

THE PARABLE OF THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN

TEXT: MARK 12:1-12

Introduction:

1. Scofield calls this, the “Parable of the householder demanding fruit from his vineyard” (p. 1061).
2. That’s a rather lengthy title. RC Trench, in his book, *Notes on the Miracles and Parables of Our Lord*, calls this parable, “The Wicked Husbandmen.”
3. That is more concise. The word “householder” is not found in Mark’s account of the parable. Matthew uses the word in his account.
4. Matthew 21:33 says, “Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard...” (cf. Mark 12:1).
5. Mark 12:9 refers to the householder as “the lord of the vineyard.” The householder obviously represents God the Father, and his “wellbeloved” son clearly represents the Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 12:6-12).
6. The husbandmen (Mark 12:1) represent the leaders of Israel who exercised authority over the people.
7. The servants (Mark 12:2-5) represent the prophets God sent to Israel.
8. My outline is simple: I am going to try to frame my message around these three themes: fruitfulness, patience, and judgment.

I. FRUITFULNESS (12:1, 2)

1. The background to this parable is found in Isaiah 5, where the prophet Isaiah described a vineyard that had been planted “in a very fruitful hill” (Isa. 5:1).
2. This vineyard gave every prospect of producing a bountiful harvest. The Lord carefully prepared the soil, fenced it, and cleared away the stones (Isa. 5:2).
3. God wanted to remove every obstacle to the growth of the vine, “the choicest vine” (Isa. 5:2). God built a watchtower for protection and “made a winepress therein,” anticipating a big harvest.
4. But alas, when harvest time came, the vine yielded only “wild grapes” (Isa. 5:2b), literally “rotten or stinking” grapes.
5. The meaning is not hard to figure out (Isa. 5:7) – God had blessed them in every way and He expected fruit.
6. God brought the children of Israel out of the desert into the promised land. He protected them and took good care of them but all He got in return was rotten fruit (Isa. 5:7b).

7. The application for us is obvious. God has given us:
 - the Word of God for instruction
 - the Holy Spirit of God for guidance
 - the church of God and the saints of God for protection and fellowship.
8. God has given us eternal life!
9. God loved us so much He gave us His only begotten Son!
10. In return, God expects fruit – are you producing good fruit or rotten fruit?
11. God wants us to be fruitful (John 15:8, 16).
12. With this well-known “song” from Isaiah 5 in mind, our Lord used the same imagery as the prophet Isaiah. Christ was reminding His listeners of their history. God planted them in a good land; He provided protection by giving them the law; and He expected the fruit of righteousness from them.
13. Jesus explained that God “let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country” (Mark 12:1). Husbandmen were tenant-farmers who paid rent to the owner of the vineyard. These husbandmen represented the leaders of Israel who exercised authority over the people.
14. In Mark 12:2, our Lord said that “at the season” (harvest time), the lord of the vineyard sent a servant to the husbandmen, “that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard” (21:34).
15. These “servants” represented the prophets whom God had sent throughout Israel’s history to call the people to repentance and obedience.
16. Unfortunately, those in authority over the vineyard rejected the servants (the prophets). They beat them and killed them, one after the other (Mark 12:3-5).

II. PATIENCE

1. God is patient and long-suffering. After the wicked husbandmen continually beat and killed the prophets, God would have been perfectly justified in destroying the nation Israel.
2. But instead of removing the rebellious husbandmen and executing them, God in His grace and mercy, continued sending more servants, but they were all mistreated and killed (12:3-5).

3. Our Lord was reminding His listeners of their disgraceful history (cf. Matt. 23:29-36).
4. In a display of matchless grace and mercy, instead of removing the wicked husbandmen, instead of pouring out His wrath upon these ungodly leaders, and instead of destroying the nation Israel – the owner of the vineyard gave them one more chance – He sent his “wellbeloved son” (12:6).
5. Luke 20:13 says this was his “beloved son.”
6. “Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son” (Mark 12:6).
7. There can be no doubt that Christ was referring to Himself, and that the chief priests and the Pharisees understood it that way (Mark 12:10-12).

III. JUDGMENT

1. God is patient and longsuffering, but His patience and longsuffering has a limit (cf. II Peter 3:8-10).
2. Our Lord asked the religious leaders what should the lord of the vineyard do to them (12:9).
3. In Matthew’s account, it is recorded that the chief priests and the elders said in answer to our Lord’s question, “He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons” (Matt. 21:41).
4. They gave the only logical answer – the lord of the vineyard should “miserably destroy those wicked men” (Matt. 21:41).
5. By answering correctly, they were passing judgment upon themselves (cf. Matthew 27:24, 25).
6. Our Lord confirmed that the parable was about their rejection of Him by citing a Messianic prophecy from Psalm 118 (Mark 12:10).
7. This was a fatal admission on their part. It was for their own selfish motives that they killed their Messiah (cf. John 11:47, 48).

CONCLUSION:

1. The message for Christians – are you fruitful?
2. The message for the unsaved – consider the judgment of God. If you have never repented of your sin, and trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord

and Saviour, you are lost and on your way to eternal punishment in the lake of fire.