

THE LORD OF THE VINEYARD

Mark 11-12

After observing the Sabbath in Bethany with Lazarus, Martha and Mary, we saw in our study together last time that – on Sunday morning (11th Nisan) – that once again Jesus was making His way to Jerusalem.

1. They saw the fig tree that had been cursed for its hypocrisy.
2. They saw that it was dead and totally dried up from the root.

The disciples were amazed and Jesus took the opportunity to give them some teaching on the power of faith – there were three points that we saw together last time:

- a. The object of faith – *i.e.* trusting in God alone.
- b. The opportunities of faith – *i.e.* doing greater things than cursing a fig tree.
 - i. Moving things immovable.
 - ii. Doing things impossible.
- c. The obstacles of faith – *i.e.* an unbelieving heart; an unforgiving heart.

When that teaching opportunity was ended, Jesus then continued on His way toward the city of Jerusalem. And that is where the story continues in ...

Verse 27 “**And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple (*i.e.* less than 48 hours after He had cleaned it out!), there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders,**”

This was the Sanhedrin – *i.e.* the religious “*top guns*” of Judaism – who now came out to confront the Lord Jesus. And in the closing verses of this chapter, I find three things that I want us to notice as an introduction to our text for today – notice ...

1. The question they asked.

Verse 28 “**And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?”**

2. The question they got.

Verses 29-30 “**And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do**

these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me.”

3. The question they ignored.
 - a. Their rationale.

Verses 31-32 “... they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him (*i.e.* why did you reject the message John declared concerning Me – *cf.* John 1:29)? But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed.”

These men were NOT stupid. They immediately realized that they were now caught between a rock and a hard place – *i.e.* Jesus had turned the tables on them and they were now caught in the very trap they had created for Him – and they knew it!

Therefore, we find ...

- b. Their cowardice – *i.e.* that bunch of self-righteous cowards ...

Verse 33 “... answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell ...”

- c. Their frustration.

Verse 33 “... And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

Now Jesus could have allowed the matter to die right there – *i.e.* He could have simply walked away. But, being the “*Master Teacher*”, Jesus would not allow such an opportunity to slip away. Therefore, now we come to our text in **Mark 12** ...

Verse 1 “And he began to speak unto them by parables ...”

As we consider this parable, I want you to remember that the “*certain man*” who planted the vineyard is the LORD God. The “*vineyard*” is the nation of Israel. The “*husbandmen*” are the religious leaders of Israel. The “*servants*” are the prophets that the LORD sent to Israel. And the “*well-beloved son*” of that “*certain man*” is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here the Lord Jesus is going to do two things:

1. To expose the sinfulness of those religious Jews.
2. To exalt the goodness and the graciousness of God.

So let’s begin by noticing ...

I. The kindness of the Lord.

Verse 1 “... A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it (*i.e.* built a fence to keep out those who would destroy the vines), and digged a place for the winefat (*i.e.* where the juice of the grapes would be collected), and built a tower (*i.e.* where a watchman might guard the vineyard), and let it out to husbandmen (*i.e.* entrusted his vineyard to men who would be responsible to care for it), and went into a far country.”

It is interesting to note that this is the very same parable was used by the prophet – *cf.* **Isaiah 5** – to warn the nation of Judah. And the prophet said in ...

Isaiah 5:4 “What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? ...”

Many times in the Bible, the nation of Israel is referred to as vine ... for example:

Psalms 80:8 “Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen (*i.e.* those nations that were in the land of Canaan), and planted it.”

Those Jews in Jesus’ day fully understood that they were God’s vine – in fact, as they stood in the Temple complex talking with Jesus, they could see the huge and magnificent grapevine that was carved on the door of the Temple.

1. The vine was embellished with leaves of pure silver and gold.
2. The grapes that hung on the vine were precious jewels.

Without a doubt, those Jewish leaders had no doubt what the Lord Jesus was talking about in this parable – *i.e.* He was talking about the nation of Israel!

And the first point that Jesus made was that the LORD God – in His goodness – had done everything that was necessary so that His chosen vine might prosper and bring forth good fruit. However, the LORD God asked the pointed question in ...

Isaiah 5:4 “... wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?”

But instead of writing off the vine as worthless – *i.e.* ripping it out of ground and destroying those who had been entrusted with the care of His vine – we find ...

II. The graciousness of the Lord.

The LORD God showed His graciousness to Israel in two ways:

A. He sent His servants.

The LORD God had commanded back in ...

1 Chronicles 16:22 “... Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.”

But the religious leaders of Israel, through their history, had rebelled against that command – therefore, the Lord Jesus continued His parable by saying ...

Verses 2-3 “And at the season he (*i.e.* the LORD God) sent to the husbandmen (*i.e.* the religious leaders) a servant (*i.e.* a prophet), that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty.”

Some of God’s prophets – *cf.* Hebrews 11:32-35 – experienced times of great victory. However, we are also told in ...

Hebrews 11:35-38 “... others were tortured, not accepting deliverance ... And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; ... they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”

But in spite of Israel’s rejection of the LORD God’s “*servants*”, He still showed His graciousness to them again and again – notice it in ...

Verses 4-5 “And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some.”

Now – to be honest – it is a good thing that I am NOT the LORD God! I would have been fed up by now, wiped out the whole bunch and started over again. But the graciousness of the LORD God is seen in that ...

B. He sent His Son.

Verses 6-7 “Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be our’s.”

Here Jesus laid His omniscient finger on the exact problem with those leaders of Judaism. Those men wanted the fruit of God’s vine – *i.e.* they wanted all of the

preeminence, the glory and the honor, that belonged to the LORD God – for themselves.

Therefore, instead of accepting and submitting to the authority of the Son of the vineyard Owner – *i.e.* submitting to Jesus as the Son of God ...

Verse 8 “... they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.”

What those religious leaders had failed to understand – and what many people still fail to understand even today – is that, when you accept the Son of God, you get the vineyard and everything in it!

When you accept the Son:

1. You become a child of God – *cf.* **1 John 3:1-3**.
2. You become a joint-heir with Christ – *cf.* **Romans 8:17**.
3. You get all the blessings Heaven has to offer – *cf.* **Ephesians 1:3**.

Bottom line: When you have Jesus Christ, you have everything! You have an abundance of life here, and eternal life hereafter.

But the religious leaders rejected all of that – therefore, we see ...

III. The judgment of the Lord.

Verse 9 “What shall therefore the Lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen (*i.e.* the Jewish religious leaders), and will give the vineyard unto others (*i.e.* the spiritual care of Israel would be now given to those Apostles who will preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ).”

And that is why we find a sudden change in the imagery – *i.e.* instead of speaking about a vine and a vineyard; Jesus now speaks of a building and a corner stone.

Verses 10-11 “... have ye not read this scripture (*cf.* Psalm 118:22-23); The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?”

1. The “*stone*” is the Lord Jesus.
2. The “*builders*” are the religious leaders.

They rejected God’s “*stone*” because – as we saw moment ago – they wanted to have the place of preeminence and glory for themselves. However, in spite of their own wicked/selfish ambitions, God’s plan would not be overthrown:

- a. The “*stone*” would become the “*chief cornerstone*” upon which all of God’s work would be based.
- b. And that would not be accomplished by the power of men – rather, it would be the “*Lord’s doing*”!

Therefore, this was a defining moment – the religious leaders were being offered a final opportunity to accept Jesus as their Messiah. It is interesting that, in a parallel passage, we find something is added in ...

Matthew 21:44 “**And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.**”

1. Those who fall on that “*stone*” will be broken of their pride and brought to a place of true repentance and salvation. However ...
2. Those who reject God’s chosen “*stone*” will one day experience the total destruction of God’s judgment as that “*stone*” will fall upon them.

Conclusion

After the sermon was ended, it was time to make a decision – and the tragic decision of those religious leaders is found in ...

Verse 12 “**And they sought to lay hold on him (*i.e.* to kill Him), but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.**”

God has been good to everyone in this room today – and by His grace, He offers to every one the wonderful gift of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. I pray that you ...

1. Will NOT be like those religious leaders – *i.e.* do NOT become angry and ignore God’s offer of grace; do NOT proudly determine to go your own way.
2. Will humble yourself – repenting of your sins – and placing your faith in trust in the Lord Jesus today! That is, trusting completely in God ...
 - a. To save your soul.
 - b. To direct your life.