

Jesus Speaks to the Heart

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[0 : 00] Well, we turn back to our reading in Mark's Gospel, chapter 12, and this parable that we have in verse 1 to verse 12. The parable of the tenants, as it is called.

It's not just a parable as we see here, Jesus teaching it against the Jewish leaders of the time, but it's a reminder to us of how we have God's Word to this very day.

At the heart of it is that the Son was sent to them and the Son was rejected. So this is looking at the Jews of that day. But then at the end of verse 9, it says, He will come and destroy the tenants and those who have rejected him and give the vineyard to others.

So that the Gospel is going to go out. And as with many parts of Scripture, what we find here is a response to Jesus' teaching.

A response to the authority of God's Word. As a question for ourselves as we begin the service this evening, what do you do when you hear God's Word speaking to you?

[1 : 22] We all hear it. We all hear God's Word speaking to us. We heard it this morning. We hear it this evening. We hear it so often. But what do we do with the Word of God?

And what you find as you go through the Scriptures, you find there are those who delight to hear the Word of God. You think of the two on the road to Emmaus who met with Jesus there on the way.

And it says that their heart burned within them. Not with anger. As we can often think of a burning heart with anger. It wasn't with anger.

But it was with this amazement, this wonder that Jesus was there opening up the Scriptures to them. So there is one response to the Word of God. But as we see again and again throughout God's Word, there's another response, another burning within the heart.

But it's a burning with anger. It's a burning with a ferocious anger as we see here as we look at the authority that Jesus was challenging. As you read through chapter 11 and chapter 12 here in Mark's Gospel, Jesus has arrived in Jerusalem and he's just a matter of days away from the crucifixion, from going to the cross.

[2 : 42] Why was he going to be crucified? Well, we could say because it was God's plan. That God had planned and purposed this from the very beginning.

As we see going through the Old Testament, as we saw this morning, we thought about Isaiah 53, just touched on that, how this reminder of Isaiah there speaking about the suffering servant, the one who was going to give his life.

We could say that's the reason. But we see it too in another way as well here. He was going to be crucified because he was at the mercy of people's hands, those who he caused offense to, those who he upset.

He angered these leaders. And it was they who were seeking to crucify him as well. In chapter 11 there in verse 18, Jesus had come in and seen what they were doing in the temple in Jerusalem.

And he's saying there in verse 17, that my house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations, but you have made it a den of robber. So he's speaking to their hearts there.

[3 : 46] And what they say is that they sought a way to destroy him in verse 18. They sought a way to destroy him.

In verse 27 to 33, as we read here, again, they were challenging his authority, questioning his authority.

Who is he to say any of these things to us? And even after this parable at the end in verse 12, they were seeking to arrest him.

So it still wasn't changing. Their reaction to God's word was one of, you will not tell us what to do. Why was he going to be crucified?

Well, because of what we see here, not just in their hearts, but in all the hearts of the people, in ourselves today as well. We see that he was going to be crucified because the world is a sinful world that needs a saviour, a redeemer.

[4 : 46] And he came as that saviour who would give his life. The son that we read of in this parable, the son that the master loved.

So the question we face is, as we were thinking this morning, whose voice or what voice are we listening to? Do we trust Jesus as the son of God or are we looking somewhere else?

Are we looking to do away with him? Are our hearts burning with desire for him or burning with anger against him? So as you go into chapter 12, Jesus here challenges these religious leaders with this parable that speaks to them.

He's speaking right into their hearts. He's getting right into their very soul and being as to what are they going to do with him. The parable is something that the people would have been familiar with. In those days, very often this kind of situation would happen. We sometimes call it today absentee landlords where somebody owns a vineyard, in this case in the scriptures, but they're at a distance.

[6 : 04] But they have other workers who will come and work it for them. But the landlord ultimately owns it and will get his share of the profits from it. And that's what we see here.

This is the parable that Jesus uses. Verse 1 describes for us a man who planted a vineyard. And put everything up that was required, a fence around it.

He dug a wine pit where the wine, the juice of the grapes, would be collected in the right season. He built a tower for a watchman to guard it. And he had his workers, his servants, to work it for them. And he left it in their care. But when the season came, when the wine was going to be flowing, the master would want his share. And so he would send his servants to them to gather what he was due.

But then you see the response of those who were the workers in the vineyard. In this parable, the lord of the vineyard, the master is God. We see that so clearly.

[7 : 11] The vineyard is God's people that he's caring for. And the farmers are the Jewish religious leaders and how they are dealing with God's people.

The servants that the master sends are the prophets that God sent to his people. And as we know, the well-beloved only son is the Lord Jesus Christ.

These things are so clear to us here. And it's reminding us of God's grace and his love towards us. And that's what we want to take from this parable as well. But we see the response of the farmers. We see the response of those who are working the vineyard for the master.

And we see the response in how the servants are sent and what they do with them. And how it speaks to us of how we respond to the word of God. So we're going to go through it and look at three different things in this passage.

[8 : 15] First of all, we see the goodness of God. The goodness of God. I want to think about this. Is it received or is it rejected?

Received or rejected? The goodness of God. The parable, as Jesus is speaking it to them here, is very heavy with Old Testament imagery.

And so the leaders who he is speaking it to, they would have known exactly what he was talking about. They are questioning Jesus' authority as we see in chapter 11.

And so he's using this parable to show them, well, what are you going to do with my authority?

Whose authority do you think it is? And he is showing them that this authority foremost is with God. And they should have been able to see it immediately as he speaks this parable to them.

Immediately as God's word is speaking to them, they should have been under conviction of sin here. The word of God speaking so clearly to them that they would have been feeling just as shying away from Jesus.

[9 : 31] Coming to that point where you would hope they would just see their sin and say, forgive us. Have mercy on me, a sinner. That is the response you would want, but it's not the response that you see.

Instead, it's their own pride and self-importance that comes to the fore. But when you look at it in the Old Testament, you see just why they should have realized what Jesus was saying.

For example, going back to Isaiah again as we were this morning, in chapter 5, verse 1 to 4, you see just how familiar this is to what we're reading here this evening.

Isaiah 5, verse 1, let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard. My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones and planted it with choice vines. He built a watchtower in the midst of it and hewed out a wine vat in it and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes.

[10:36] And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard, what more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it?

When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? You see how similar that is to this parable that Jesus is telling here.

The similarities are there just so clearly. And so they should have recognized what Jesus was speaking about. They should have recognized the importance of this.

And as we are hearing God's word as well, surely we too recognize the importance of it because it's always speaking to us. Here it is speaking into the hearts of these Jewish leaders into their sin.

And that is what God's word does for us as well. It speaks into our hearts of our sinfulness, of how far short we fall of God's glory, of how much we've done wrong against him.

[11:40] And when you look at what God has done for his people in the Old Testament, how God had tenderly cared for them. When you go back to Egypt, they were in slavery, they were in bondage, and yet the Lord took them out.

He had taken them through the wilderness, cared for them there, given them everything that they needed. He took them into the promised land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

There they took root and they flourished and God blessed them in so many ways. God had given his vine as they were, his people, all of his goodness in which to grow.

He had blessed them in so many ways. He had given them his word. He had given them his protection. And he had done all of these things for them.

God had been good to them. As Isaiah 5, verse 4 said, what could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?

[12:41] He had done everything for them. Time and time again the Lord has been good to them. But what did they do? They rejected him.

And what of us today? When we think of what God has done for us, can we not say today, God has been good to us? God has been good to me.

Can you say that this evening? As God's word is speaking to you, reminding you in your heart of your sin. And yet we read of a saviour.

Can you not say, well, God has been good to me. God has showed his favour towards me. There is no question that everyone here who has come to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ cannot confess that God has been good.

we are not the Israel that he is speaking about here. We are not those who are in bondage in Egypt. But we are in bondage in sin.

[13:48] We are lost in our sin. But God by his mercy takes us out of that sin. As Psalm 40 speaks about waiting on the Lord and has been brought up out of that pit the mighty clean, our feet set on the rock.

that is what the goodness of God does for us. Takes us from darkness to light. Has God been good to you?

If you are a believer you can say it. God has been good. But maybe you are seeking after God. Can you not say that God has been good to you as well?

God has given you an opportunity. God has given you this time. God has given you his work. God has heard our prayers in so many ways.

God has given us his grace in so many different ways day by day. God has been good. The psalmist in Psalm 116 in the Sing Psalms version it puts it like this, rest oh my soul God has been good to you.

[15:01] That is where we find rest. God was good to these leaders but what did they do? They rejected him.

They questioned his authority. They sought to arrest him. They sought to crucify him. But what about us? What do we do with this goodness of God?

Do we give thanks to him? Do we rejoice in it or do we just push it back in his face and say not for us? God has been good.

But so many reject God today. Let us not be found as those who reject or shun God or turn away from him but give thanks to him and receive his goodness and praise him for all his grace and love towards us.

the goodness of God. We see it here among them, rejected by them. Let us receive that goodness. The second thing we see here is just that grace of God.

[16:15] He's giving them something that they don't deserve and they just throw it back in his face. And we see that in how the master has given them this vineyard.

He's done everything for them, prepared it for them. And then in verse 2 it says, when the season came he sent a servant to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard.

Some of the fruit of the vineyard. The owner would send his servants to gather what was due to him.

some of the fruit of the vineyard as it says in verse 2. The owner normally would take about a third or a half for himself.

Everything else would go to those who attended it. To the farmers, to the tenants who had been leased it.

[17:19] They would get the rest. they paid nothing for it. They tended it for a time and they bore the fruit. You would think, well, they would be delighted with that.

They would be made up with that. They would receive their reward. But yet what we see is when the servants arrive, the tenants, what do they do? They turn against them time and time again. So the first servant arrives in verse 3 and they took him and beat him and sent him away empty handed. Verse 4, again he sent them another servant and they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully.

And again and again we see it going on here. They killed some, they beat others, sent them all away empty handed. God is showing his grace here towards them, giving them opportunity after opportunity and yet they still cannot see the goodness of God or the grace of God.

And what is he saying to the leaders here? Well all of these servants that are sent back to the tenants, he is saying, these are the prophets. These are the ones who have spoken down through all the generations and what did you do with them?

[18:47] The ones who brought you my word, you beat them, you killed them, you sent them away. You see this when you go to the book of Hebrews in chapter one.

Long ago at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. So right through the generations, God was speaking.

And yet they rejected, rejected, rejected. And then finally, the landowner sees one more option. In verse six, he had still one other, a beloved son. Finally, he sent him to them saying, they will respect my son.

Surely, this will be the answer. I will send my son. And again, you go back to Hebrews chapter one. God spoke to our fathers through the prophets, but in these last days, he has spoken to us by his son, whom he appointed heir of all things.

[19:57] So we're seeing here, this is the master sending his son. This is God sending Jesus Christ into the world. Surely, they will receive him.

But what do they do? What do they do with him? Well, they see an opportunity for themselves. In verse seven, 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. This is what they did with him. they thought that by killing the son, they could have everything for themselves.

They could not stand the thought of this Jesus having authority over them. So they are looking for ways to kill him.

And yet what grace God shows. Grace that they don't deserve. The blessings that they have received again and again. But there is a warning.

[21:11] What will the owner do? What will the owner of the vineyard do? In verse 9, he will come and destroy the tenants.

What a warning that is there. What will we do with this grace of God ourselves? God has shown us grace.

He has given us his word through the prophets as we have them. He has spoken to us through his son, the Lord Jesus Christ. But how do we receive that word?

Do we receive it with gladness or do we reject it? Do we shun it and turn away from it? Do we have that attitude where if we can just get rid of this son, we will have everything for ourselves?

As one commentator put it, this is the way that humanity sees it. If humanity can dispense with God or even kill God, then humanity can become God.

[22 : 16] It's not a reminder of the kind of hearts which we have. The hearts that are apart from the grace of God want to be God ourselves. If we can dispense with God or even kill God, we can become God.

But we cannot. What they failed to understand was the grace that was on offer here, that they could have everything if they would just receive the son.

But they failed to understand. Receive the son, the vineyard and it's all there for you. Receive the son as God goes on to speak to us through the word and you will become a child of God.

Receive the son and you become an heir alongside him. Receive the son and you have all the blessings that heaven has to offer. But they killed him.

What about you? What do you do with the son who was sent? Do you receive him and all the blessings that are offered through him or do you kill him?

[23 : 35] God's grace and love is immense towards us through his son Jesus Christ but yet we live in a world that says no again and again and again.

Will you receive this word with joy or will you burn in anger against it? That's the choices that are so often put before us.

But we are warned again and again and that's what we see finally here because there's an ultimate warning. You go on rejecting the grace of God and there are consequences.

Verse 9 What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. Jesus was God's final messenger and if they rejected him they were saying no to God for the very last time.

It's a frightening thought that for us that we could say no to God one last time but yet God still speaks.

[24 : 53] The religious leaders killed the Son of God on the cross at Calvary. They thought that they would get rid of him and get everything all authority and everything else for themselves but they would end up with nothing.

The Master would come and destroy the tenants. They will be cast out and others will receive. That is the same for us.

You reject the Son. You throw him away but others will receive. Reject the authority of Jesus.

Reject the salvation that is offered through him and there is only judgment and destruction for you. But how shall we respond to the word of God?

Again you go back to Hebrews chapter 2. It's there the warnings are there for us how God has spoken through his Son.

[26 : 04] But the beginning of chapter 2 therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard lest we drift away from it. For since the message was declared by angels proved to be reliable and every transgression and disobedience received a just retribution how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

Isn't that a stark warning for us? Pay closer attention to what we have heard lest we drift away from it. How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

We won't. We can't. But the salvation is there on offer to us and that's what's summed up by verse 10. Have you not read this scripture?

The stone that the builders rejected has become the corner stone. The Lord this was the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes. Quoting from Psalm 118.

The one who was rejected has become the corner stone. Is it your corner stone? It was the Lord's doing.

[27 : 24] Is it marvelous in your eyes? Do you rejoice in that? That God sent his beloved son. That whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life.

The word of God speaks to our hearts. The response of these religious leaders of the day was to have him arrested to cast him away. But what is yours?

How do you respond to the word of God? How will you escape if you reject such a great salvation? It was Martin Luther who once put it like this, the life of Christianity consists of possessive nouns.

It is one thing to say Christ is our Savior. It is quite another thing to say he is my Savior and my Lord. The devil can say the first he said.

The true Christian alone can say the second. So who is this Christ? Is he just our Savior? Or can you say he is my Savior?

[28 : 37] If we are able to say he is my Savior, then we can face up to that judgment when the master, the owner returns. And we will not be cast away.

Because when we come to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, to know his love and his grace, then we are saved through him.

And as Jesus says in Matthew's gospel, on that day of judgment, there will be those who will be cast away, who he says, I knew you not. That is the outcome for those who reject his son.

But for those who receive, for those who believe in him, Jesus says, then the king will say to those on his right, come, you who are blessed by my father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

The king has won. He is on his throne and he will come again. But what we receive depends on what we do with him now.

[29 : 55] Do we receive him with gladness or do our hearts burn in anger against him? He has shown us love.

He has shown us his goodness. He has shown us his grace. There is nothing more that he could have done for his vineyard. It's what we do with him.

Do we receive him or do we reject him? May God help us to find a refuge in him so that when he returns he will call us by saying come you who are blessed by my father.

Let us pray. Lord our gracious God we do thank you that your word is complete, that your word stands firm and sure, that it has all authority for us and reminds us of our sin and yet your grace.

And we thank you Lord that your word speaks into our hearts. And we pray today for that word to be received in our hearts, not with a burning anger that shuns you and turns away from you, but recognizing our need of you.

[31 : 19] And thankful for your goodness to us and your grace towards us. Lord, continue to speak, guiding us and helping us and forgiving our sins in Jesus' name.

Amen. We're going to conclude by singing to God's praise these words in Psalm 118, the Sing Psalms version, page 156, Psalm 118, verse 21 to verse 26.

You answered me, I'll give you thanks. Salvation comes from you alone. The stone the builders had refused has now become the cornerstone. The Lord himself has done all this.

It is a marvel in our sight. This is the day the Lord has made in it. Let us take great delight. We'll sing from verse 21 to 26.

The tune is Old 100th and we stand to sing. You answered me, I will give thanks.

[32 : 41] Salvation as now stone.

The Lord himself has done all this. It is a marvel in our sight.

This is the day the Lord has made. And let us take great delight.

Save us, O Lord, we humbly pray. O Lord, we pray, grant us success.

His blessing is blessed who comes in God's great name. You from the Lord's house we will bless.

[34 : 19] Amen. After the benediction, I'll go to the door to my right. We'll close with a benediction.

May grace, mercy, and peace from God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forever more.

Amen. God Thank you.