

Good morning church family! It is so great to be with you again! I also just want give a quick shoutout to our online folks. I don't know about you but I have this habit of talking with my wife where on our way home from church and the first question is usually "What'd you think of the message?" The responses vary but we usually assign some sort of adjective to describe our overall thoughts on the message. Of late, I've been led to open that discussion with a different question: How did the message challenge or convict you? When I've asked that question, I feel like we have a more engaged discussion that does a better job building each other up. I hope at some level you'll leave our morning together with continued conversation on God's Word.

If you're just joining us, or are coming back from a lengthy vacation we have started a series focusing on the parables Jesus taught. To this point we have covered the parables of the Unmerciful Servant, The Unjust Judge, The Pharisee and the Tax Collector and The Wheat and the Weeds. What is a parable? Phil and Dillon have done a great job covering that so I'll just steal their line. A parable "is an expanded analogy used to convince and persuade." That parables point us toward action and that a parable uses everyday life, relationships and activities to teach us important spiritual lessons.

With that in mind, we are going to camp out in the book of Luke 20:9-19. For a little bit of background, this parable Jesus shares comes off the heels of Him cleansing the temple of merchants turning God's house of worship into a place where they would force them to purchase approved sacrificial animals and currencies at high prices. After Jesus drives these merchants out the Chief Priests, Scribes and Elders then challenge Jesus by a barrage of questions meant to entrap Him so they could arrest and try Him. They begin by challenging His authority.

Jesus exposes the evil intentions of the Chief Priests, Scribes and Elders and then proceeds to give them this parable that highlights the failure of Jerusalem's spiritual leaders in responding to God's call. This parable of The Wicked Tenants condemns Jerusalem's spiritual leaders for their callousness toward God's son and announces the consequences for their failure to accept Jesus. One of the interesting components of this parable, along with a couple of other parables Jesus shares, is that two different groups of people are contrasted: those who assume they have a right to be in their position and those who find themselves unexpectedly promoted

Let's go ahead and start reading from Luke 20.

v.9 "And he began to tell the people this parable:"

There are 3 accounts of this parable between the books of Matthew, Mark & Luke. I chose to go with Luke's account and this opening line is one of those reasons. The other two gospel accounts either gave a vague idea or do not address all of the audience Jesus was teaching. Not only was He giving this parable to the Pharisee's, Chief Priests and elders, but also to a general group of people. I think that's important.

Last week, Pastor Dillon shared that a good parable will leave you asking questions and seeking the true meaning. That is true and is certainly applicable to this parable, but Jesus didn't leave a whole lot of room for ambiguity given the context. The first response to the parable shows you that the spiritual leaders of Jerusalem immediately catch what Jesus is saying and who the parable was directed toward.

Here's an explanation of terms for this parable -

Vineyard - Jewish Nation | Tenants - Jewish Spiritual Leaders | Landowner - God | Servant - Prophets | Son - Jesus Christ

v.9 "A man planted a vineyard"

Jesus is using imagery that would've been known by the Jewish leaders; the vineyard was a common symbol for the Jewish nation in Scripture as seen used in Isaiah 5:2

v.9 "A man planted a vineyard and let it out to tenants and went into another country for a long while."

The scenario of an absentee landowner was likely a familiar one to some of the chief priests and elders who Jesus was speaking to as it wasn't uncommon for them to have owned land away from Jerusalem. In order for this venture, planting a vineyard; to be profitable it would require patience as vineyards weren't expected to produce fruit for at least 4 years. In this instance, the landowner was a caring one who invested lots of time and practices in order to take care of the vineyard (Matt 21:33)

v.10 "When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, so that they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard."

Once the vines would begin to produce fruit, there would be an agreed upon proportion of the crop due to the owner.

v.10-12 "But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. And he sent another servant. But they also beat and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. And he sent yet a third. This one also they wounded and cast out."

Jesus is communicating here that in the past God had sent prophets to help lead Israel back to God, but they were rejected by Israel's leaders (Jer 7:25-27). At this point like Jesus' audience, I'm sure you are listening to this and are justifiably upset. Here the tenants are, having already agreed upon fulfilling their obligation to the landowner and in an act of defiance, beat up his servants. But we haven't yet reached

Jesus' main point for both the religious leaders of Jerusalem nor that of the audience.

v.13-14 *"Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.' But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Let us kill him, so that the inheritance may be ours.'"*

With this part of the parable Jesus is exposing the evil intentions of the religious leaders of Jerusalem and their callous reception of God's son. With Jesus out of the way, they could lead in a way that profits them rather than in a way that is true to who God is and what He wants. They will only serve God, so long as it remains profitable for them.

v.15 *"And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him."*

This parable, while a teaching that is intended to "stir" the listener to a response; is also predictive in what's to come. That Jesus would be thrown out of the city and killed under the supervision of the religious leaders of Jerusalem.

v.16 *"He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others." When they heard this, they said, "Surely not!"*

When I read the religious leaders response to the parable, you see what they're concerned about. You don't see the tipping point as them rejecting the prophets, killing the son. No, the tipping point is that God will remove them from their position of power, influence and leadership over Israel. God doesn't want leaders overseeing His people that value status, pride, power or influence above obedience, humility and a willingness to follow.

Just a reminder, this isn't an indictment against Israel. Notice how Jesus doesn't say the vineyard will be uprooted, destroyed or replaced? The parable is not a condemnation of Israel but of the religious leaders. God

will give spiritual leadership to the apostles who would lead a remnant of Israel to living in a way that pleases God & produces fruit.

v.17 *"But he looked directly at them and said, 'What then is this that is written: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone'?"*

Jesus is actually quoting from Psalm 118:22, a messianic Psalm that Jesus is using to double down in that He is the Messiah and has been rejected by the leaders, who were considered the builders of Israel. A cornerstone was the principal stone, usually placed at the corner of an structure, to guide the workers in their course. The cornerstone was usually one of the largest, the most solid, and the most carefully constructed of any in the edifice.

In calling Himself the cornerstone Jesus is saying a couple things: He's saying that He is the most important person on which the house of God is built around. Without him, the house would cease to exist. Additionally, that He's the Messiah, deliverer and foundation on which God will establish His redemptive work.

This parable is about the lack of reception Jesus and His message of the Kingdom had among Israel's leaders. While the parable was a condemnation of the religious leaders and their callous reception of the Son of God, remember, Jesus addressed this to all the people. Just because they weren't religious leaders didn't mean there wasn't a lesson to learn or a warning to heed.

When **receptive** to **God's leading** in Jesus, we receive a life, purpose and identity that can only be made known through **making Him** the cornerstone of your faith.

Let's take a look at how God leads us through Jesus:

The first way God leads us through Jesus is to acknowledge Jesus as Lord (Matthew 10:32-33) and in response to knowing in your heart that Jesus is Lord, submitting ownership of your heart to the way, truth and life of Jesus (John 14:6). The way Jesus leads is to peace with God, the truth Jesus leads is that you are freed from sin and the life Jesus leads is abundant, influencing the lives we lead now and for eternity.

God also leads us through Jesus in that we're directed to deny the self, take up your cross and follow Him (Matthew 16:24). To deny the self means to fight against our self-will and acknowledge that God's will is better. To deny the self means that we admit that our condition is beyond self-repair. The self is naturally opposed to the things of God and will not lead you to devote yourself to Him. The self will prevent you from being made a new creation in Christ as the self is naturally opposed to God. **The self must be denied.**

To take up our cross means that you devote yourself wholly to God. The cross was a torture instrument used by the Romans to deter potential criminals from committing future crimes. Jesus shows His devotion to glorifying God and to His sheep in that He was willing to endure the cross for those purposes. The cross is the ultimate representation of His devotion. The call to his followers is no less than that. If you are to devote yourself wholly to God, you must bear your cross. Your cross may lead to suffering on behalf of Christ. Your cross may lead to doing something that adversely affects you for the sake of God's Kingdom. All crosses are meant for **the glory of God.**

Finally, God leads us through Jesus by desiring that we be fruitful. To be fruitful is to have the type of faith that leads you to be made new in Jesus and where He uses a renewed mind and the gift of the Holy Spirit to display the **works of God through you.** In a different parable Jesus says:

"But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."

Mark 4:20

Being a Christian that is fruitful or who's faith leads to displaying the works of God may sound like a given but it requires so much to be done in order to be the fruitful kind of believer that God wants you to be. Knowledge means nothing if the awareness of God doesn't lead to change. The people who's faith leads to fruitfulness or displaying the works of God are the ones whose **hearts** are receptive to **Jesus' leading** and are willing to do whatever it takes to allow room for the **Holy Spirit** to work in and through them. The more fertile the ground of our hearts are to God and His Word, the more fruitful our faith will be.

v.18 *"Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."*

Here Jesus presents two different scenarios with the same conclusion. The first are those who actively oppose or hate the teaching of Jesus such as the religious leaders of Jesus' time. Jesus, the cornerstone of God's redemptive plan; will crush them and will deny them before God. Just like if someone were to strike a cornerstone and keep striking it would be crushed, so it goes with a callous receptiveness toward Jesus. A hardened or calloused receptiveness to Christ will lead to being spiritually crushed and punished by God for having rejected the cornerstone. The might of the cornerstone far surpasses that of any person and no person will leave without being broken to pieces. The second group is "when it falls on anyone." This group of people being described is more open and includes anyone that falls under the category of unsaved. This could be the ignorant, apathetic, flippant or carefree. This group of people may not actively oppose Jesus or even hate His way, truth or life but they nevertheless, will be crushed by the cornerstone.

For Jesus' direct recipient in the parable, the religious leaders of Jerusalem; the parable was intended to condemn them for having evil motivations for serving in their role as spiritual leaders and in ultimately being unreceptive to God's leading through the Son of God who preached a good news they hated. That God could forgive even the worst of sinners, that Gentiles would be grafted in to God's chosen people and that self-righteousness couldn't save you but by grace through faith alone you may be saved.

For Jesus' indirect recipient in the parable, the people; we see that his message contains God's desire that our receptiveness to the Son would be better than that of the tenet's and out of that God would see people's faith be productive and glorifying Him.

One day, all will be held accountable for their sins against a perfect & Holy God. Matthew 10:33 says "So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven." John 1:12 says "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" I wanted to follow this message with an invitation to ask Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins, to declare that Jesus is God and that He would give all you need to live as one redeemed, purchased from your sins and given to new life.

If you are already a follower of Jesus and are needing the Holy Spirit to help make the ground of your heart more fertile or receptive to Christ's leading then I also wanted you to invite you to ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit. Mark 4:20 says "*But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.*" God uses Spirit-filled Christians to make an exponential impact on the Kingdom of God. Don't settle for anything less than the fullness of what God has for you.