

# Keeping the faith

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[ 0 : 00 ] Passage, which is Luke chapter 20, and starting at verse 9.

The heading in my Bible says, The Parable of the Tenants. 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. At harvest time, he sent a servant to the tenants, so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed.

He sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated shamefully, and sent away empty-handed. He sent still a third, and they wounded him and threw him out.

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.

[ 1 : 20 ] 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.

What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. When the people heard this, they said, God forbid.

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 cornerstone.

Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces. Anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.

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, but they were afraid of the people.

Keeping a close watch on them, they sent spies, who pretended to be sincere. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said, so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the governor.

[ 2 : 30 ] So the spies questioned him, Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth.

Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not? He saw through their duplicity and said to them, Show me a denarius, whose image and inscription are on it.

Caesar, they replied. He said to them, Then give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's. They were unable to trap him in what he had said there in public.

And astonished by his answer, they became silent. Amen. And now we'll sing to God's glory. It's, There is a Redeemer, Jesus, God's own Son.

The Christians, Thank you, Gordon, for your prayers. Let's just have one little prayer for a moment. Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you that you are the Redeemer.

[ 3 : 39 ] We thank you that you brought about the new covenant. And as we work towards the Lord, remembering, celebrating, focusing on your death and your resurrection, bless our hearts, our great Redeemer.

God is now over your word. Bring peace, bring help, bring joy. Thank you, Jesus. Amen. Amen.

Amen. In the BBC's Keeping Faith, Eve Miles plays a solicitor, a Stoke mum, called Faith, who is hunted by a bruised, hurting, corrupt group of police detectives.

And what is she hunted for? Well, her husband has went missing, perhaps killed. There's maybe some dodgy dealings in her law firm.

But the detectives found nothing concrete. Nothing comes of it. So instead, they throw everything else they possibly can at this mum.

Have her children removed, accuse her of petty crimes, mixing with the wrong folk, looking suspicious, and so on, and so on, and so on. A never-ending string of false accusations goes against her that she cannot seem to escape.

[ 5 : 37 ] And it's all being laid by one particular rather nasty detective. Now, why exactly is this detective doing this?

Well, as it later turns out, there is some history. the two grew up together in a little Welsh village, went to the same school, and things have went wrong between them.

But Faith ended up the more successful of the two, her own business. And so after going off to university, she returns to her little home like a local Lord Mayor.

and the struggling detective doesn't like it, they're in a spiral of jealousy with one focus and one focus alone destroying her business, her family, everything.

And so she and her colleagues desperately gather around, planning little traps, sending spies, making accusations, all in the hope of ending faith's popularity.

[ 6 : 51 ] Sounds familiar, doesn't it? We've just read it, happening to Jesus. In real life, this sort of thing does not happen to everyone, but it certainly does happen.

It is real life for some people. And then, we can take that down there, Phil, thank you. And then I suppose we all at times have little personal small ones, from family members, work colleagues, neighbours, and thankfully the good news is that however small or big they are to us all, Jesus is able to say, I know exactly what it's like.

For this was indeed real life for Jesus, particularly his last week. just look at chapter 20.

From verse 1 in, it says, one day as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple courts and proclaiming the good news, the chief priests and the teachers of the law came up to him, tell us by whose authority, bang, missile launched.

it's the first attack that kicks off a verbal battle waged by the religious leaders against Jesus and it lasts the entirety of chapter 20.

[ 8 : 48 ] They try everything and anything to destroy him. All sorts of accusations, traps and lies.

The verbal missiles just keep coming. Why? Well, just before all of this, Jesus has in full royal messianic fashion entered Jerusalem on the donkey, declaring peace, love, joy, forgiveness to everyone.

And the crowds loved it. And the people love it. His popularity is through the roof. And then, then he enters the city and again in full God-given messianic authority, he enters the temple and declares this is my house.

This is my house. And it's to be a house of prayer for all nations. So take your money and go. And so after these two massive messianic events, the mass popularity of Jesus, all that donkey in my house stuff, he's massive.

Everyone's following, everyone wants involved, everyone wants to know more about it. And the religious leaders are furious.

[ 10 : 26 ] They're furious and they have made a decision. Destroy Jesus at all costs. Doesn't matter what we do, this guy needs to go now.

And so they go right into it, right into their path of war, sending spies, setting traps, making accusations. I said, the first one tells by what authority you're doing this.

And Jesus cleverly, as he often does, responds with a question, John the Baptist, and they decide not to answer, leaving Jesus with the platform to speak next.

And Jesus does not hold back, not this time. Jesus knows these days are short. This is the end now. And so a valley of variable ammo fills the airspace by Jesus, as Jesus gives the great parable of the tenants there, the evil tenants, as Jesus calls them.

And the ammo is unavoidable, because as we then find out, the Pharisees knew, they knew the evil tenants were them.

[ 11 : 37 ] And so it hurt, it hurt deep, it convicted inside. Their ancestors had killed off the prophets and messengers sent by God to them.

And now, now that the sun, the sun is here, and the people are loving the sun, they're like, let's just kill him, and then we can have control, control of the nation for ourselves.

Get rid of the sun, we've got the nation. Indeed, they know what the parable means. We, we humans are so short-sighted, aren't we?

These are men in, what, their 40s, 50s, 60s, with only a handful of years left on the earth. And here, the king of their nation is in their presence.

And the people, for one short moment, want him crowned king. But the leaders say, no, we want it. We want to spend our feeble last 10 or 20 years on earth, running the kingdom ourselves, without

any thought about eternity.

[13:05] missing the point that their rejection of Jesus the cornerstone is sacrificing eternal salvation for the sake of having temporary power for a decade or so.

And then going, how sad, how dispiriting, how awful. So, don't we often slip into the same trap? It can be for a number of reasons. I will work for my employer, or I will run my company, or I'll run my church role, or I will lead my family this way, that way, with these instructions, these rules, whether they like it or not.

I'll hold on to my position, whether it's right to you or not. Missing the massive point, in a few short years, your employment could look very different.

Your company could be gone. Your church role could be in the hands of someone else. Your very church building could be a block of flats. Your children will have left home and be gone.

[14:26] And so your few short years of power have cost you everything. Or, or I'll kick this habit later.

Or I'll forgive him or her later in life. I'll worry about my debts later. I'll work on my marriage later. Never take it into account.

you really have short time. Never take into account how short your time is. Or ultimately, of course, I'll get right with God at some point in the future.

I'm enjoying the other ways of life a bit too much at the moment. I've got some big dreams, visions I want to fulfill. Again, not stopping to think.

you're possibly sacrificing eternity in heaven for a few decades of fun or power or whatever it may be here. We so easily forget how short and temporary our lives really are.

[15:43] And so for these guys, in today's passage, Jesus declares ironically that the very cornerstone of the faith will in the end crush them.

Their temporary feeble human hold of power over Judaism costs them eternity. And the battle wages on. Sadducees ask about the resurrection.

Jesus warns about dangerously following religious leaders. it's all happening back and forth, back and forth, left, right, and center. And right in the middle, right in the middle, what we've talked about today already, the sin spies.

people pretending to be genuine, sincere, inquires, but secretly looking to catch Jesus out. But the one big thing they seem to fail to really think through is that they're going up against the living Jesus Christ himself, God's king, God's wonderful counselor, the Messiah, the Savior, the intelligent designer.

And as we read, he saw right through them, right through. He saw their craftiness. After all, he was their creator, so he should.

[17:08] And so they smoothly approached Jesus. Hey, Jesus, how are you? Rough day, isn't it?

Anyway, look, for all those Pharisees know, for all they're accusing you of, we, me and my pals here, we know, we know that you speak and teach what is right, Jesus.

You're safe with us, Jesus. We have your back, Jesus. We're the good guys in this whole thing. I mean, like, how could they even think they could throw him off their path, their deceiving path here? beyond me. I could even think they could make him feel comfortable as if they're on his side. Utter fools indeed. But they in vain press on.

Okay, Jesus, so is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not them? What a loaded question this really is. the Jews were enraged at having to pay taxes to Rome.

[18:20] It was financially supporting a pagan government and a false god. So they rightly stood against that and were enraged at what they had to do.

They also hated the system that allowed tax collectors to charge outrageous rates and keep extra for themselves. No Jew, no one wanted to pay taxes to Rome.

So they're thinking, Jesus being a good law-abiding citizen will hopefully say, well yes, I suppose so, you know, be a good citizen.

Maybe in a moment of weakness or if he's not really thinking straight, he'll just say, pay taxes to Rome. And then they would have branded him a traitor. A traitor to the nation, a traitor to Judaism, a traitor to God.

The crowds would turn on him, his movement would be over, their aim and focus achieved, Jesus destroyed. But they're also thinking, if, if by any chance, Jesus does go the other way, again, maybe under pressure, maybe a moment of weakness, and instead says, absolutely not, we should

not pay taxes to Rome, to that corrupt government, they would have just as quickly have responded the same way and reported him to Rome as a rebel.

[ 19 : 49 ] As one speaking against Caesar, as one saying, don't pay your taxes, he would have been arrested and gone, and again, the same result, Jesus destroyed, followers gone, movement over.

They really fought they had him this time. There's no way out now for Jesus they fought. I can just see them now having posed their question, standing back for all to see, Jesus is down for.

Watch this guys, watch him as he falls down. Fist bumping, we've got him now, here we go, here we go, come on Jesus, give us your answer. But Jesus seeing right through their duplicity, he said to them, show me a denarius, the coin, roughly a day's wages.

Thank you, says Jesus, whose image and inscriptions are on it. Caesar's, they reply, similar to our point coin with the king or the queen.

That's Caesar's picture, yes? Yes, they agree. Well then give it back to him. Give it to him, if it is. But give to God, what is God's.

[ 21 : 02 ] Stunned, stunned, silence, speechless. And the few sheepish guys quickly get into the background and go.

What an incredible answer. Verse 26 actually says, astonished by his answer, they became silent. And I am astonished as well.

Until the battle ended, Jesus had won. They really believed Jesus only had two possible answers here. And either one would be a win for them.

But no, Jesus had a third possibility, which was not off the earth, but it was of God and it was from above.

Jesus knew exactly how to handle the sly attacks of the enemy. And here is the wonderful, powerful, reassuring learning outcome that we, Jesus' followers, need to take from this today.

[ 22 : 12 ] This very same powerfully skilled, defending spirit and mind of Jesus is with us today. As we face man's wicked ways throughout our lives, at whatever time, for however long, be assured that the same Jesus who defended himself here will defend you also.

And he will give you the same strength and help and aid that he himself used. He equips you with all the protection, all the defense, all the wisdom that he used to sort them out.

He gives it to you. I don't know about you, but I really do take real relief in knowing that. As the accusations and the lies and the set traps from family, colleagues, fellow students, the press, or whomever, or whatever revels on, we can rest assured Jesus has our backs.

The world is tricky, it's nasty, it's evil, and you will face the hard times, times when the enemy, like he did to Jesus, will send people to trap you and hurt you and cause you pain and cause you distress, but I can't repeat it enough, do not fear, be assured, Jesus will stand with you in the same way he his very self stood against his own ones, or as Jesus, his very self, puts it.

John 16, 33. Let's turn to John 16, 33. Let's turn to John 16, 33. In, in this world, you will have trouble, but, but, take heart, I, Jesus, have overcome the world.

[ 24 : 45 ] Jesus said this just hours before the cross. Having endured the fullness of life in this world, he was all too aware of how harsh and evil it really is.

And so amongst his parting words was indeed, yep, the world will attack you. He says, if it attacked me, then it will attack you, so be ready.

But then he says, be ready, yes, but don't fear it. Don't be scared of it, because I am far more powerful, I'm far more stronger, and I'm far wiser than it.

I'm its defeater. And with the same wisdom and strength that I, Jesus, use against it, I will also give to you, as you face it.

You face it in my strength and my wisdom, and you will overcome. Wonderful, isn't it?

[ 26 : 00 ] It's mind blowing. And listen, looking at the passages such as today, we can rest assured that this is not just words. These are not just parting emotional sentimental words.

From Luke up to 20, we know Jesus really definitely did do it. He did actually do it as well. He knows how to silence the world, he does it.

He knows how to put them quiet, put them down. So yes, he definitely knows how to protect you and I, his children from them, and set us free. from their traps because he first endured it, because he, his very self, first went through it.

God is the defending God. He defended himself and he still does the same for us today. And I'll leave you with this.

the psalmist writes, your rod and your staff, they comfort me. His rod and his staff is actually being used to protect us, care for us.

[ 27 : 12 ] And get this, his rod and his staff is being used to keep the enemy back. Those people sent to trap Jesus had God's rod and staff keeping them back.

And so we today rest assured when people today attack us, that God is using his rod and staff to keep them back, to gently nudge them away.

picture this. When the enemy looks upon you and he sees you and I seated at God's table, fully provided for, he thinks twice about attacking.

But when he does, remember Jesus' rod and staff. I, his defense, his protection, his wisdom will lead you through.

You will win by his strength. Jesus always had people trying to trap him. Today we face similar attacks and difficulties from the world.

[ 28 : 28 ] But just as Jesus had all of God's protection and all of God's wisdom, so do we. So we take comfort in the skill.

We take comfort in the skill Jesus used in being of these guys, knowing that he does the same for us. When the world sends people to trap you and hurt you, Jesus will defend you with the same wisdom he defended himself with on this particular day.

In this world, you will have trouble. But, take heart, I, Jesus, have overcome it.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we thank you that we are not left on our own to face the harsh ways of the world, but we face them with you.

and thank you that we can look across your life story and really know you did it yourself. You endured it. This is not just some written story.

[ 29 : 53 ] You literally did it. So whenever you tell us to not fear because you've overcome the world, we can say, yep, you did it. So help us trust you on that and go forward trusting you and that Lord, our defender and our king.

Thank you Lord. Amen. you. So we're going to turn our hearts to communion as we do. We'll have the first half of It Is Will With My Soul and then we'll finish it at the end.

But if you're able to stand with us, please do. Amen.