



THE PARABLES OF JESUS

THE TENANTS

Before Life Group

Read [Mark 12:1-12](#)

Jesus stood there in front of the Pharisees and the religious rulers of the day knowing full well that if he had taught anything other than parables, the consequences would have been quite severe. Specifically, for this message. The love that Jesus had for His people went beyond religious rules and adherence to produce salvation. Instead, Jesus cared for the people of God and provided a path for them when they strayed from God's plan and His best for them. This included correcting the religious leaders of the day who sought to lord their power over the people and, in doing so, abandoned their role to the world.

The role of the church on the earth is to shepherd the people and represent God to all the world. The temple specifically served as the intermediary between God and man. Yet, as Jesus came to the world, those whose job was solely to act as surrogate rulers for sought to rend the power themselves instead. It was the vineyard owner who planted the vines, dug the well, crafted the winepress, and built the watch tower. All the glory, honor, and power belongs solely to the owner, and thus to God, and the workers rejoice in the grace and provision from their benevolent Lord.

For hired workers to seek to take over the field from the owner for their own purposes would be nothing short of mutiny. The field did not belong to the workers. Their mission and purpose was to care for and steward creation under the watchfulness of the owner. And, because of their faithfulness they would be blessed by the produce of the field. Their payment was coming not only from the owner, but from the abundance of the field. God intended the people to enjoy the fruit of their labor. Similarly, being active participants in the church provides us with a sense of purpose and meaning for our lives.

Jesus spoke in parables as he levied the accusation against the religious rulers of the day who sought to take the Kingdom of God away from its rightful owner and turn it into their own creation. Since the owner of the field was away, and through their pride and arrogance, they took that as a sign of their "rightful ownership" and believed that the kingdom of God should be ruled by them. Man attempted to take the place of God rather than serving Him in obedience. Yet, throughout the course of this parable and mankind, God extended grace to the people. The first messengers served as a sign of the prophets that had come to man, heralding their right standing with the owner. The son of the owner represented the rightful heir who stood before them now—Jesus Christ. In each case, God provided grace for the people so that they would have opportunity to escape the fullness of the wrath of God.

God Providing Prophets to His People

Throughout the parable, God sent many people on His behalf to remind the vineyard workers of their right standing. Yet, despite knowing full well who these people were, the workers sought to kill the messenger of God. As Jesus spoke this parable, it was undoubtedly clear that He sought to correct the religious rulers of that day. He equated the workers of the vineyard as religious rulers who claimed to obey God but missed everything about Him. God sent prophet after prophet, and in each case their prophecy was ignored. Now, as Jesus stood before them, He represented Himself as the true heir to the throne who had come to be with the people. They had been given chance after chance to return to right standing with God, but in each case chose rebellion against Him.

The role of the prophets throughout biblical culture was vastly different than what we imagine it to be now. This parable is as much a cautionary parable of *rejecting* the authority of God and His prophets as it is on the authority of God. Be cautious of the prophets who only proclaim fleshly benefits and false “blessings.” Prophets remind the people of God of their right relationship with Him. For the workers of the vineyard, God sent prophet after prophet, even so far as to send His son, to remind the people that the vineyard belongs to Him and Him alone.

Prophets sent by God, however difficult their message may be and however convicting they speak, are a blessing from God. It is our continual reminder that God desires to be in right relationship with each of us and that we belong to Him. Like the workers of the vineyard, we are not beyond the reach of God. When God sends His prophets to restore us to a right relationship with Him, it would do us well to heed the words of a true prophet. Often times it will be corrective and other times revealing of our innermost thoughts and desires; but in each case, it is God speaking through the mouth of one of His servants out of His great authority and love for us, His people.

The Fullness of God

Mutiny against God, though, cannot be tolerated and must be fully dealt with according to the standards of righteousness and holiness. Thus, as Jesus asks the people what must happen to the works of the vineyard, they reply with truth; the workers of the vineyard would be put to death for their crimes and for their rebellion. In a holy and just society, transgression cannot remain. The unclean cannot exist in the presence of the clean and the unholy cannot bear to stand in the presence of God. Everyone, in some context or another will experience the fullness of God’s presence.

For some people, they will experience the fullness of God through His wrath. Those who refuse to turn their backs on their rebellion and repent of their sins and return to their right standing relationship will the fires of hell. It is a common misconception that the Devil is the ruler of hell. This is simply not true. Hell is designed with Satan in mind and reserved for him and all who follow him. It is also the destination of those who reject God, His grace through the prophet’s call, and the incarnation of Jesus Christ who died on their behalf.

At the core of this parable, though, is God sending His Son on His behalf. Through the rightful heir’s return to the vineyard, everything is restored to its intended purpose and relationship. While some sought to murder Jesus to claim the inheritance of God, Jesus sought to willingly die for their sins in order that He could share the inheritance with them. The crucifixion of Christ did not give authority to mankind, but instead freed mankind from their slavery. We become co-heirs with Christ by uniting ourselves with Him in his death, burial,



and resurrection. Some reject the authority of Jesus Christ. But the fullness of God's grace and love, and the whole of creation and salvation hinge on this central act on the cross.

Discussion Questions

Read [Mark 12:1-12](#)

1. What role do you see the prophets playing in the world today? How was their purpose expressed throughout the biblical times?
2. Why do we resist messengers from God when they bring rebuke or correction? What happens when we ignore these messengers? What happens when we heed the words of God's messengers?
3. How does God's sending of prophets demonstrate the love that God has for us? What does this reveal about how God cares for His people?
4. How do the two options for mankind display the sovereignty of God? What else does this parable communicate to us about the nature of God?
5. What is our role in the Kingdom of Heaven? Why is God a better "owner of the field" than we could ever be? What happens when we attempt to take this role of God away from Him?
6. Everyone wrestles with the idea of handling our own salvation and taking power from God. What are some things mankind struggles with handing over to God?
7. How do we experience the fullness of the presence of God? How can we be good stewards of the land and mission that God has given us? What can we do to represent God to the world?

About the Author.

Pastor Daniel Burton lives in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. In May 2015, Daniel graduated from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary with his Master of Divinity. It was here that he began to explore his passion for Theology and deeper exploration of the word of God. Daniel believes that, at its core, Theology should be fun. Check out more of his work at <http://thegospeloutpost.com>

