

The Parable of the Vineyard

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Date: 31 January 2010

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again to the chapter we read in Luke's Gospel, Luke chapter 20, and looking at this section from the beginning to the end of verse 18.

It tells us here at the beginning, one day as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up and said to him, Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority.

Now Jesus, as we know us, is now coming very close to the end of his journey in this world, and coming very close to the time where he is to lay down his life and to make sacrifice for sin.

Jesus knew what was ahead of him. He had told the disciples what lay ahead when they went to Jerusalem. And rather than shying away from it, Jesus met everything head on.

He came into Jerusalem not secretly, not hiding away. He came in very publicly. Remember how he came in riding on the young donkey.

[1 : 20] And when he came in to Jerusalem, he didn't hide away. He went, remember how he went to the temple, and how he dealt in a very vigorous and in a very vehement way with the people there, and where he chased them out because they had turned God's house, the house of prayer, into a den of rubbish.

Now when Jesus did this, of course, it absolutely incensed the religious leaders. And they were saying to themselves, who is this? They had been determined for a long time to get hold of Jesus.

They wanted to destroy him. And as each passing day, things were getting worse and worse. And Jesus' influence was growing and growing, and particularly now that he was in Jerusalem.

He was right in the very heartland. And they were becoming more and more and more determined to get him. Now Jesus, we find here, is in the temple, and he's using the temple in the correct way.

He is here. He is preaching the gospel. And this deputation, we read of chief priests and scribes and elders, and they came to him demanding to know by what authority he was doing what he was doing.

[2 : 38] Who gave him the authority to teach in the temple? Who gave him the authority to throw out the people who were there buying and selling? Who was giving him the authority to do these things?

Because as far as they were concerned, he was an outsider. They didn't know him. He hadn't come through the colleges of learning. He hadn't come through the rabbinical schools.

Who gave him this authority to do what he was doing? And so they ask him this question. By, tell us, they say, by what authority you do these things?

Or who it is who gave you this authority? Now, it's amazing how, when you look at the life of Jesus, how he was constantly being, people were trying to undermine him.

People were trying to put him down. People were speaking untruths about him. People were going round behind, as it were, nipping away all the time.

[3 : 41] And, you know, it's an amazing thing, but you'll often find that when people are truly doing and working for the Lord, there will always be critics. There will always be people finding fault.

The self-righteous will always find fault. Those who do not truly know the Lord, they will find fault. There's always somebody who will find fault. It happened with the Lord, and it happens right down to this day.

But Jesus wasn't going to try and defend himself. There was no point. There was no point in Jesus saying to them, Look, right, let's stop for a moment, and I'll tell you by whose authority I do this.

Jesus knew there was no point in doing that. Because these men, they were so blinkered, they were so prejudiced, they were so full of hatred and spite, that it was impossible for them to believe the truth.

They were so filled with anger and hatred against Christ, that they wouldn't listen to him. And even if he tried to tell them, they would have become so incensed, they would no doubt have started trying to stone him there and then.

[4 : 50] So, Jesus, what he does is really quite brilliant. He says, all right, first of all, he says, I'm going to ask you a question. Was the baptism, or that is simply the ministry of John, the ministry was the baptism, the ministry of John the Baptist, was it from heaven or from man?

And it was really quite a brilliant question because John's roots were just as obscure as Jesus. John, like Jesus, hadn't come through the normal channels.

He hadn't gone through the schools of learning and through the colleges of learning and through the rabbinical schools. He, just as it were, arrived on the scene. And he arrived on the scene preaching with great authority, with great power.

And the people knew. You see, there is something about the truth that testifies to itself. And when people listened to John, they knew this was the truth.

And people knew this was a prophet sent by God. Right throughout the land, the ordinary people were convinced that John was a prophet sent from God because there was a reality.

[6 : 08] That ring of truth was hitting home. And they knew it. And so, there was this great link between Jesus and John.

There was this authority. There was this power with the message. And Jesus and John preached the same message. They preached faith and repentance.

Both of them preached this message. And there was a real problem for the Jewish leaders here because John's ministry was incredibly linked to Jesus'.

In fact, John's ministry proclaimed Jesus. So, the Jewish leaders had an incredible dilemma as to how they were going to answer this.

Because if they said that John's ministry was from God, then in turn they were going to have to admit that Jesus' ministry was also from God.

[7 : 12] And that that was answering the question that they had asked. You see, the question Jesus asks them will shed light on the question they have asked.

And so, there's this dilemma and they say, well, if we say the ministry of John was from God, then we're going to be forced to confess and admit that Jesus' ministry is also from God.

So then there's kind of arguing amongst themselves and then they say, well, but then they say, well, if we say it's from man, then the people are going to stone us because they revered John and they held John as a prophet sent from God.

And so they found themselves all of a sudden in a no-win situation. And they say, they come to Jesus, you can see them discussing, they're huddled away there and they're discussing it.

So they answered that they didn't know where it came from. And Jesus said, well, I'm not going to tell you either. And I'll just say one thing here when these men say, this is what they say, we do not, so they answered that they did not know where it came from.

[8 : 31] And what I'll say here is, don't believe everything that people will say to you about the gospel. What I mean is that, you know when sometimes people will know that you go to church or you're a Christian and every so often people will have a go at you because you're a Christian or because of what you believe.

Don't believe everything that they say. Just in the same way, these men weren't speaking the truth to Jesus. They said, we can't tell.

That wasn't, that wasn't the deep-rooted answer. That wasn't how it really was. And often people will say things about the Christian and about Christ and about the Christian religion that deep down they don't really believe.

People will sometimes say very unreasonable and irrational things and people will sometimes demand things of you that this is how you should be that deep down they don't really themselves believe but they'll say it.

Maybe you face that at home. Maybe you face that at work. Maybe that's something you're often challenged by by people who are being unreasonable with you. And what they're saying is actually different to what they're actually thinking themselves deep down.

[10 : 02] And we find that I'm sure we've all experienced that in different ways at different times. Well, in a sense what we have here is highlighting that very thing. And so Jesus says I'm not going to tell you by what authority I do these things.

And then Jesus turns to the crowd to the people there and he tells them a parable. Now we saw before in chapter 19 the parable of the 10 minus that was the last parable Jesus told before he came to Jerusalem.

And here now he's telling them this story in Jerusalem. And as Jesus tells them this this is one of the clearest stories that he's ever told.

You know, we've said this before with regard to the parables that you cannot take some of the parables of Jesus you cannot spiritualize every single aspect of it. sometimes it's telling one main thing.

And if you try and take every little aspect of it you get into all kinds of bother. But this one it's incredibly evident and clear what Jesus is talking about.

[11 : 12] And Jesus gives us here a very clear picture of the religious leaders of the Jews what has happened what is happening and what is going to happen.

And Jesus is showing them that God is going to take the blessings the privilege the kingdom from them and give it to others.

The story Jesus uses is just such a it's such a simple example of this this man we read it here this particular man who owned land and he let it out to others to farm.

And it's very clear when you look at this vineyard here this man had this vineyard that the owner you can see it here it's very clear the owner in the parable is God the vineyard is Israel they themselves and their predecessors they are the tenants the servants are the prophets and the beloved son is Jesus Christ it's very obvious as you read this and so the detail here is really quite extraordinary and here is a history of Israel and here is God now we were talking this morning about the formation of Israel and that God had made Israel for himself and it was to be through Israel that all the nations of the world were to be blessed as Jesus Christ came and God gave so much to Israel he did so much for Israel they were his people and he they were his vineyard and he's looking for fruit and down throughout the years we can read about it throughout the Old Testament prophet after prophet after prophet was sent to the nation the prophets were often the conscience of the nation and when you read through the Old Testament you see the way that Israel often treated the prophets they stoned some of them some of them like Jeremiah were thrown into miry prisons they suffered incredibly the people wouldn't listen

God's people wouldn't listen and as the prophets came they were being cast aside and all the time the Lord is looking for one thing he's looking for fruit it's his vineyard but they don't want to give fruit they want the vineyard for themselves and then eventually the owner of the vineyard says well right what I'm going to do is here is my own son my own beloved son I'll send him and surely they will listen to him surely they will respect him surely what they will give to him what is at the end of the day mine but we read what happens when the when the beloved son comes they they treated him worse than they treated the servants they took him we read that that they when he came the tenants saw it and they said this is the heir let us kill him so the inheritance may be ours and they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him and that's exactly what was done with Jesus they threw him out of the city and they killed him when God sent his own son his own beloved son to his own people remember how it tells us in John

[14 : 55] John chapter 1 he came to his own and his own received him not they were his own people God is saying here's my son my beloved son and what did they do they took him and they took him out of the city and they killed him and Jesus is here giving such a graphic picture you see it was they said this is what they're saying let's kill him and the vineyard will be ours no my friend it couldn't be it never was and it never will be the vineyard is God's and God as we read this morning in Isaiah made the people for himself and God is looking for fruit in people's lives spiritual fruit he's looking for love and faith and he's looking for peace and joy he's looking for this fruit and this is the reaction as he comes looking for this fruit and the inevitable will fall is judgment and we find the response of the people when Jesus tells this parable

Jesus asks the question what then will the owner of the vineyard do to them well logic logic would tell us what he would do you think about it if you're just looking at this in pure logic here's somebody and he owns his vineyard other people are working it and he sends people all the time to get to get what belongs to him and they won't they won't give it they beat up everybody he sends he beats them up in the end he says I'm going to send my own son my own beloved son my one and only son and when he comes they not only beat him up but they kill him Jesus asks them the question what do you think the owner of the vineyard is going to do well logic will tell you what the owner is going to do and Jesus tells us very clearly he will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others and the crowd are shocked and they're saying surely not but Jesus looks directly at them you see they understood absolutely what Jesus was saying and my friends this is this is the most this is the most serious thing that we can do you see so many people when the Lord hears the Lord and he's coming remember

God is our maker he's made us we have all fallen into sin we're born in sin and God says that's not the way that I made man I made man to bring forth fruit to my glory and so the only way that we can bring fruit is in God's way and God says well the only thing I can do is to send my son and my son will die in the place of sinners my son will do for them what they can't do themselves and all I ask in order that I will get fruit is that they will accept my son that's all that they will take my gift and you know the worst thing that we can do is to say to the Lord no I don't want your gift I want the vineyard for myself but it's God's our life is ultimately God's it's God who made us

God owns us we don't ultimately own ourselves though we want to think that we do we want to be involved we want to be the boss we want to be in control and the Lord says no it's not yours it's mine and that's a lesson we've got to learn and that's what the gospel is saying to us and that's why we've got to grasp this truth before it's too late and that's what we find here and so the Lord goes on to say and he quotes from the psalm that was sung as he entered into Jerusalem the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces and when it falls on anyone it will crush him that what it says here everyone who falls on that stone that is those who stumble on the stone now the stone we're told the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone that's speaking about Jesus

Christ and those who stumble on that stone are those who stumble with regard to the offer of salvation and there are so many people Jesus himself said that the gospel is a stumbling block maybe there's somebody in here tonight and that's what the gospel is to you it's a stumbling block it's sort of you just it's like you can't quite get over it it's there's a lot of things you understand but you're saying I just don't get this whole area of sin and I don't get this whole area of why I've got to accept Jesus Christ and the gospel is a stumbling block to you my friend only God can take you over that so that it ceases to be a stumbling block and I as I was saying this morning get real with God speak to the Lord personally one to one and say to him Lord I have a problem

[20 : 41] I just don't get this I not able to somehow my mind and my heart isn't able to grapple with this please Lord take me over the difficulty so that I can see Jesus as saviour and see the way of salvation and help me Lord to trust and believe and you know this if you do that the Lord will answer your prayer he will and he'll help you to believe and to trust because if we don't if we reject if we continue to reject you know what happens particularly if we're challenged by the gospel we wound our conscience and our heart becomes harder and the whole process of unbelief becomes more rooted within us and every week we go on it gets harder and harder you know it's a very serious thing when we're challenged by the gospel when we're standing as it were on the very borders of challenge when there is an influence and a drawing and a warmth in the gospel and you feel yourself being challenged and pulled by it and still you're saying no a hardening effect can take place that's what the bible tells us that the gospel is either a saver of life and to life or of death and to death people can become harder and harder and harder and harder please do not resist when god touches you and strives with you because we see the impact everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces and when it falls on anyone it will crush him in other words he will be ground to powder this is the impact this is talking about the judgment of christ when he will come total destruction and you know for the jews the what took place in their own experience very short jesus everything that jesus spoke was true remember this what you hear in church is truth the bible is truth every word that jesus spoke is true that's one of the beautiful things about christ he said i am the way i am the truth please remember that these this word is true and that if we reject if we go on rejecting rejecting rejecting the lord will when a judgment comes if we go through all our life into death rejecting the lord will give people what they have chosen in this life we've said it before that's what happens the lord gives to people what they choose if people choose to reject jesus will say well i have no option but to reject you you rejected me all throughout life and you know the lord would come in that day and would remind you of all the opportunities and all the times when you were challenged and the times you thought about it and the times when you were close and yet you chose to reject and the lord says well there is no other option but i have to say to you depart from me all throughout life you said to me depart well you've chosen that for eternity that's really what happens and that's why jesus is saying it is such a fearful thing to stumble on that stone because if we stumble on

that stone and die in that condition then that stone who is jesus will grind us will crush us eternally it's a fearful thought and that's that's that's what jesus is telling us in this in this episode in this part here the stone that the builders rejected has become the corner stone well i hope tonight my dear friend that you will accept this lord and this savior this jesus who has who has done everything you know when jesus told this story it would be round about roughly round about 30 a.d roughly round about that 40 years later there was the fearful destruction of jerusalem in 70 a.d and you know it's told it's recorded that the romans they ran out of wood in all with all the crucifixions that took place the jews put jesus on the cross 40 years later i don't know how many how many crucifixions but the jews were the romans were bringing wood more and more wood in because so many were being crucified in the city and surrounding it as they destroyed jerusalem and slaughtered the inhabitants and jesus warned them and he said this is what's going to happen you are going to you are bringing destruction on yourselves and it was a fearful destruction this gospel which they rejected this savior that they rejected is a savior that we still have please if you are without jesus ask him tonight personally between yourself and himself lord come into my heart tonight let's pray oh lord we pray that that we may not put these things away from us some people here tonight may be in the very dawn of their life others might be in the dusk but it doesn't matter really where we are as long as we have christ and we pray that everybody in here may do business with the lord that we do not shy away from it that we do not bury our heads in the spiritual sand so to speak but that we face up to the challenge of the gospel and that we may believe in our heart oh lord bless us we pray bless our homes and our families and bless all whom we love take us all whom safely we pray and forgive us our sin in jesus name we ask it amen