

Luke 20:9 - 19 The Parable of the Vineyard

Ch. 20:9 And He began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey for a long time. 10 "And at the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order that they might give him some of the produce of the vineyard; but the vine-growers beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 11 "And he proceeded to send another slave; and they beat him also and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. 12 "And he proceeded to send a third; and this one also they wounded and cast out. 13 "And the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.' 14 "But when the vine-growers saw him, they reasoned with one another, saying, 'This is the heir; let us kill him that the inheritance may be ours.' 15 "And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What, therefore, will the owner of the vineyard do to them? 16 "He will come and destroy these vine-growers and will give the vineyard to others." And when they heard it, they said, "May it never be!" 17 But He looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written,

*'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED,
THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone'?*

18 "Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust." 19 And the scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him that very hour, and they feared the people; for they understood that He spoke this parable against them.

In communication theory there is a term called by-passing. By-passing. And that's when someone engages in discourse, someone says a sentence or a phrase and the person listening hears something completely different from what was intended.

definition; Bypassing is a semantic barrier which occurs when people think they understand each other but actually miss each other's meaning because one or both are using equivocal language—words that can have more than one interpretation.

For example in Britain “knock you up” means “come and see you.” Consider an American in Britain telling his British friend that when he gets to America he needs to visit his sister on his behalf. And the Brit says I'll do that, when I get to Tonopah, I'll knock her up.

It's pretty common and sit-com's use it frequently to stage situations that will get a laugh. But good Bible teachers need to make sure their hearers understand fully what is being taught by giving enough background so that the person hearing isn't getting a completely different understanding.

So before we consider what Jesus is saying to His audience here we need to learn the background that His audience on that day already automatically knew.

In Isaiah 5 God through the prophet Isaiah says this;

*1 Let me sing now for my well-beloved
A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard.
My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill.*

*2 And He dug it all around, removed its stones,
And planted it with the choicest vine.
And He built a tower in the middle of it,
And hewed out a wine vat in it;
Then He expected it to produce good grapes,
But it produced only worthless ones.*

*3 “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah,
Judge between Me and My vineyard.*

*4 “What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it?
Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce
worthless ones?*

*5 “So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard:
I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed;*

I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground.

6 *“And I will lay it waste;*

It will not be pruned or hoed,

But briars and thorns will come up.

I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it.”

7 *For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel,*

And the men of Judah His delightful plant.

Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed;

For righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress.

This familiar dirge is what Jesus audience returns to immediately. The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel. Jesus gives a parable about a vineyard tha His hearers are already on board. His version is going to be an expansion of this dirge.

In Psalms 80 and in Jeremiah there are also places where a vineyard is a metaphor for Israel.

In Mark, and Matthew's account, enough language is identical to this Isaiah passage to snap a hearer instantly to this song of sadness in Isaiah. Dug a vineyard, built a wall, put a watchtower in the midst.

In Isaiah's account the outcome described is what happened to Israel in 586 BC when they were taken captive and hauled to Babylon for 70 years of captivity. Jesus is going to expand and update this song of lament. He brings it current with a far more devastating end than Isaiah's version prophecying the captivity.

So that's part of the background you need, to get into the same mindset that Jesus hearers would have had. But let me deepen that even more.

Luke includes this parable as the next scene immediately following the leaders and rulers of Israel demanding that Jesus tell them where and from whom did

He get the authority to enter Jerusalem as Messiah King on a donkey, and then to throw out their money machine when He cleansed the temple.

He rides into the temple area on a donkey receiving the Hosanna's of the multitude complete with language only due to the arriving Messiah. The rulers tell Him to hush His disciples and He says if He did, the stones would cry out.

Then next day he literally and physically throws out the sellers and money changers. The money machine that was making the leaders of Israel rich men. And then He sort of occupy's the temple grounds and is using it to proclaim the good news of salvation from sin and also to teach the people.

All of that drama immediately precedes this parable. You can picture all of the rulers of Israel, the religious men, the priests, the elders, the lawyers, the San Hedrin, all listening to this parable immediately after the failure to entrap Him with the question about authority.

Jesus is in full command as He, at the moment of telling the leaders that He won't be telling them by what authority He does what He does, He begins this parable that paints a complete history of God's dealing with Israel up until that moment, and actually beyond.

Because the parable foretells His death which is only two days away. His version is prophetic of His death and also of the destruction and displacing of Israel as caretakers of God's vineyard.

Why do we believe in Jesus? Because everything He foretold in this parable of the vineyard, happened just as He prophecied. OK, with that background, let's look at Jesus' updated version of God's vineyard.

9 And He began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey for a long time.

This was common then and it's common now. We've had tennant farmers,

where someone else owns the land and in this case, began the vineyard so that it has everything it needs to produce a crop except the labor that the tenant farmer provides. It works on an agreed upon percentage.

If you watched that show Gold Rush, Parker Schnabel has to go all the time to see Tony Beets and hand over 20% of the gold that they recover. Tony owns the land. Parker does the work. He has to cover all of his overhead, plus pay Tony Beets 20% and still have something left over for himself.

Common as dirt and equally as old. McDonalds restaurant owners have to pay the corporation to lease the ground the restaurants are on. If they don't keep all of the corporate rules, the land owner, the corporation, has eviction rights.

So, nothing new here. This land owner has a choice vineyard, already under production, everything is there ready to go, and he sets off on a long journey and leases His vineyard to caretakers who will produce fruit with an agreed upon portion of the fruits going to the land owner.

10 “And at the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order that they might give him some of the produce of the vineyard;

No surprises here for anybody. The word for slave here is doulos. The Bible makes no apologies for slavery. When we abdicated our throne in the garden of Eden and chose to be owned by sin and Satan, slavery is the result.

Jesus doesn't pause the story to talk about the evils of slavery here. It just IS. It's part of the human condition in a fallen world. Employment to someone else is just a more dignified approach. Pam doesn't get up at 4:00 AM 5 mornings a week because she wants to.

This slave is a trusted steward of the Master's possessions. The landowner sends a slave to receive a portion of the fruit that belongs to the Master. Notice that He doesn't send the slave in the springtime, or the winter. He sends him in the season when the fruit is ready. Harvest time. Fruit is expected. Please give my slave the fruit that is my share, that belongs to me.

but the vine-growers beat him and sent him away empty-handed.

Oh dear! This is the first shock in a series of shockers! Who does that!?? This is shocking behaviour in any culture. The tenant farmers are thugs! You rented your vineyard to the Mexican Syndicate.

This is Jesus method, by the way. His stories always have a shock value that draws the hearers in. Because sin against a righteous and benevolent God is a shocking truth.

11 “And he proceeded to send another slave; and they beat him also and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed.

The aggressive behaviour gets worse. They beat the first guy up and sent him packing. This guy is the same treatment plus another word is added; *atimázō – treat dishonorably (shamefully, with indignity) because perceived as having no value (honor, worth)*

This interests me because of what we're beginning to see happening to christians in our country. Outrage. Dishonor. Suddenly christians who believe in and proclaim the truths of this book are the recipients of outrage and dishonor. Shame, dishonor, and no value, no worth are what the current righteous people are heaping onto the christians who believe this book.

Nothing new under the sun. Later on in the parable we'll discover that it's the leaders of the current false religion in that land that are heaping the dishonor on the slaves of the true Master.

12 “And he proceeded to send a third; and this one also they wounded and cast out.

This third guy they physically harm with the beatings. They throw him out. Drive him out. It's like he barely escapes with his life.

In Matthew and Mark's versions some of the slaves are actually murdered. The tenant farmers are thugs who will not stop at anything.

13 "And the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do?"

The multitude is drawn into the story now. What shall I do? Part of our human condition is a longing inside us for justice. We are naturally empathetic. We long to see wrong's righted. We want justice. We want fairness. When Jesus asks the multitude what should the rightful owner do, in their minds every one of them is seething for justice. Punish the rebellious thieving murderous land grabbers in that vineyard!

The vineyard owner is awfully patient. Awfully gracious that He didn't send a SWAT team in with AK47's and orders to leave no one alive. And that's what the multitude is thinking at this point. Boy, I'd crush those thugs to powder.

I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.'

Send your son into that mess? Yikes. Who does that? Who is that gracious and loving that he keeps sending messengers into a hostile environment and now His Son, who He loves most of all. Wow. This is grace upon grace.

14 "But when the vine-growers saw him, they reasoned with one another, saying, 'This is the heir; let us kill him that the inheritance may be ours.'

This is diabolical. Diabolos is the word for Satan. One of his names. Think about this for a minute. Satan has usurped the throne of this world. The rightful owner has come down from heaven. Those words that the evil caretakers in the vineyard just spoke are exactly what Satan has planned for the Son of God.

Kill Him so that the vineyard will be ours. Jesus gave us a tiny window into the mind of Satan in that verse. *'This is the heir; let us kill him that the inheritance may be ours.'*

Satan was at work behind the scenes in all that is about to happen. He hates God. He hates the Son of God. He hates anyone who has come out from under his control and ownership because of forgiveness of sin, who now belongs to the Son of God. Past, present, future. Satan is a murderer. He loves murder.

14 "But when the vine-growers saw him, they reasoned with one another, saying, 'This is the heir; let us kill him that the inheritance may be ours.'

15 "And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What, therefore, will the owner of the vineyard do to them?"

The evil caretakers of God's vineyard murdered the Son. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them.

Jesus has drawn His hearers into His story. There is sympathy for the vineyard owner and shock at the wickedness of the caretakers of the vineyard. They were ready to string those folks up after the first slave. More so after the second and more again after the third.

But now the thugs have murdered the land owners Son??!! What will the vineyard owner do to those evil caretakers.

16 "He will come and destroy these vine-growers and will give the vineyard to others."

In the other accounts it's the multitude who answers back with this verdict. Here in Luke's account it seems as if Jesus gives the verdict. Either way it's the same. Justice demands this verdict. Blood cries out from the ground. Every human made in the image of God, even though fallen, has an intrinsic built in understanding that spilled blood demands justice. The evil seizure by force of property that rightfully belongs to someone else demands justice.

The response is immediate. Destroy the evil vine growers and give the vineyard to others. But then there's a second wave of shock as the hearers think about who the different elements in the parable represent. Shock ensues

again.

The vineyard is Israel, in the sense that Israel is the recipient and caretakers of the revelation of God. When God chose to reveal Himself to men He chose a specific nation to be His own possession who had the responsibility of receiving and preserving the very words of God. That is God's vineyard.

The tenants in the vineyard are the priests and rulers of Israel. The slaves sent to receive due fruits are God's prophets, who, to a man were mis-treated and murdered by the wicked religious systems in Israel. Murdered, all. Tradition says Isaiah was sawn in pieces by a wooden saw. Jeremiah, murdered. Ezekiel, murdered.

The Son of the owner, is Jesus, Son of God, sent by His Father to receive the fruits of what His Father owns from the Father's vineyard. But the Son will be murdered by the rulers of Israel, in two more days. The rulers who are listening to this very indictment on them.

16 "He will come and destroy these vine-growers and will give the vineyard to others." And when they heard it, they said, "May it never be!"

The other accounts have the multitude correspondingly giving the same sentence. He will bring those wretches to a wretched end and He will give the vineyard to others who will bring forth it's fruit in it's seasons.

Israel has been the recipients and stewards of God's presence and word. Jesus here says that system is going to be destroyed and replaced. Beyond shocking.

There are 12 men, well, 11 really because one is already a traitor, 11 men who will be the new recipients of the Kingdom of God, the Authority to reign of God in this world.

Israel will be brought to a wretched end and the church, born by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost will become the new vineyard of God. Did it happen? Yes, in 70 AD, within 40 years of Jesus pronouncement, Israel was

obliterated. The religion and the government were obliterated. The temple dismantled stone by stone. The records of the jews were destroyed and lost.

As a nation and a religion they were obliterated, but as an ethnic distinct people group, they are still very much alive.

Meanwhile, the priests and levites and pharisees and saducees and the powerful leadership, the sanhedrin and the lawyers, have an epiphany. A second wave of shock. He's talking about us. We're the wretched tenants who will be brought to a wretched end and who will lose this vineyard to others. And the next reaction is theirs;

And when they heard it, they said, "May it never be!"

In our vernacular; No Way! That cannot and will not happen. They are trapped in the spiral of dis-belief. That's not going to happen and we're going to ensure that doesn't happen by killing You.

But killing Him only reverts them to the 4th event in His story He just spoke. Kill the Son and the inheritance will be ours. It's a death spiral and they can't get out. Such is the Sovereignty of the judgement of God.

The leaders of Israel argue, this is impossible. Impossible that Jesus is Messiah and impossible that when Messiah comes they would reject Him and vanish into oblivion as God takes His dealings with men away from Israel and gives that privilege to some other entity, some other group. They dis-believe Jesus is Messiah and they dis-believe God will set them aside in judgement.

As always, Jesus answers them with their own scriptures. He quotes Psalms 118:22

17 But He looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written, 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone'?"

In the Old Testament, one of the re-curring images that depicts the coming Messiah is this concept of a stone.

In Daniel 2, He is the Stone cut out without hands that becomes a mountain that overshadows the statue that represents all of the nations of the world and then crushes them to powder.

The statue represents all of the kingdoms, all of the empires of this world controlled by Satan. The stone is the Messiah who gathers to Himself a people that becomes a mountain who crushes Satan's kingdoms to nothing.

In Isaiah 28:16 God speaks these words;
So this is what the Lord GOD says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; the one who believes will never be shaken.

And the Psalmist says the words Jesus just quoted to these rejectors; Psalm 118:22 *The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.*

Jesus has in a few words in a simple parable defined the entire experience of God's interaction with the nation of Israel for almost 2000 years since Abraham.

Though God set them up as a theocracy where He would be King, they rejected Him as King and wanted kings like the nations around them had. Israel became a nation, and empire, ultimately ruled by the ruler of this world. Different from all the others because God providentially used them to give His inspired revelation to the world.

Paul answers the question of advantage Israel had over the other nations in Romans chapter 3. *1 What, then, is the advantage of being a Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? 2 Much in every way. First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God. 3 What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness?*

In the providence of God, because of sin and because God gives men over to their sinful desires, Israel had become a nation under the rule and influence of the ruler of this world Satan.

Those vine-growers represent the rulers of Israel, the top men in the religion and the civil government of Israel, and they are under the control of Satan and they are in direct conflict with God.

God sends His slaves, the prophets to call that nation back to obedience, and in every case, the prophets are beaten, shamefully treated, and murdered.

Then God sends His beloved Son to call the wicked nation to Himself and to obedience and they murder God's beloved Son. What will happen to those vine-growers who have rejected God's cornerstone? Jesus is going to tell them.

18 “Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.”

In Isaiah chapter 8 we have this same idea of Messiah, the Lord of Armies who is both a sanctuary of safety for some and a rock of offense for others;

*13 “It is the LORD of hosts whom you should regard as holy.
And He shall be your fear,
And He shall be your dread.*

14 “Then He shall become a sanctuary; But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over, And a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

*15 “And many will stumble over them,
Then they will fall and be broken;
They will even be snared and caught.”*

For those of us who know and love Jesus, it's as if we are safely kept, inside

the stone. Jesus is our sanctuary. We are safe and secure in Him.

But to the rest of the world, He is the stone that destroys in two different ways. To many He is a stumbling stone that you fall against and that stone will break you into pieces.

To the rest of the world who loves their sin and loves to be under the authority of the ruler of this world, He is the stone who will crush and grind those kingdoms to powder.

There is only one safe place beloved. Take sanctuary inside the stone.

19 And the scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him that very hour, and they feared the people; for they understood that He spoke this parable against them.

A final thought and warning for us this morning. What parallels can we draw this morning to God's replacement vineyard, the church, and God's original vineyard Israel.

Is God receiving the fruit that He is due from those who would call themselves the church, those who claim to identify as christians? How are we doing?

Are we any better at the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st than Israel was when God sent His Son to receive the fruits that He was due?

God destroyed Israel for their faithlessness and corruption. Sold out to sin. No better than the nations around them. Ruled by the ruler of this world. God judged Israel and set her aside.

Do we really think God would not do the same to His church if it is sold out to sin and wickedness and has rejected Jesus as Lord and come under the authority and rule of Satan?

The vineyard owner WILL have His rightful fruit. One way or another.

Life is for sowing. The harvest isn't here.

What a mystery life is, and love is a mystery within a mystery. ... to see more and more clearly that life is only a kind of sowing time, and the harvest is not here. Vincent Van Gogh 1883 in a letter to his brother Theo