

Mark 12 1-12 Part 1

¹ Then He began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard and set a hedge around *it*, dug *a place for* the wine vat and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. ² Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that he might receive some of the fruit of the vineyard from the vinedressers. ³ And they took *him* and beat him and sent *him* away empty-handed. ⁴ Again he sent them another servant, and at him they threw stones, wounded *him* in the head, and sent *him* away shamefully treated. ⁵ And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some. ⁶ Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ⁷ But those vinedressers said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' ⁸ So they took him and killed *him* and cast *him* out of the vineyard. ⁹ Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others. ¹⁰ Have you not even read this Scripture: '*The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone.* ¹¹ *This was the LORD'S doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes'?" ¹² And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for they knew He had spoken the parable against them. So they left Him and went away.*

I prepared this sermon at the same time a bunch of you were dedicating your day to working on the new church building. I thought about you and feel an ambivalence, wishing I could be there helping and knowing that this is the role I have been given so I better do it well. But I really appreciate what you folks are doing, even if I can't often be there.

We need to remember that we are reading about Jesus's final week prior to His crucifixion.

Let's take a quick look at Jesus's schedule for this week.

Saturday- Jesus arrives at Bethany and Bethphage and stays the night.

Sunday- Jesus attends the party thrown by Simon the leper. The crowd learns of Christ's presence and they show up to see both Christ and Lazurus.

Monday- The so called triumphal entry

Tuesday- Christ casts the vendors out of the temple

Wednesday- Is where today's text takes place.

Thursday- the disciples prepare for the Passover meal and partake of it with Christ

Friday- Christ was crucified

Before we go to our Mark text, we will take a little side route to see what else is in our context. In fact, we will use **all our time** this week to prepare to preach through our text, Lord willing, next week.

First we will look at another parable that Matthew tells us about. It was spoken at the same time as our parable in Mark. It gives us more insight into what the crowd was experiencing.

This too, was given in the context of Jesus defending His authority.

Matthew 22:1-14

¹ And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: ² "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, ³ and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come.

*Take note that Jesus is telling his listeners that these parables are specifically about the kingdom of heaven. The Jews would have understood this to be about them, God's chosen people. So they would already have a key for how to apply it. Now, a marriage back then was a very big deal. The father of the groom would hold an elaborate party for days on end in celebration of the union of his son and his wife. This is something that everyone would look forward to. There was little about an event like this **not to like**.*

*But when our text tells us this was a party given **by a king**, that moves it to a whole different level. Now it is the **event of all events**. It is the kind of thing that only happens once in a person's life, being invited to a wedding of the king's son. The invitation, itself, would be a great honor. No one would ever think of missing such an event. In fact, they would give their right arm to receive such an invitation.*

*Our story leads us to believe that there were many invited to this event ahead of time. They knew **what it was** and **where it was**. The servants went out to tell everyone **when it was**. **It is now**.*

And what was their response to this wonderful offer. Nah, no thanks. I am busy. Now at this point the crowd listening to Jesus would be flabbergasted. They could not imagine such a response to the king's invitation. For several reasons. First, it was a great honor to be invited. Second it was the party of all parties. And third, it would be a tremendous insult to the father to reject the invitation. So at this point the crowd would have powerfully been involved in the story.

⁴ Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding." '

*The crowd would **now have gotten a point** that we don't get from the story. After having been insulted by the invitees, after they have slapped the king in the face, there is **no king** that would give a second chance. The king in this story is doing something unthinkable. He is extending mercy and grace to his invitees. He is going **way further** than even a common man would do. He is ignoring the insult and offering even a greater appeal for why the people should come.*

He is essentially emphasizing 1) what is in it for the people He invited and 2) the price he has gone to to prepare this feast for them. He is basically saying, the party is ready for you. And I have gone out my way to make it ready. Come.

⁵ But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business.

Look at this. They are invited to the party of all parties, the special of all special. And how do they respond? They make light of it. They act as if it is nothing special, or maybe nothing at all. And what do they choose instead of it. Normal day to day drudgery. Normal day to day existence. Rather than party with the king, they would prefer to merely survive by themselves. They dishonor the message. But that isn't bad enough.

⁶ And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them.

Not only is it bad enough to dishonor the message. Look what they do to the messengers. They seize them, treat them with dishonor and killed them. And what were the messengers guilty of? Inviting people to a party. That is all. They were powerfully conveying the king's wishes that these people attend. That is all.

⁷ But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

The crowd would have expected the king would do this. They only would have thought he would have done it sooner. They would have understood the king's right to do such a thing after his people had dishonored him so intentionally and directly. The king's anger was appropriate. And his retribution was just.

So ends the story of those who have missed out on the greatest of great opportunities. But the story doesn't end here.

It is important that these Jewish people are told what is going to happen to this kingdom going forward.

⁸ Then he (the king) said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. ⁹ Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.' ¹⁰ So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.

It is hard at this point to stick with the story line. It is hard here not break out singing Hallelujah. Here is the point in the story where the gospel comes to us. Us poor dejected, outside the camp, uninvited riff raff. Here comes our invitation.

Oh it matters so little that we were slow to be invited. It matters not at all that we were not worthy of the honor. It doesn't matter that we were not, in any way, qualified to come. It doesn't matter that we bring no honor or worth with us. It doesn't even matter that we had no morality with which to approve ourselves.

Are we getting this?

*The only reason we were invited to the party is that **God wanted to share the glory of His son with someone.** And the most impressive people were not available.*

*And the reason that nothing else matters is because of this- **the magnitude of the party.***

*You see every one of us pathetic believers, every single one of us, is invited to the marriage supper of the lamb. And that party is going to go on for eternity. We so often have to get off our high horse. We so often have to bring our lives into perspective. There is nothing to envy about the wicked. But at the same time, we are **not morally superior** to the wicked. The biggest difference between us and them is that God wanted someone at His party. And the truth is, maybe He is still calling some of them.*

*When we look at each other, we are looking at people who share one thing in common. God chose us to fill a seat he wanted filled. So the same thing that makes **us** special makes **each other** special. We must remember that when we want to draw distinctions to make ourselves somehow superior to another fellow beggar. It is insane, but don't we still do it? We might as well redirect our perspective this morning to what the King says. He wanted people to say yes to His party, he went to the dregs, and we said yes. That is the truth of it.*

The wedding hall is going to be full of guests.

If you are here this morning and don't have a relationship with Christ, if you have never received and accepted the invitation of the gospel, you can do so this morning. You too are invited to this party. You can come to Christ by believing that what He did on the cross He did to pay the penalty for your sin. And you can receive Him, just as you would a king, as the king of your life. If that is something you want, just let me or someone else you know here, and we will tell you more. Don't reject this invitation to this wonderful party.

¹¹ But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. ¹² So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. ¹³ Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' ¹⁴ For many are called, but few are chosen."

What we have here is one who was invited and said no. But now he is trying to enter on his own merit, at his own invitation. He has not arranged it with the king. He has not made a simple mistake. He knew he was doing something wrong. Because he has sought the honor of the king through a method other than being chosen by the King. He is showing as much dishonor to the King as those who refused to come.

The wedding hall is full of guests. But there will be no imposters allowed. There won't be any of the old crowd who said "no" that will be able to sneak in any other way. There won't be anyone there of their own merit. There won't be any there who are entering through any other garment than the white robe of the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

I think Jesus is referring here to the Jewish Judiazers, the ones who would come into the church after Christ's resurrection trying to mix Judiasm with Christianity. They wanted to mix meritorious work and grace. And Christ shows in the party story what they really are and what will happen to them.

As we look at the whole story we see this:

*All who heard the appeal of the king to come to the party were **the called**. But the **chosen** are those who have received the robe of Christ and entered in. So many are called but few are chosen.*

There are so many points to make from this story. But the thing that stands out so starkly is the opportunity. This marriage feast in the parable is really talking about entry into Heaven, into God's kingdom.

It is an amazing invitation. It is astoundingly glorious. It is the most lofty invitation that a human could receive.

And look what the world does with it. It makes fun of it. Yeah, Jesus, right. They make fun of it. They are sarcastically skeptical of Christ and His message and His followers. In some places they kill the ones who preach the gospel. They kill the ones who offer this invitation to come. Yet it is the greatest opportunity that they will ever experience. It is the greatest gift they will ever be offered.

And what do they pick instead? Day to day drudgery. Life without meaning. The opportunity to live and die without hope.

Is that you this morning? Is that the life you are facing? Will you not respond to Christ's call on your life?

*Then, in context, the listeners would have understood that those who were invited to this party were the Jewish people. They would have understood that they were the ones who were given the invitations that rejected them. They were the legitimate invitees. They would have gotten that point. The servants they mocked and killed would have been the prophets. They all knew their rich history of how they treated the prophets. They always loved the prophets, but not until they were dead for an appropriate number of years. Living prophets are pesky things. They will tell you that you need to change. And worse yet, they will tell you **exactly how** you should change and specifically **what is wrong with you**. It is far easier to love dead prophets.*

Now, Mark has written this story like a current action movie. It moves from one scene to the next rapidly.

John, on the other hand focused most of his writing about the final days of Christ. And in that John reveals much greater detail. I think John's writing will help us a lot to understand what both Jesus, the crowd, and the disciples may have been thinking and experiencing.

Let's just read the whole thing. This all happened in what would be "yesterday" in our text. You will find it in

John 12:20-50

²⁰ Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. ²¹ Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." ²² Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus. ²³ But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. ²⁴ Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

*It is very clear that Jesus understands exactly where he stands. He knows He is about to die. And it is likely these Greeks were wanting to get in on Jesus's ride to power. They had likely bought into what the Jews expected Christ to do. That would make what Christ says in response to them make much more sense. He starts by saying what will happen to Himself- to Christ. Jesus says, the hour has come. He is essentially saying this is going to happen **now**. I am going to die. He continues:*

²⁵ He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

This would address the Greeks who wanted to meet Christ, as well as everyone else. What the followers do after His death will display what they really are. The true followers will follow Christ after Christ's death, and quite possibly to their own.

²⁷ "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify Your name."

*Here we see the humanity of Christ. He feels the distress of His situation. He is about to take upon himself the sins of the world. Can you imagine? Think of your own sins that are painful to even think about, to see yourself as you were **doing things that disgrace both God and yourself**. We all have them. And Christ was about to take upon Himself **the load of that from you and me** and every person who will ever come to Him. Of course the human impulse would be to avoid that pain. That is sane. That is logical. But Christ could not take that path because*

that path was God's will for Him. It was His reason for his visit to this planet in humanity's form.

Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified *it* and will glorify *it* again." ²⁹ Therefore the people who stood by and heard *it* said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him."

I am surprised that Mark skipped this in his gospel. We read this and think little of it. But this, just in itself, would have been amazing. These people would have solid reason to believe they are in the presence of God.

³⁰ Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³² And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself." ³³ This He said, signifying by what death He would die.

Jesus is telling these people, probably many of the same ones he addresses in our text this morning, that God Himself is verifying to that crowd the legitimacy of Christ. He is confirming the truth for them.

Then Jesus goes on to talk about the how and why of all the upcoming events. How- by Christ being crucified. These people understood what that meant. Why- to overpower the devil's sin hold on people and to draw people to God through himself.

³⁴ The people answered Him, "We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how *can* You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?"

The people ask an honest relevant question. How can Messiah die if His kingdom reigns forever.

³⁵ Then Jesus said to them, "A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. ³⁶ While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.

Jesus is essentially appealing to these people- believe. While you have me with you, while you have seen what I have done, while you still have a chance, believe. If you don't believe now, you will never believe.

This should be said to anyone here this morning as well. Believe while you have the chance. Pursue Christ while your mind is thinking about Him. Because darkness always encroaches upon the people who do not know God.

³⁷ But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, ³⁸ that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: "Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?" ³⁹ Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: ⁴⁰ "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, Lest they should see with their

eyes, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them."⁴¹ These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him.

These people Christ was calling out to, for the most part, were not going to believe. He appealed to them passionately to believe while they could, but they would not.

*We don't know the spiritual realities that we walk in. We don't know how God's calling is arranged. But we do know that **now is the time to respond**. Today is the day of salvation. Don't end up like the people in this story. Respond now!*

Respond before your heart is hardened and darkness overtakes you.

I am reading this passage because it is important to our text in Mark. This is the state of much of the crowd. They are preparing their paths for what to do when they are disappointed in Christ. And it is not a good preparation.

⁴² Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Look at this. These people knew in their heads that Christ was the Messiah. That is what this is telling us. They reached the right intellectual decision about Christ.

They had the right doctrine. They knew Jesus was Lord. They knew they should do what Christ said. But they wouldn't. Why?

Because they were afraid to lose what they loved most.

They were confronted with the most glorious opportunity to follow Christ. He is right there. They know who He is. But they won't commit for fear of what they would lose. Yet everything they had was sure to be lost anyway. In their case, in AD 70 all would be gone. And if hadn't been for that, death was the sure end that would rip all that they love out of their hand.

What do you love that keeps us from following Christ? What holds you back from following Him and acknowledging Him? What other love is in your way?

We do well to remember Jim Elliot's words here. "He is no fool to give up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

*It appears to me that what Jesus cries out next is directed to the unbelief of the crowd. He is imploring them to believe for the **advantages** of believing and to **avoid the judgment** of disbelief.*

⁴⁴ Then Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. ⁴⁵ And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. ⁴⁶ I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. ⁴⁷ And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. ⁴⁸ He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him--the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. ⁴⁹ For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I

should say and what I should speak.⁵⁰ And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak."

This is Christ's ministry to the crowd. He pulls out all the stops. He holds no punches. He lays the truth straight out. This is their chance.

Now as we go to our text next Sunday we will have a much fuller understanding.

We are prepared for Christ to tell us about a vineyard with some very evil tenants.

In closing I think we need to ask ourselves, do we see our faith like Christ described it? Do we see that we are the most fortunate of all people to be invited and included in this wonderful party? While this was a parable, there actually will be a marriage party of the lamb. It will be a real party and it will be the best party there ever was. Do we see ourselves as blessed beyond belief to be invited?

Well, that is the truth of it.