

RTS Women's Study: The Gospel of Mark

#25: Mark 12:1-12: Parable of the Vineyard

Intro: "Ordinary Men"

I. God's Goodness to Israel (v.1)

A. The Story of a Vineyard comes from Isaiah 5:1-7

- "My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it" (Is 5:1-2)
- The "vineyard" is a reference to Israel: "For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel" (Is 5:7)

B. In the ancient world, a Vineyard was a great blessing

- It took a lot of work to make a vineyard
- It has a fence for protection
- It has a tower to look out for enemies
- It has a winepress for enjoyment
- **To live in a vineyard is the height of prosperity in the ancient world!

C. Jesus' message is simple: Look how good God has been to you!

- God had poured out his blessings on Israel. What are some of these blessings?
- God has also poured out his blessings on us. Why is it so important to regularly recount and remember the goodness that has shown to us?

II. Israel's Rejection of God (v.2-7)

A. Stage 1: Israel Refused to Give God What Was Owed

- In the ancient world, the tenants of a vineyard would often pay "rent" by simply farming the land and giving the owner a portion of the "fruit"
- Symbolically, this is a picture of worship, thanksgiving, and obedience. But Israel refused to give it...

B. Stage 2: Israel Refused to Listen to God's Messengers

- The "servants" sent to collect the rent are symbolic of God's prophets that he sent to warn them and call them to repentance
- Throughout the OT, God sent numerous prophets to Israel and she regularly refused to listen and instead beat and persecuted the messengers (e.g., Jeremiah)

**Notice God's incredible patience. After numerous rejections, God continues to send messengers in hopes that Israel will repent.

C. Stage 3: Israel Killed God's Own Son

- In the parable, the vineyard owner sends his son in hopes of getting a hearing
- But, instead of listening, the tenants "took him and killed him" (v. 8)
- This is an attempt to usurp the owner: "This is the heir. Come let us kill him and the inheritance will be ours" (v.7)
- **Notice the escalation among the stages:
 - Stage 1 is a rejection of God's rightful rule
 - Stage 2 is a growing rebellion and dismissal of God's warnings
 - Stage 3 is an outright declaration of war on God
- This is a remarkable and tragic picture of *total depravity*. Despite God's graciousness and good to humans, those same humans, left to themselves, are not merely neutral or indifferent to God, but hate the things of God and eventually hate God himself.

III. God's Judgment on Israel (v.9-12)

A. God destroys the "tenants"

- In the parable, the owner utterly destroys the tenants of that vineyard
- This is a foreshadowing of judgment coming on Israel when the Temple is destroyed in 70AD

B. God gives the vineyard to "others"

- In the context, this is likely a reference to the Gentiles
- Israel's rejection of the messiah is the opportunity for the Gospel to go to the nations

C. God's Son is Glorified

- Despite the humiliation of being murdered, the "Son" will eventually be vindicated
- Jesus cites from Psalm 118:22-23: "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." This same passage is used throughout the NT: Acts 4:11; 1 Pet 2:4,7; Eph 2:20.
- "Cornerstone" could refer to the foundational stone of a building, or the capstone at the top of a building (which is the last stone laid). Either way, it is a stone that is the most important.
- Key point: The rejection of Jesus is part of God's mysterious and glorious plan whereby Jesus will be glorified and the nations saved.

Discussion Groups

1. We need to remember God's goodness to us. Take a moment to share with the group a few examples of how you can see God's faithfulness and goodness toward you.
2. Are you surprised at the wickedness of the tenants of the vineyard? What are some lessons we can take away about the tendency of the human heart and its potential for evil?
3. How does this passage give you a deeper appreciation of the patience and longsuffering of God? How does that encourage you? How does that make you want to change?