeremiah is speaking to Israel's leadership.

He's not calling them tenant farmers though. He's calling them shepherds. Hear this. Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture, declares the Lord.

Therefore, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people, you have scattered my flock and have driven them away. You have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil deeds, declares the Lord.

Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. New shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the Lord.

[20:47] Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch, the Messiah, the good shepherd, the son of man, the son of God, the Christ.

God's been sending prophets to his disobedient shepherds for a long time, God.

And Jesus is just very skillfully making all these connections in parabolic form while he's in the temple in Jerusalem. God has sent Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, Zechariah, Malachi, just to name a few.

They were beaten, they were killed, they were humiliated. They were God's servants faithfully proclaiming God's word to a disobedient people. So like Israel's leaders of old, Israel's present leaders, the Sanhedrin, had claimed God's people for themselves, the vineyard czars. Forgetting that they were caretakers, they thought they were owners. And so in verse six, we have a dramatic shift in the story.

[22:35] He had still one other, the vineyard owner had one more, a beloved son. We've come across those two words in Mark before.

The first time is chapter one, verse 11, at Jesus' baptism, the heavens open up, the Spirit of God descends on Jesus, and then there is this voice as loud as thunder, this is my beloved son, in whom I delight.

The gospel of Mark has already told us who this is. And the other time it's Mark chapter nine, verse seven, Jesus' transfiguration.

God has been transfigured, his disciples are dumbfounded, they're saying weird things, cloud, and out of the cloud, God speaks again.

This is my beloved son. Listen to him. God the father asserts the authority of God the son. Respect him. Obey him.

[23:46] And so this beloved son, we've already heard about. Isn't it ironic?

Here is Jesus, the beloved son of God declared by God himself, speaking a parable, referring to himself in the third person as a beloved son.

And he's going to talk about himself as being sent to the vineyard by his father, and he will be killed by the tenant farmers.

See what Jesus is doing here? This is the gospel. The vineyard owner in verse 6 says, he sends him, they will respect my son.

Verse 7, the complete opposite happens. The tenants, they see him, this is the heir, come let us kill him, they do not respect his son, and the inheritance will be ours.

[25:07] This is a property dispute. This parable is a property dispute between the owner and the tenant farmers, and the owner has gone to great lengths in order to appeal to the tenant farmers, hey, just give me some fruit.

It's my vineyard. What a contrast between respect my son and the heir, let's kill him.

Verse 8, they take him, they kill him, they cast him out of his inheritance. inheritance. Jesus is a master worker.

He's essentially re-speaking what he's been saying multiple times all along. The son of man must suffer, be rejected, be killed, and be raised.

831, same thing in 931, same thing in 1033 and 34. This is a parable about God sending his son to reclaim a people.

[26:23] Sophisticated. And it culminates in the sending of the beloved son. And you'll be killed for the vineyard. It's a gospel parable.

It's good news. It's good news for us because we see in this a persistent loving God going after what is his, his vineyard.

But it's not good news for the Sanhedrin. So if you're to ask what is this parable about, on one level, hey, it's a property dispute, but really? this parable is God's plan for salvation that culminates in the sending of his son, Jesus, to die for his people.

And it's taking place in Jerusalem in the temple. And he's speaking it to the very people who are going to kill him.

So why did Jesus speak this parable? In verse 9, Jesus asks a rhetorical question. In the parable, he's kind of bringing it home. He says, what will the owner of the vineyard do?

[27:42] He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. So he's going to do two things. The owner is going to visit judgment and destruction on the tenant farmers.

And the second thing he's going to do is he's going to entrust the vineyard to another. Do you know what happened in 70 AD? judgment came to Jerusalem.

The Roman general Titus destroyed the city, raised the temple, scattered countless Jews to the nation's judgment. It happened. But God's people weren't destroyed.

The vineyard wasn't destroyed. Now prior to 70 AD, God began planting and growing a new and expanded vineyard of Jews and Gentiles who had been radically changed by the risen Jesus Christ. In April 33 AD, Pentecost happened. And the new vineyard was born. The church. God's vineyard in Jesus.

[28:58] And God has been growing and expanding this vineyard ever since. If you want to line that up with some other things of the kingdom of God we've been learning, this is Daniel chapter 7, 13 and 14.

This is the son of man who has been given a dominion, a kingdom, kingdom that is everlasting and indestructible, made up of people from all nations.

Why did Jesus speak this parable? To show he has authority. In verse 28, by what authority do you do these things?

It's being asked by the chief priests, scribes, and elders, and Jesus answers them with a parable. I'm the son. I'm the beloved son. He's saying, I have authority because I was sent by the vineyard owner.

Second, this is, why did Jesus speak this parable? It's judgment. Judgment on the disobedient, evil shepherds of the day.

[30:06] Third, it's fulfillment. Did you see Psalm 118, 22, and 23?

Speaking to these religious leaders, he says, do you not know what your Bible says? The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

He's referring to himself, and so there's been a metaphor changed. Jesus is now talking, no longer talking about himself as a beloved son, but now is some kind of a stone that gets rejected by the builders, the builders being the leaders, Jesus being the stone.

His rejection ultimately culminates in his crucifixion. That's the stone that was rejected. But that doesn't end there, because that stone that was rejected has become the cornerstone.

And if we apply it to the gospel, do you know what the becoming of the cornerstone is? His resurrection. And being placed placed as the most important stone to build a new building, the people of God.

[31:12] This is a gospel parable. It's a gospel. It turns out that this parable, though bad news for the Sanhedrin, for us, it is really good news.

this Jewish Messiah is our king. He died and was raised so that we could be grafted into his vineyard.

Why did Jesus speak this parable? Well, there's multiple reasons. But it's marvelous in our eyes. It's how do we respond?

Here's the big question for us. How are you going to respond to this this morning? We're 2,000 years after Jesus spoke this. Does it matter?

What difference does this make? I mean, does it make any difference for us today that Jesus spoke this parable? Yes.

[32:31] First is behold your king. Behold him. Behold him in the temple in Jerusalem speaking these words to these men that he'd be rejected and killed and eventually raised for the vineyard.

That the new leadership would be the apostolic shepherds. we marvel. We marvel at him.

If you have yet to become a Christian, a follower of Jesus, it's simply acknowledging your sin and acknowledging what God through Christ has done. He was killed and he was raised to bring you into his family.

And what you do is you simply say, I will receive your gift and I will gladly enter your family and I will follow you. So behold your king, he's the beloved son.

The second way we respond to this is we follow the beloved son. We follow our king. This Jesus who's saying boldly these things, you know what?

[33:47] he's worth everything. He's worth everything to follow. He's worthy of it all. He's the treasure hidden in the field.

And in joy, we give everything we can have to acquire it. He is, he's, he's it. Did you notice all the suffering that happens in this parable?

All the servants, they suffer. So the servants are like small s suffering servants. But Jesus, a beloved son, is the capital s suffering servant.

Which means if you're going to follow Jesus, expect to suffer for Jesus. People make fun of you for being narrow-minded.

People make fun of you for basing your life on a book. People think that you're ignorant. People think that your religion is a crutch. Jesus is totally worth it.

[34:59] Third, behold your king, follow your king, take heart wayward one. Was anyone shocked shocked by God's faithful and persistent sending of prophets to his wayward people?

Is anybody else shocked by that? What a God in his steadfast love and faithfulness. So if you were a wayward Christian who happened in into the sanctuary, I am really glad that you came.

God, he wants you back. He wants you back and he wants you back with his people.

So come, let's follow Jesus together. Together following Jesus. Finally, last application is for the Christian leaders in the room.

Be sober, Christian leader. The most grievous mistake in this parable, the sin, are these tenant farmers who mistakenly thought that the vineyard belonged to them.

[36:24] It's presumptuous and prideful. Christian leadership is like tenant farming. We don't own the vineyard.

Christ the King Church doesn't belong to the pastors and elders of Christ the King Church. The church doesn't exist to serve its leadership.

The church's leadership exists to serve Christ's vineyard, his church. So elders, deacons, life group leaders, ministry directors, and teams, we are caretakers of God's people, of the vineyard, the blood bought of Jesus.

It's a joy and a privilege. And we will be held accountable for it. Let's take that to heart. the tortoise and the hare is a fable about being slow and steady.

The parable of the tenants is a parable of the gospel. A beloved son killed to reclaim his vineyard.

[37:52] stone. He's the stone that the builders rejected and he's become the corner stone. Our corner stone. So this morning, Christ the King Church, behold your king.

God's plan of salvation has always been to send his beloved son for us. And it is marvelous in our eyes. Let's pray together.

God in heaven, thank you for this parable. And we take it as from you into our hearts.

We want to be good soil that this seed falls into. God, would you make us fruitful? Would you help us to live for you, Lord Jesus?

Live for you humbly. You are marvelous in our eyes. In your name we pray. Amen.