

Rev. Dr. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
Matthew 21:33-46 | Parables of Conflict: The Vineyard Owner
Sunday August 24, 2025

WELCOME:

- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.
- My sermon notes are in the foyer—please take them home with you.

REVIEW:

We continue our verse-by-verse study in Matthew's Gospel today by examining the last three days of Jesus' life.

It is Wednesday of Passover week.

Thursday, Jesus will spend privately with His disciples.

On Friday morning, Jesus will be arrested, tortured for crimes he didn't commit, and then crucified.

On Friday evening, Jesus' dead body will be placed in a borrowed tomb.

On Sunday morning, He will be resurrected from the dead.

Amid Jesus knowing what's about to take place, He's in the Temple teaching.

Matthew records his last day in the Temple—all the way through Matthew 24.

The subject matter that Jesus is teaching on is authority.

Matthew 21:23—By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority?"

We saw the dramatic events unfold last Sunday as Jesus answered the question on authority indirectly through *a short story filled with spiritual principles*—a parable.

The Parable of the Two Sons taught us about obedience vs disobedience, faith vs. faithlessness, and works vs. ~~actions~~ works.

The father told his two sons to work in the vineyard.

The first son initially said "no," but later ^{"I just want to."} changed his mind and went.

The second son initially said "yes" but lied and never went.

He gave a false impression of obedience.

In reality, that second son points to Israel's leadership—the kings and High Priests.

These men say all the right things but don't do the right things.

In that parable, Jesus exposed them and judged them for who they are, what they've done, and what they refused to do.

INTRODUCTION:

Today, we're studying the second parable of conflict—*The Vineyard Owner*.

In this parable, Jesus continues to judge the religious leaders through a narrative about Israel's historical disobedience.

What does Israel's history have to do with us personally?

Why is there an entire television network called the *History Channel*?

As the old saying goes, 1) *What comes around goes around*, 2) *If we don't know history, we are doomed to repeat it.*"

Let's learn from Israel's mistakes so we won't ^{repeat} ~~make~~ them.

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 21:33—"Listen to another parable: There was a landowner, who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a watchtower. He leased it to tenant farmers and went away.

Matthew 21:34—When the time came to harvest fruit, he sent his servants to the farmers to collect his fruit.

Matthew 21:35—The farmers took his servants, beat one, killed another, and stoned a third.

Matthew 21:36—Again, he sent other servants, more than the first group, and they did the same to them.

Matthew 21:37—Finally, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said.

Matthew 21:38—"But when the tenant farmers saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.'

Matthew 21:39—So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

Matthew 21:40 —Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those farmers?"

Matthew 21:41—"He will completely destroy those terrible men," they told him, "and lease his vineyard to other farmers who will give him his fruit at the harvest."

Matthew 21:42—Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures:

**The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.**

**This is what the Lord has done
and it is wonderful in our eyes?**

Matthew 21:43—Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruit.

Matthew 21:44—Whoever falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will shatter him."

Matthew 21:45—When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they knew he was speaking about them.

Matthew 21:46—Although they were looking for a way to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because the people regarded him as a prophet.

These are the holy words from the authoritative, inerrant, inspired, infallible, sufficient, and efficacious Word of Almighty God.

PRAY:

You who are his holy ones, fear the Lord, for those who fear him lack nothing.

(Psalm 34:9)

EXEGESIS:

Matthew 21:33—"Listen to another parable:

Coming off the heels of Jesus' first parable—telling the religious delegation that tax collectors and prostitutes are going to Heaven while they are not.

Jesus immediately launches into a second parable—"Listen." *ἀλλος* in Greek.

*AKOΩ
"Another"*

Listen to the *same type* of parable—judgment parable.

A parable is a short story filled with moral or spiritual principles.

Matthew 21:33—There was a landowner, who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a watchtower.

That sounds familiar—Jesus continues His vineyard theme.

Wine and olive oil are the backbone of Israel's economy, so everyone listening relates.

However, Jesus continues to make the common uncommon through parables.

It's based on a similar story found in Isaiah 5:1–7.

We got a preview of this passage last week, but it's important that we review it again.

Isaiah 5:1—I will sing about the one I love, a song about my loved one's vineyard: The one I love had a vineyard on a very fertile hill.

Isaiah 5:2—He broke up the soil, cleared it of stones, and planted it with the finest vines. He built a tower in the middle of it and even dug out a winepress there. He expected it to yield good grapes, but it yielded worthless grapes.

Isaiah 5:3—So now, residents of Jerusalem and men of Judah, please judge between me and my vineyard.

Isaiah 5:4—What more could I have done for my vineyard than I did? Why, when I expected a yield of good grapes, did it yield worthless grapes?

Isaiah 5:5—Now I will tell you what I am about to do to my vineyard; I will remove its hedge, and it will be consumed; I will tear down its wall, and it will be trampled.

Isaiah 5:6—I will make it a wasteland. It will not be pruned or weeded; thorns and briars will grow up. I will also give orders to the clouds that rain should not fall on it.

Isaiah 5:7—For the vineyard of the LORD of Armies is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah, the plant he delighted in. He expected justice but saw injustice; he expected righteousness but heard cries of despair.

That's the background & context.

In a parable, it's crucial we know what specific things, people, and events represent.

What do we know so far?

Matthew 21:33—There was a landowner, who planted a vineyard,

We know that the Landowner is God, just as "the father" was God from last week's *Parable of the Two Sons*.

God is the subject. He is the main character.

We also know that the vineyard represents the nation of Israel.

Notice that it is God who plants the vineyard.

God is the one who did all the work.

Spiritually speaking...

Psalms 80:8—You (God) dug up a vine from Egypt; you (God) drove out the nations and planted it.

Jeremiah 2:21—I planted you, a choice vine from the very best seed.

Not only did God plant this vineyard—^{other words} not only did God create a nation from a moon-worshipping pagan named Abram.

Matthew 21:33—put a fence around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a watchtower.

This isn't just a mediocre vineyard designed to produce Mad Dog 20/20!

God is not peddling Nighttrain and Thunderbird!

The owner built a fence to protect it—in other words, God is the one who protects Israel.

The owner built a winepress—in other words, God provides for the health and well-being of the nation by giving Israel His promise, covenant, laws, and land to thrive like no other nation on Earth.

The owner also built a watchtower—in other words, God gave Israel prophets and kings to protect and instruct them.

Israel had all they needed—because Yahweh God had chosen to love them.

So the Landowner (God) has finished building His vineyard.

Matthew 21:33—He leased it to tenant farmers and went away.

Why would the Landowner do all this work and then lease it out?

This is a common first-century practice—people actually do the same thing today.

For example, if someone has multiple residential properties that he rents out, he can hire a real estate management company to handle all the details.

Similar to our vineyard owner—takes lots of farmers to tend a vineyard.

The question is—"Who are the farmers?"

Answer: The farmers represent the OT kings and religious leaders.

They are the stewards of God's vineyard—Israel.

They are not the owners—God is the owner.

It's pretty interesting to consider how most renters today don't take care of the owner's property as they should because it's not their own.

It is important to note that Scripture does not look favorably on tenants/renters for spiritual reasons.

John 10:11— "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

John 10:12— The hired hand, since he is not the shepherd and doesn't own the sheep, leaves them and runs away when he sees a wolf coming. The wolf then snatches and scatters them.

John 10:13— This happens because he is a hired hand and doesn't care about the sheep.

And we see this theme about Israel's kings and religious leaders, not only not caring about God's people, but using and abusing them for their own benefit.

Matthew 21:34—When the time came to harvest fruit, he sent his servants to the farmers to collect his fruit.

This is the normal process for the vineyard owner.

He owns this land and has made an agreement with the renters/farmers.

So he sends his servants to collect what is rightfully and legally his.

The fact that the owner doesn't go himself but instead sends servants tells us that he has authority and is wealthy.

It takes 4-5 years to earn a profit from a startup vineyard.

It's been said that a vineyard will produce a small fortune—as long as you start with a large fortune!

Regardless, he sends servants.

Who do the servants represent in the parable? Answer: The OT prophets.

Prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

Some lesser-known prophets like Joel, Amos, and Haggai.

These were the men God sent to speak for Him.

God sent these men to King's time and time again.

As you read through 1 and 2 Kings, you'll experience how the majority of these kings treated God's prophets.

The kings mocked them, refused to listen, beat them, and even killed them.

Therefore, Jesus' parable took a bizarre turn:

Matthew 21:35—The farmers took his servants (prophets), beat one, killed another, and stoned a third.

Biblical history tells us that Queen Jezebel massacred prophets (1 Kings 18:4) and tried to kill Elijah.

Jeremiah was beaten and put in stocks—tradition says that he was stoned to death. (Jer. 20:1–2).

Tradition states that Isaiah was sawn in half.

Ezekiel was rejected, Elijah and Amos had to run for their lives,

Micah was punched in the face (1 Kings 22:24),

Zechariah was murdered in the Temple (2 Chron. 24:20–22; cf. Matt. 23:35).

The greatest prophet who ever lived, John the Baptizer, was thrown in prison and eventually executed as a form of entertainment for King Herod's birthday party.

Matthew 21:36—Again, he sent other servants, more than the first group, and they did the same to them.

We see the patience and long suffering of Almighty God. *here in v. 36.*

So he sends more prophets—but the religious leaders and Israel's kings continue to do the same thing they've always done.

Matthew 21:37—*Finally*, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said.

Finally is an emotional Greek adverb.

A better English translation would be, "Ultimately"—*at the end of this awful progression of wickedness and murder*—God sends His Son.

Question: If you were this landowner, would you send your only begotten Son?

Would you take that chance? Or would you send soldiers and require immediate justice?

Throughout antiquity, the son comes with all the authority of the father.

In other words, the son represents the father.

What the son says is what the father says.

Matthew 21:37—Finally, he sent his son to them.

This verse sounds familiar to us.

John 3:16—For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

John 5:23—Anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

Galatians 4:4—When the time came to completion, God sent his Son,

1 John 4:9—God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his one and only Son into the world so that we might live through him.

1 John 4:10—Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

1 John 4:14—And we have seen and we testify that the Father has sent his Son as the world's Savior.

Talk about a spiritual principle being revealed through a parable!

Jesus is obviously referring to Himself.

Jesus makes it crystal clear that He is not only a prophet, but the very Son of God—their Messiah/Savior.

Matthew 21:38—“But when the tenant farmers saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and take his inheritance.’”

Note that the farmers know exactly who this man is—just as Israel’s leaders do.

Both the farmers and the Pharisees know He is not a servant/prophet—^{only} they know precisely who he was.

Therefore, this murder is premeditated by both the farmers and Israel’s leaders..

Question: *Why are the farmers/Pharisees so angry?*

Why are they so adamant in committing first-degree premeditated murder to steal the son’s inheritance?

Why does the world hate God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, with such murderous rage?

Why is it that nearly every television program produced today takes the Lord’s name in vain with such contempt?

The answer comes from God’s own attributes—God’s character.

1. God is holy—Jesus is divinely pure. There is no hint of sin in or on Him.
2. God is powerful—Jesus has all the power that the world wants, ^{but can't have.}
3. God is righteous—Jesus exposes the depravity/unrighteousness in our hearts.

In other words, Jesus is everything that we are not—He is the perfect man and the perfect standard—therefore, the world hates Him for it. ^{sets}

It’s out of this contemptuous, murderous rage that their actions follow.

Matthew 21:39—So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

This is the end of the parable—it ends in murder.

How would you like a movie to end that way? It's not a happy ending.

It's not like the parable of the woman finding her coin, or a man finding a treasure in the field.

This is a parable of conflict. It's a parable of judgment.

It's intended to wake everybody up from our spiritual stupor.

It's fascinating because Jesus now turns the parable into a prophecy.

As we'll soon see, Jesus Himself (God's Son) was taken outside the city walls of Jerusalem and crucified.

Jesus ends the parable and asks a question:

Matthew 21:40—Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those farmers?"

The owner sent two sets of servants/God sent prophet after prophet. → farmers killed them

then Out of compassion, he sent his only begotten son. → Farmers killed Him

Now, the owner shows up.

In typical rabbinical fashion, Jesus draws his listeners into the story and wants them to participate.

He invites them to finish the story.

The religious leaders respond...

Matthew 21:41—"He will completely destroy those terrible men," they told him, "and lease his vineyard to other farmers who will give him his fruit at the harvest."

Can you hear their tone of voice? The righteous indignation against the farmers?

How they demand justice for the servant and the owner's son?

The NASB, LSB, and NIV capture a play on words in the Greek,—

Matthew 21:41—"He will bring those wretches to a wretched end."

Guess what? Who are the wretches?

It's themselves! The religious delegation condemns itself once again—just like last week with the first parable.

In their own words, the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Scribes confess that judgment is coming.

But in their ignorance, they don't realize judgment is coming for them!

They gave a prophetic answer to Jesus' question!

Matthew 21:41—"He (God) will completely destroy (judge) those terrible men," (Pharisees) they told him,

Jesus accepted their answer and saw it as a fulfillment of Scripture:

Matthew 21:42—Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures:

At first glance, Jesus' statement seems irrelevant.

But it is not—Jesus continues to teach the purpose of the parable indirectly.

To paraphrase, “Do you still not get it?”

Do you not see that you are the wretch that's coming to a wretched end?

Matthew 21:42—*The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.*

Jesus quotes Psalm 118:22.

This is the very Psalm that Israel sang during Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Monday.

The stone/rock is a messianic title in the OT that points to Jesus.

Deuteronomy 32:4—*The Rock—his work is perfect; all his ways are just. A faithful God, without bias, he is righteous and true.*

Psalm 18:2—*The Lord is my rock,
my fortress, and my deliverer,
my God, my rock where I seek refuge,*

Psalm 18:31—*For who is God besides the Lord?
And who is a rock? Only our God.*

Psalm 18:46—*The Lord lives—blessed be my rock! The God of my salvation is exalted.*

Back...
Matthew 21:42—*The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.*

The "cornerstone" is also a riddle.

It means two things.

First, it can refer to a stone for the foundation of a building.

In the first century, stonemasons would search for a very large unique stone—one with the shape and weight required to begin new construction.

They would discard all other stones to find the right one.

The cornerstone was the first stone laid when constructing a building—it was laid at the corner of the foundation—hence the name.

It had to be perfectly cut and placed because the alignment, stability, and orientation of the building depended on that stone.

The cornerstone was a reference point for the builders to measure and set all other stones in straight lines.

Secondly, the "cornerstone" can refer to a *capstone*.

A capstone/keystone was not the first stone placed, but the last stone.

A capstone is the final stone placed at the top of a building, often an arch, doorway, or wall.

A capstone is essential because it locks all the other stones into place, allowing the arch to bear weight.

It was less about alignment (like a cornerstone) and more about completion and strength.

KEYPOINT 1:

The cornerstone either saves or crushes.

~~Regardless, this stone either saves or crushes—which Jesus refers to in a moment.~~

Matthew 21:42—

**This is what the Lord has done
and it is wonderful in our eyes?**

What is so wonderful about this stone? I can't say it better than Peter...

After Peter heals a lame man in the Temple, he tells these same religious leaders.

Acts 4:10— let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified and whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing here before you healthy.

Acts 4:11— This Jesus is **the stone rejected by you builders, which has become the cornerstone.**

Acts 4:12— There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved." — *SALVATION*
— *Forgiveness*

Matthew 21:43— Therefore I tell you,

Jesus proclaims a solemn pronouncement,

It has the power of the OT, "Thus says the Lord."

Matthew 21:43— the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruit.

Jesus repeats only what the Pharisees said *in their answer about the parable*

Matthew 21:41— *They said that the owner will* "and lease his vineyard to other farmers who will give him his fruit at the harvest."

Because of their hypocrisy and disobedience, the religious leaders would lose their privilege of caring for God's vineyard.

Jesus fires them—it officially happens forty years later with the destruction of the Temple.

Ever since then, the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Scribes have ceased to exist.

The leadership of Israel is temporarily under new management.

However, the Kingdom wasn't completely taken away from the Jews.

In God's sovereignty, he planned for this to happen and spoke through the prophet Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 31:31—"Look, the days are coming" ... "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel ..."

Jeremiah 31:32—"This one will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors on the day I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt—my covenant that they broke even though I am their master."

Jeremiah 31:32—"Instead, this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days"... "I will put my teaching within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."

Jesus' verdict is not about a replacement of Israel here, but a postponement of God's promises found in the OT.

The Apostle Paul confirms this

Romans 11:1—...has God rejected his people? Absolutely not!

Romans 11:2—God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew.

Not repentant but post repentant...

Who are these new people? The apostles.

Jesus is stating that the kingdom will be taken away from the current first-century religious leaders and given to the disciples of Jesus—the church!

Although the church includes Gentiles, its roots are still based in the Abrahamic Covenant.

Think of Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman—***"Salvation is of the Jews"*** (John 4:22;

We can think of the Church as a "new nation without borders."

1 Peter 2:9—But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession,

The Church will bear the fruit God seeks until Israel is ready.

So,
Matthew 21:44—Whoever falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will shatter him."

Jesus is providing a spiritual reality to the cornerstone *and* capstone.

Those who reject Jesus will be like someone tripping over a stone, and suffering a judgment that will (Greek verb, *likmaō*) pulverize to be made into a powder/to crush.

(lek-maō)

KEYPOINT 2:

The judgment of God should not be taken lightly, because God should not be taken lightly.

Matthew 21:45—When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they knew he was speaking about them.

The Pharisees knew and understood that Jesus was God's Son, their Messiah.

Yet, these men would not be convinced of their sin—and if they can't be convinced, they'll never be convicted of their sin.

They would not repent, and therefore could not be forgiven.

Matthew 21:46—Although they were looking for a way to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because the people regarded him as a prophet.

The Pharisees continue to fear the people.

There are four main types of fear in Scripture:

1. God
2. Man
3. Future
4. Death

> worldly fears

APPLICATION:

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APPLICATION:

What are the lessons for us? How can we apply this parable to our lives today?

First, we can somewhat relate—the VV is wine country—we see many vineyards throughout our valley.

We understand the importance of good grapes vs bad grapes both practically and spiritually.

Second, we've learned that God is patient.

2 Peter 3:9— The Lord does not delay his promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.

So we praise God for His patience and long suffering with us.

But our parable also teaches that His patience can and will be exhausted.

God is not patient forever, because God is also just—meaning judge.

This is the Parable of the Patient, but Just Vineyard Owner.

God is both perfectly patient and divinely just.

Meaning Jesus is either our Savior— or our Judge.

How do you know which one Jesus is for you?

Let me encourage you to review last week's parable—because they build upon one another.

Watch it on the website—review my notes—or do both.

Continue to ask the Lord, "*Which son am I?*"

Am I the son who is first disobedient, but then repents and changes his mind?

Or am I the second son, who has the *appearance* of obedience, but lies to his father?

Today's parable presses into the consequences of the first parable.

The Father "sent His Son" as the Cornerstone/Capstone."

If the second son (last week) doesn't repent—this son will trip and fall and then be crushed for eternity.

Next Sunday is the third parable—it is the most disturbing of the three.

Once again, it builds upon the previous two—it's called *The Parable of the Wedding Banquet*.

I would encourage you to read it—along with the two previous parables together—because there is nothing more important than understanding what Jesus is communicating.

Don't make the mistake that the Pharisees made—thinking that they are good people.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that just because you said the "sinner's prayer, walked the aisle, raised your hand in a church service, makes you a Christian.

How do you know you're a Christian?

As we learned in the first parable, a changed life produces good fruit.

The Pharisees never changed—what about you? Have you changed?

And Are you continuing to change?

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