

“Back in the Vineyard”

Matthew 21:33-46

The Parable of the Tenants

³³ “Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. ³⁴ When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. ³⁵ And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶ Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. ³⁷ Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ ³⁸ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.’ ³⁹ And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. ⁴⁰ When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” ⁴¹ They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.”

⁴² Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

“ ‘The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord’s doing,
and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”

⁴³ Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. ⁴⁴ And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”

⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶ And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet. (Mt 21:33–46 ESV).

Back in the vineyard

A few weeks ago we had the parable of the generous vineyard owner, who would gather workers to work in his vineyard from all times of the day, and generously pay them the same wage.

Last week was the parable of the two sons, when asked to work in the vineyard one said, “no” and then repents and goes, and the other says, “I will go sir,” but then does not go.

This week we are back in the vineyard with another parable. (Matthew 21:33) *“... There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country.*

The Master planted the vineyard, this takes us back to the garden that was created in Eden. The LORD created, HE cultivated it, it is HIS. Hebrews 1:1-2 remind us: *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.* (Heb 1:1–2ESV).

A fence went around His vineyard, a barrier, a wall if you will. This vineyard was to be set apart, protected. In the Old Testament the vineyard was used as analogy for the Children of Israel. They were set apart, away from the surrounding people, from their false gods and from their evil practices. The people of Israel were set apart in their laws about diet, marriage and their faith. This fence (around them) served to protect them and keep them and the community safe.

In this vineyard he made a tower. It would serve to be a watch tower for the vineyard. It serves to be a platform for a watchman to guard the vineyard. The religious leaders were to guard the people, however, they have become ones to whom the LORD needed to protect the people.

The vineyard was leased out to tenants and the owner went into another country. It is still his, those tenants, will at the time of harvest share with the owner in the yield of grapes. At least that is what they were suppose to do.

³⁴ *When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. ³⁵ And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another.*

Beat one, killed one, and stoned one. What would you do to these tenants? Send in a squad to restore order? to crack some heads? to get his vineyard back? The vineyard owner sent in more servants. (The scriptures continue) ³⁶ *Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them.*

Okay now, send in the goon squad? No. Not even close. He sends in his son.

³⁷ Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ³⁸ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.' ³⁹ And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

What kind of vineyard owner is this? He is cheated out of His rent and the servants He sends are beaten, killed and stoned. Then he sends more, still mistreated. This kind of vineyard owner is one who patient and loving. How loving? So loving, he sends his son. Who would such a thing? This vineyard owner is our Heavenly Father. Who knows exactly what they are going to do with His Son.

And they take that son and throw him outside the vineyard and kill him. Hebrews 13:12 says, *Jesus...suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.*

It was necessary for this SON to die for the people, the sinners and tax collectors and even for these religious leaders and pharisees. Jesus came for them too. HE is reaching out to them. This is Holy Week and in a few days these "workers" will take Jesus and orchestrate HIS death, on a Roman Cross. And so Jesus reached out to them, ever so strongly.

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These wicked men, knew Jesus was speaking about them.

Remember when Nathan the prophet went to speak to King David about his wickedness and told him the story about the rich man with many sheep who took the poor mans only sheep? King David was cut to the heart, and repented. Not so with these men, they knew Jesus was talking about them and and ignored HIS Word they rejected Him and continued to seek His arrest and destruction. *“Look the heir, let’s kill him and all this will be ours.”*

“The reason for this astounding imagery is that in his long suffering God does act, in fact, did act in the way here depicted. There is no imagery within the experience of men that can picture the amazing grace and patience of God. . . . With this unheard of imagery Jesus pictures the unheard of wickedness of these Jewish leaders who murdered not only the prophets sent for salvation but were now about to murder God’s own Son.” (Lenski)

This parable is not about the evil wicked tenets, its about the gracious loving God that has great patients. When we fail to live the way we should, when we treat people badly either in our actions or in our heart, He has patients. When we covet what others have and despise what God had has given us, He is patient. When we would like to drag a few people outside and pound them into the dust, He has patients. When we run out of patients, when we snap, yell, curse, swear, He is patient, He calls us to repent, and He comes and takes our sins, all of them, and dies outside the city, on that Roman cross, the sinless Son of God is crucified, for you, for me, the tax collector, the prostitute, the pharisee, for us all.

Now Jesus was rejected by the Jews, and so He gives the vineyard to others, to the Gentiles. From Jerusalem to far off places in all directions, like Germany and then to the United States, and places like Perry County, to places farther north, like Quincy. God’s Word of love and patients has come to you.

Who do you know that needs to hear about the very loving and extremely patient Savior who died for them? Who might you bring next week to church with you?

Today I want to thank you for all your years of support you have given to me and my family as we have served in Hong Kong, and now as we transition to Thailand. Thank you! We travel to Thailand on your behalf, we will live in a country of 68 million people, a land where only 1% are Christian.

Please pray to the LORD, who we know is very patient and loving, pray that HE would open the hearts and minds of the people of Thailand, that they would come to know the Savior of the World. That HE would call them out of darkness and into HIS marvelous LIGHT.