



Luke 20:9-19

9 Then He began to tell the people this parable: "A certain man planted a vineyard, leased it to vinedressers, and went into a far country for a long time.

10 "Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that they might give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the vinedressers beat him and sent him away empty-handed.

11 "Again he sent another servant; and they beat him also, treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed.

12 "And again he sent a third; and they wounded him also and cast him out.

13 "Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son. Probably they will respect him when they see him.'

14 "But when the vinedressers saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.'

15 "So they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do to them?

16 "He will come and destroy those vinedressers and give the vineyard to others." And when they heard it they said, "Certainly not!"

17 Then He looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone'?"

18 "Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."

19 And the chief priests and the scribes that very hour sought to lay hands on Him, but they feared the people -- for they knew He had spoken this parable against them.

Of all the words that could be used to describe the Lord God Almighty, impatient is not one of them. God in exercising his mercy towards sinners is best described as longsuffering. Although he could justly do so, God does not immediately render judgment upon those who deserve punishment for their sins.

The apostle Peter told us that is precisely because the Lord is so merciful that he is so patient – like a loving parent he prefers to reward and show kindness and so he is slow to anger. ***2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.***

I am personally glad that God is patient and longsuffering and full of mercy, not only for your sakes, but for my own, because you see I never want to forget that I myself spent 23 years in rebellion. God did not reward me according to what I deserved, instead he raised up intercessors to preach the gospel to me, and although I treated many of them very poorly, He also broke down my resistance, and eventually caused me to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. I was eventually brought to praise and glorify and even preach the name of the very same Savior whom I had once despised and attacked. Even now I can only stop and wonder at that, and say "isn't the mercy of God amazing?" That he would save those who were so far from the kingdom as to be smack dab in the middle of the enemy camp?!

We *should* marvel at the longsuffering mercy of God. But at the same time, we have to shake our heads at the stubborn self-destructive sinfulness of his creatures.

I mean think about it, God in the ultimate act of mercy promises to send his only begotten Son to be with His people and he makes good his promise, and his Son goes about healing the sick, raising the dead, and preaching the good news, and what are they doing at this point in the narrative? Plotting to kill Him! It's not only that people generally are trying to kill him, it isn't even the covenant community, God's people are trying to kill him. Worse, It's the leaders of the assembly, the ekklesia, the church that are trying to kill him!

Now Jesus knows this, and he tells a parable which makes clear that He knows, and which warns of the consequences of their actions.

Jesus uses the example of a vineyard and a vineyard owner, the example is not new to scripture. you find it at various place in the Old Testament. For instance in *Isaiah 5:1 Now let me sing to my Well-beloved A song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard On a very fruitful hill.*

2 He dug it up and cleared out its stones, And planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, And also made a winepress in it; So He expected it to bring forth good grapes, But it brought forth wild grapes.

In the parable the vineyard owner is God, the vineyard itself is the visible church. The Westminster Catechism gives us a helpful definition of the visible church and the special privileges it enjoys:

Q62: What is the visible church?

A62: The visible church is a society made up of all such as in all ages and places of the world do profess the true religion,[1] and of their children.[2]

Q63: What are the special privileges of the visible church?

A63: The visible church hath the privilege of being under God's special care and government;[1] of being protected and preserved in all ages, not withstanding the opposition of all enemies;[2] and of enjoying the communion of saints, the ordinary means of salvation,[3] and offers of grace by Christ to all the members of it in the ministry of the gospel, testifying, that whosoever believes in him shall be saved,[4] and excluding none that will come unto him.[5]

Now you would expect that a community that has been so highly favored by God would be extra-grateful, but Jesus in the parable shows that isn't the case.

The tenants of the vineyard, God's people didn't create it, they are in fact sharecroppers, and God has every right to expect an increase from them. What would that consist of? Responding to him and his love with faith and trust, and giving him praise! But instead of giving him that increase they treat Him with contempt. You see that in the OT where God's people were constantly going after false idols, or complaining no matter what God did, he gave them bread, manna in the wilderness, and they complained because it wasn't meat!

So they beat his servants, his true prophets, and the treatment they give to these faithful men becomes worse and worse, the author of Hebrews gives us a kind of summary of their ill-treatment:

Heb. 11:36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented --

It's worth reflecting on what happened to the last prophet who came before Jesus Christ. You remember who that was, don't you? *John the Baptist*. John was executed.

But God is patient, he is longsuffering, and finally, God doesn't send the sharecroppers any more servants to tell them what He desires, this time he Sends His own dear Son, the prince of the kingdom. But they plot to kill him, and in fact in verse 15 Jesus is prophesying his own death.

What do they want? They want the *ekklesia* to be theirs to do with as they wish. You see at heart men want an institution that glorifies not God but man, and that follows our own desires. And we need to remember that that isn't only the problem of the church in the Old Testament, it's the problem of the church in every age. That is one of the reasons why it is so easy for our worship to become nothing more than entertainment. Its not just the Church at the time of Jesus that has this probably, it's the church of today too. Too many churches kill the real Jesus, that is the Christ of scripture, and replace him with a Jesus who is not very God of very God, but simply a man, once we have cast him out, we set about replacing the commands of God with the desires of man.

Brothers and Sisters, it is no surprise that the same "churches" that are endorsing same sex marriage are also the churches that deny the deity of Christ and his miracles. First the Son of God was put to death in their doctrine, and then cast entirely out of the vineyard, and then grabbing at what they saw as "the inheritance", they have sought to remold the church.

But Jesus warns them, just as he warned the leaders of his own time what the consequences of rejecting and killing him are. He says there are two consequences:

- 1) **They will be destroyed** – That destruction has two parts. First there was a destruction that came in time. As a consequence of their rejecting the Messiah, the Jewish nation was destroyed in their rebellion against the Romans. And there is a destruction or *appollumi* that will take place in eternity, here he is warning that if they follow the broad path, they will not only fall in this world, they will be damned in the next.

The Consequences for the church in our time of rejecting Christ are just as severe. The churches who have done so bring down destruction upon themselves, is it any wonder that the liberal churches are dwindling away to nothing?

- 2) **The vineyard will be given to others** – Here Jesus warns that the visible church with all its privileges will pass away from the nation of Israel and be granted to others. We see this in the change of the covenant community from primarily Jewish to primarily gentile. Paul in Romans 11 compares this process to the natural branches of an olive tree being broken off and then wild branches being grafted in.

That statement by Jewish horrifies his listeners, μή γένοιτό they shout. May it never be, God forbid! They are expecting the kingdom promises to be fulfilled, and now Jesus is warning that the Kingdom is about to be taken away from them and given to their enemies. How can this be allowed to happen? Jesus tells them it was prophesied:

***Psalm 118:22 The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone.
23 This was the LORD's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.***

It was prophesied that they would reject Jesus the Messiah and that is exactly what they are doing. Jesus who is and always will be the Cornerstone – why a cornerstone?

He is the Cornerstone, that which determines the lay of the building throughout. He is "the churches one foundation"

Now he warns that this stone will be a stumbling block, a stone placed in the way of the blind that causes them to fall and be injured. But he warns this stone that they reject will grind them to dust. Their rejection of him will seal their doom. The Crazy thing is that this very warning that they cannot reply to – a prophecy that the Messiah would be rejected – causes them to want to kill him all the more!

Applications:

1) Kids: Example of the room and rowdiness, not hearing, then warning, then finally punishment. Patience of your parents is a sign of their love. Do not abuse it. Do not think that because sin is not immediately punished there are no punishments coming. Same with God, he is longsuffering he is merciful. But wrath will follow. Unless you forsake sin and close with Christ, then destruction will follow, you will fall.

Adults: Romans 2:3 And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?

4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

2) God is longsuffering and patient, should we not be as well?

3) We always see the negative, judgment, but do we rejoice any more at the mercy and longsuffering of Christ? Do we grumble?

Psalm 2:12 Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. *Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.*

Have you grown weary of the mercy of God? May it never be!