

“The Bible is History and His Story”

Luke 20:9-20

Last Sunday in Bible Class, someone had a “quick question.” I know we have heard that one before. Fortunately, God gave me the wisdom to give a quick answer, especially because I was totally speaking from ignorance. The question was about my opinion of the History Channel’s mini-series “The Bible.” I have not taken the time to watch any of it, so it is really hard for me to offer an opinion. (So I will offer one anyway – just kidding).

As this mini-series has stirred up much interest, it has stirred up much opinion. I haven’t really been too interested in watching it actually, because I have already read the book, and the movie is never as good as the book. And that is the criticism that I have heard the most, is that they have left stuff out. That is what always happens to books that get made into movies.

However, this is not “Harry Potter” or “The Devil Wears Prada.” It matters a great deal that what is shown is a faithful rendering of what actually happened, because what actually happened means life and rescue from judgment.

Speaking from a point of ignorance, because I have not seen any of the mini-series, the one thing I could say with confidence is that the

account of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, cannot not be told faithfully unless Christ is the focal point. One of my favorite quotes from Luther is that “you can cut the Bible on any page and it will bleed the blood of Christ.”

My word of advice is to watch it if you want to, but if the atoning sacrifice of the suffering servant – the death and resurrection of Jesus is not foreshadowed throughout the Old Testament portion, and blatantly emphasized at the appropriate times, then all that you saw and heard was an interesting story. But it was not “history” or “His story” whichever way you wish to pronounce it.

It is much like what we here from Jesus in our Gospel reading today. There is authentic, recorded, specific history of God’s interaction with His people. Jesus reminds all the people, especially the scribes and chief priests, of this history. In the Old Testament, the Vineyard is always a reference to Israel, and it belongs to God. So He tells of the servants (the prophets) who were sent. Literally, they were “apostled”. An apostle is “one who is sent.”

God’s prophets are sent. And the people know what happened to the prophets. The text literally says the tenants of the vineyard “unapostled” them. That is, they rejected the authority of the ones who were sent by God. And all the people know that is exactly what happened.

The prophets were mocked, were threatened, were chased out and had to flee for their lives. You don’t hear of it specifically in

Scripture, but it was common knowledge among the Jews that the prophet Isaiah was stuffed into a log and the log was sawn in two.

This, among other accounts, is why we heard Jesus say three weeks ago, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you.” It was a commonly understood history. All the people knew what God had done for them and the promises He had made. And the people knew how their forefathers had treated the prophets. And prophets like John the Baptist were still being treated this way.

The people knew what Jesus was saying. The meaning of this parable was completely clear. And Jesus gets to the end and says, “What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.” And “when they heard this, they said, ‘Surely not!’” They knew exactly what Jesus was talking about, and they knew the history.

The Jews wanted to be a part of God’s history, but they didn’t want the real story. They wanted a smoothed over, feel-good, everybody in our land gets to go to heaven, and God would never punish us and give His favor to the Gentiles. “Surely not!!”

As we dealt with the prodigal ancient world head-banger last week, when the apostle Paul went out into the Gentile world, it was the tattooed, foul-mouthed pagans that received the Gospel and were invited into the Vineyard, because we are the new Israel. We are the children of Abraham – not by birth, but by faith.

It is good to be a part of God's history. It is good to be a part of "His story." The story is all about Jesus. You are here today because of what Jesus Christ has done for you. All through this Lenten Season, on Wednesday nights, we have been focusing on how the Son of God was sent into the world as the Seed of the woman, takes on flesh, and reverses all of the curses brought on by sin.

You cannot tell the real story of the Bible without the real people of the Old Testament being pointed toward the coming of the Messiah. And you certainly cannot tell the real story of the New Testament without blatantly emphasizing the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ our Lord.

Our world wants to do to the Son of God and the ones who have been sent with authority what the tenants of the vineyard did to the son of the owner and the sent ones – the "apostled" ones. The tenants acted the way they did, because they did not recognize the owner of the vineyard as having any real power or authority to punish them. They dismissed him as being nothing.

Our world has treated Christ and His church – the "one, holy apostolic church" – this way. God, the owner of the Vineyard is viewed as being off in a distant place looking down from on high, but not really having any real power over my life, and certainly not having any authority to punish or hold me accountable for breaking His will. "A loving God would never do that" – so we are told by the masses in our culture. This is called Deism and is the most common view of God in

our culture today. In surveys concerning beliefs about God, Deism is much more commonly held than salvation by grace through faith alone in the broken body and shed blood of Christ our Lord.

It is unfortunate, but a false story about God has been told and retold. I can't say what is being presented in any show on the History Channel (except for Ancient Aliens – that has to be real – just kidding). One thing I know is that the movie will never be as good as the book – no movie ever is. That is why there is no substitute for being in the Book. Other material, videos that support the real history of God interacting with His chosen people can be very helpful – I find it helpful.

Just make sure you are hearing the real story. Like the tenants in the vineyard, there are many who want a smoothed over, feel-good, everybody in our land gets to go to heaven, and God would never punish us – that is an unreal, “unapostled” story.

Christ is our cornerstone. He has been rejected. But His broken body alone; His shed blood alone is what gives you life. Rejoice that you are the object of God's love in His story. Amen.