

Man's response to God's grace

Gospel according to Mark

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Well, we open the Word of God together at Mark chapter 12 and we will read together from verse one to the end of verse 12, but we will be looking particularly at verses two through eight. Mark chapter 12 verses one to the end of verse 12. Let us read the Word of God together.

And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some. Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.¹

So reads the Word of God to us.

This morning we will continue with this parable of the vineyard owner. Last Lord's Day we looked at verse one under the title, "What God had done in his Grace for his People Israel." We broke the verse down into seven parts: the parable, the planting, the

¹ Mark 12:1-12.

protection, the provision, the priority, the privilege and I couldn't find a P for the last one so we had either the word "trust" or "freedom." I have a bit of weakness for alliteration, but there you go. I tried for over an hour to find a P for the last one. So there you go.

If you think of one in the next 10 minutes, I will be extremely jealous. The parable, the planting, the protection, provision, priority, privilege and the trust or the freedom in verse one.

What God had did. God has done so much. He provided everything. There was nothing lacking. Even in the old covenant there was nothing lacking. There was salvation by grace, true faith even in the Old Testament. There was nothing lacking for the people. That is what God had did and we won't repeat our message from last week.

But this morning we want to look at man's wicked response to God's grace. God had done so much. How did these people respond?

I don't know about you, but I often think about the exodus. I think about all the things that God did in delivering his people Israel out of Egypt and that generation almost to man rejected God, forgot God, neglected God. They, in fact, wanted to be back in Egypt. They missed the slavery of Egypt. They desired to be back with their task masters. One of the deceitfulness of sin is that it can appear preferable to us than obeying God. It can appear more desirable to live in the slavery of sin than to follow in the way of holiness.

We will see this morning that often times—and man left to himself always—when God does his best, then man does his worst. Paul's words in Romans two. You needn't turn there. Just two verses. And he says, "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"²

God is good to us. And the reason he is so good to us is to show us the benefits of repentance, to show us that if we repent he will shower—as Malachi says—blessings too numerous for us to deal with.

"But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."³

The foolishness of sin, the foolishness of despising the goodness of God, the foolishness of wanting to live in slavery rather than to live in the liberty of the sons of the God.

Barnes says, "The tendency, the design of the goodness of God is to induce people to repent of their sins and not to lead them to deeper and more aggravated iniquity."

See, one of the problems with modern Antinomianism and the rejection of God's law is that some people teach that the only thing that is important is whether or not I get to

² Romans 2:4.

³ Romans 2:5.

heaven. They seem to forget that God is genuinely interested in how people live, whether they be saved or unsaved. God's law applies to both. God does have a genuine interest in whether people have wrong thoughts. It might become irrelevant to us where in this age, in this church sort of mentality that all that matters is: Is your name on the role.

But that is not all that matters. It matters how we live. It matters how we think. It matters to God. And God is good to man to show him there is a better way. There is better things to be had than the deceitfulness of sin.

Yes, man will plunge deeper and deeper into sin even in the face of the mercy and goodness of God.

Why? Well, it is the depravity of the heart of man, isn't it? It is the biblical doctrine of the depravity of the heart of man. In fact, in the very next chapter of Romans Paul outlines the true state of man in his natural condition. Just quote one verse. Romans 3:11.

"There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God."⁴

There is, in one sentence, defined, the depravity of the heart of man. None understands and none seeketh after God. And so we might say, "Well, hold on. I sought after God. Well, is God lying?"

The Word of God clearly says that no man, not one person that ever lived sought after God. Or do we forget the parables of the gospel where it is the shepherd that goes to seek the sheep. The sheep doesn't find the shepherd. The shepherd finds the sheep. We didn't seek God, did we?

I am here today not because I had the wisdom and the understanding to find God, but because God from before the foundation of the world set his love upon me. If nothing else is instruction to us in the account of Israel and what they did towards God after they were delivered, it shows us this, that the heart of man is totally depraved and unless God does a work of amazing grace in our heart, the man will never change.

Again, if I can quote Barnes on this verse. He says, "The disposition not to seek after God, that is, to neglect and forget him is one of the most decided proofs of depravity. A righteous man counted his highest privilege and honor to know God and to understand his will. And man can indulge in wickedness only," listen to this, "A man can indulge in wickedness only by forgetting God. Hence, a disposition not to seek God is full proof of depravity. God is in none of their thoughts, the Scripture says."

You see, we have to forget God, don't we? We can't be dwelling or meditating upon God and actively committing sin. It is impossible. We, even as believers, we know it, don't we, as believers, when we are committing sin. We just sort of put God to the side and say, "You know, just don't look at me for a moment. I want to think about this sin. I

⁴ Romans 3:11.

want to think about this wrong thing.” And we just excommunicate God out of our mind fort that moment.

Sproul, in his book *Chosen by God*, I read this many years ago and it has never left me. He said, “At the moment we commit sin, we choose to love that sin more than God.” At the moment we choose that sin we say, “God, I reject you. And I commit this sin because I love this sin more than you.”

We like to sort of... we would like it if that wasn't the case, you know? Sort of the modern... you know, the modern philosophy, the modern song. I am torn between two lovers, you know? What nonsense. That is the world's idea. You know, as if I can love equally two at the same time. That is nothing more than self love. That is self love. I want. I want.

You can only truly love one person if you give the whole of yourself to that person.

Turning to our passage this morning, that is just the introduction, but turning to our passage this morning we see not only the reality of man's depravity, but the increasing exposure of it in its despising of God and his people. There is an increase here in the way that they deal with the owner of the vineyard.

We notice in verses two to eight there are at least four sendings, at least four, because in one of them there is numerous sendings mentioned. In the first sending, verse two to three, then second in verse four, the third in verse five and the fourth in verses six to eight and then the final one is the sending of the Son.

So let us briefly this morning consider that the first sending in verse two to three, Mark chapter 12 verse 2:

“And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.”⁵

Matthew in his account says, “And when the time of the fruit drew near...”⁶

The owner of the vineyard had the right to partake of the fruit of his property. It remained his property. Yes, it was given to these husbandmen, these farmers. It was given to them, but he had a sovereign right to partake of its fruit. So he sends his servant to take for him some of the fruit of that vineyard.

Consider he was not looking for anything that he was not due. We were talking about this in the car on the way down. Dave asked a question. That is the problem, you ask me a question on the way down in the car, you are going to be quoted in the message.

⁵ Mark 12:2.

⁶ Matthew 21:34.

But Dave asked me in the car on the way down a question regarding the sabbath day. And one of the things and one of the responses I gave was is that God does give us so many freedoms. He gives us six days and he says, "In those six days we can do so much of what we desire and we can have times for ourselves." That is under the law of God we are given time for ourselves. But that one day in seven, that is God's due. And I admitted to Dave how awfully over the years I have observed and still continue to struggle to observe that.

God only asks us one day in seven. He has given us six out of seven that we can do our work that we can do. We can have our, you know, non sinful pleasures, holy pleasures during that week. But he says, "One day." And that is so hard. We find that we are like these, aren't we? We don't give him what he is due.

It is so easy to look at Israel and see how they fell, isn't it? But we don't give God, I don't give God what he is due.

Compare, if you would like to turn if you can, but if you just want to listen, that's fine. Luke 17 and verse seven.

But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.⁷

Let me say this. I am not trying to discourage you this morning. You are here at public worship. You are not giving something to God that is not your responsibility. It is due God. We owe it to him. We owe it to him to publicly worship him. We owe it to God to worship him in our families. And we owe it to God to worship him in private. All those things we owe as a duty to God. so when we don't do them, we are robbing God. We are taking something from God that he is owed.

How did they respond in verse three of Mark 12? They caught him.

Instead of complying with the proper requirements of the owner, they caught the servant and the beat him and sent him away empty.

Notice it wasn't an oath to refuse. You see, when people reject God they don't just do it in word, do they? They do it in action. All their actions are a denial of God.

So here they take the servant and the words there in the Greek means literally to scourge, to thrash, to flay or to smite. Or, as we have it here, to beat. Not only did he not give

⁷ Luke 17:7-10.

what they should, but they give to the servant what they should never have given, such a treatment.

There is a sense in which here they are giving a clear message to the owner. They are saying like in the parable of the 10 pounds, “ But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.”⁸

That is what they are saying. You think you are the owner? You think you own this? We will show you. We will show you who is in charge. We will show you who is in control.

You know the way people say, don't they sometimes when we are sharing the gospel with them and they in their sinful arrogance say, “Wait till I see God. I have a few things I want to sort him out on.”

What foolishness. The beating of the servant and sending a man, sending to the man or to the owner who represents God.

By the way, back in Romans three we read just the following verse that I read earlier on, verse 12.

“They are together become...”⁹ What? Unprofitable, of no use. That is why, you know, what do you do with something that is unprofitable. You either put it in the bin or the old way was to burn it, wasn't it? Stuff that became useless you burned it.

Back in... I lived in [?] as most of you know there and we had it out in the back yard and we had it, you know, different parts of the garden. But one of the things, back in the day when you were allowed to burn stuff in your back yard and we had sort of the... the [?] where a lot of the rubbish got burnt. It was unprofitable, therefore it was burnt.

And that is why at judgment day there is a place called hell because God has been so good to people. God has been so gracious and merciful. But there comes a time when God says, “There is nothing else to do, but to burn. There is nothing else to do but to hand over these to the place where unprofitable things to, things that are of no use.

On Friday evening Mike read the opening verses of Malachi to us and now everyone is fearful that they are going to be called. Don't you know? Who else is going to be mentioned?

On Friday evening when Mike read the opening verses of Malachi, in that chapter in the verses following, verse six say this. Just listen to these words.

A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say,

⁸ Luke 19:14.

⁹ Romans 3:12.

Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.¹⁰

I wonder if I can employ this this morning in a gracious way. What type of sacrifice do we bring to God? What type of offering do I bring to God? Do I give him the scraps, the leftovers, the lame, the blind? Do I give him the remainder or do I give him the best?

We are called to be living sacrifices. The apostle would say, “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.”¹¹

Someone has said, “Quite often the problem with living sacrifices is that they like to leave the altar.”

It is true. It is said maybe half jesting, but it is so true. We like to leave the altar, don’t we?

Look at what they did to the second servant. Verse four.

“And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled.”¹²

They treat this one... It gets worse, doesn’t it? Not only did they beat this one, but they treat this one like a serious offender, like a murderer or idolater or adulterer. They cast stones at him and they wound him in the head.

This was, indeed, shameful treatment. And they were also, I think, in this they were also saying to anyone else who would follow this master, “This is what you will end up like.”

Isn't that sometimes the way the world treats Christians? You want to follow God? You want to come to me with the gospel? This is the way I will treat you. We don’t know it. We don’t know of... of real trials, of real and suffering for the gospel, but there is many people in the world who do. And what their enemy is saying to them, “This is what it is to be a Christian. You want to be a Christian? Well, then this is what will happen to you.”

John Gill says, “And so as this servant was sent to reckon with these husbandmen and taking account from them of the fruit of the vineyard, one cast a stone at him saying, ‘There is the fruit for you. You want fruit? Here is the fruit I will give you.’ And a second cast another stone saying the same thing. And so they went on one after another

¹⁰ Malachi 1:6-9.

¹¹ 2 Peter 3:11.

¹² Mark 12:4.

till at last they said in a deriding way. ‘Now is the sum made up with you. You have all that we have to give.’”

The third sending, verse five.

“And again he sent another; and him they killed.”¹³

It gets worse.

“...and many others; beating some, and killing some.”¹⁴

Blessed Stephen, the first Christian martyr. They were so filled with hatred when they heard him speaking. What did he speak of? Of the reigning Lord Jesus Christ.

Our brother Dan used to say, “We don’t preach primarily a gentle Jesus meek and mild, but we preach a conquering King and the world will not have that. The world will not have King Jesus.”

Bernard of Clairvaux in the 12th century said these words.

Oh Jesus, King most wonderful,
Thou Conqueror renowned,
Thou sweetness most ineffable,
In whom all joys are found.

When once thou visitest the heart,
Then trust begins to shine,
Then earthly vanities depart,
Then kindles love divine.

Oh, Jesus, light of all below,
Thou fount of life and fire,
Surpassing all the joys we know,
And all we can desire.

Nathanael’s response to Jesus is wonderful, isn’t it?

“Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.”¹⁵

Do we see Jesus this morning as king? Or do we just—I say this reverently—do we just see him as our means to get to heaven? Because that is how so many treat him. So many

¹³ Mark 12:5.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ John 1:49.

people treat Jesus as just a ticket to heaven. Sign on the dotted line. Say the prayer and Jesus will get me in. Or do I see him as my King, my Lord , my Sovereign?

And the reply of the Lord Jesus then to Nathanael.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.¹⁶

But then the fourth sending. The first three the servants, many servants, many prophets.

By the way, it just comes to mind in Hebrews when it comes to the end of that list it says, “Of whom the world was not worthy.”¹⁷

There is a day coming when all God’s servants will be on one side of the judgment and all those who despise God will be on the other side and God’s servants will shine for God with eternal glory. And the wicked who thought they were in control, the wicked who thought they could stand proud before God will stand in all of their ugly nakedness, all of their sins exposed, all their unholy actions revealed for what they are.

But now we come to the fourth sending.

Verse six.

“Having yet therefore one son...”¹⁸

Let me say reverently if I have servants and I sent them to people and they treated them that way I wouldn’t send my son. I say it reverently. But God sent his Son.

“Having yet therefore one son...”¹⁹

One son. Some of us have many children and we wouldn’t send one of them. God had one Son and he sent him. H

“ He sent him also last unto them...”²⁰

That is interesting. Just don’t read over that. See what it says in verse six.

“He sent him also last...”²¹

¹⁶ John 1:50-51.

¹⁷ Hebrews 11:38.

¹⁸ Mark 12:6.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

Do you get that? Mohammed is not sent by God.

“He sent him also last unto them.”²²

There is no other prophet. There is no one else to come. Jesus is the fulness of the revelation of God. And everyone else who comes after him, if they claim to be a prophet are nothing more than liars and thieves, liars because they don't tell the truth and thieves because they rob from the glory of Christ.

Christ is the only begotten. He is the one Son. He is the only begotten of the Father.

John used the term five times. We won't look at the verses, twice in chapter one, twice in chapter three of his gospel and then once in chapter four. Just one of the verses, John one verse 18.

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared [or revealed] him.”²³

This Son, this only begotten hath revealed him.

Now, interestingly enough, the only other time the phrase in the New Testament “only begotten” is used, it is not used of Christ, it is used of Isaac in Hebrews 11 verse 17.

“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son.”²⁴

But at that stage he had, physically speaking, another son. But Isaac was the special one. Isaac was in the covenant promises of God. He was the only begotten. He was the special one. He was the one that God had promised to Abraham and Christ is God's Son, his only Son, the one promised in the covenant of grace.

And the word “well beloved” ἀγαπητος (ag-ap-ay-tos') which means dearly beloved, well beloved, dear to the heart.

Back in chapter nine of the gospel of Mark a number of months ago we considered the mount of transfiguration where our Lord was seen in his glory surrounded by Moses and Elijah, Moses on one said and Elijah on the other. And could you imagine the fear of the apostles? But what was said by the Father? What did the Father say?

“And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.”²⁵

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ John 1:18.

²⁴ Hebrews 11:17.

Compared to the Lord Jesus Christ, Moses and Elijah are nothing. This one, this one. This one that not many days afterwards would be in the middle of two other men, but not in glory, but in humiliation. But on the cross he is no less to be seen, no less. He is not to be compared to any other.

I remember as child watching actors portray these events. I am certainly not recommending that. I have no idea. I remember tears coming down my face watching this event of these actors. But now thank God we look at him and we see him not just as any other man.

The apostle says at one time we saw him from a human point of view, after the flesh, now so no longer. We see him as the King of glory. We do not yet see everything subject to him, but we do see Jesus crowned with glory and honor. We see that. The world does not, but we do.

When we think about the sonship of Jesus compare John's words in 1 John three.

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”²⁶

How can we explain this? How can we explain that we are given the same designation that the Lord Jesus? We are sons with him. We are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

“Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God.”²⁷

Here and now we are God's sons. It means heir. We are God's heirs. And the world doesn't see it.

“It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear [listen to this], when he shall appear, we shall be [what?] like him; for we shall see him as he is.”²⁸

Can I... I think I shared this with Dave as well last week. This answers the holiness movement, doesn't it? We can't be fully like Jesus in this world. Why? Because when we see him we shall be like him. In this world we have to be satisfied with the fact that we will always fall short of his full likeness, of his full appearance. But that time, at that moment, the moment we see him we will perfectly resemble his image.

Why?

²⁵ Mark 9:7.

²⁶ 1 John 3:1.

²⁷ 1 John 3:1-2.

²⁸ 1 John 3:2.

“For we shall see him as he is.”²⁹

But look at the third verse. Don’t forget the third verse.

“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”³⁰

An assurance and confidence of full salvation doesn’t make us unholy. It makes us more holy. To know that one day I will definitely see Jesus face to face and perfectly resemble his image promotes holiness in my life. It is only when I forget that, it is only when I lose sight of that that I stop being holy.

Back in our text.

“But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir.”³¹

“Here is our chance.”

“Let us kill him and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.”³²

We see in these two verses, first of all, their conspiracy.

“But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him,”³³ just like the words of the apostles in chapter four after they had been warned and told not to speak in the name of Jesus and they had been harshly treated. They say, “The kings of the earth...” They quote the psalm.

The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together...³⁴

And when people conspire against God and his son it turns the worst of enemies into friends. Because there is only two sorts of people in this world, those who love Christ and those who are his enemies. That is their conspiracy.

But then their cause. What was their cause?

“The inheritance shall be ours.”³⁵

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ 1 John 3:4.

³¹ Mark 12:7.

³² Mark 12:7-8.

³³ Mark 12:7.

³⁴ Acts 4:26-27.

³⁵ Mark 12:7.

We will get everything.

The hatred of the Jewish leaders wasn't based on truth. It wasn't based upon a real conviction of standing for truth. It was rooted in their wicked and selfish desires. They wanted the preeminence.

As even we said recently in a previous message, even Pilate knew their motives. It says in Mark 15:10, "For he knew [Pilate knew] that the chief priests had delivered him [why?] for envy."³⁶

They envied him. They envied John the Baptist and they envied Christ. They saw the way the people came to him and they envied and they wanted him dead.

Conspiracy, cause and, finally, condemnation.

"And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard."³⁷

Instead of hearing and obeying and worshipping the Son of God they said, "You will not come into our temple anymore. You will not cleanse the temple again. You will not make a public embarrassment of us."

Instead of repenting of their sins they treated him as an unclean thing. This is not and nothing less than their great condemnation.

I don't know about you, but I often read those words, "Left his blood," and I read these words and I sometimes it sends a shiver up my spine. "Let his blood be on our heads and on our children."

What words.

But as we close, consider it is our relationship to Jesus Christ that will determine our eternal destiny. Our relationship to Jesus Christ will determine our eternal destiny.

In the words of the parallel passage in Mathew 21 we read:

Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.³⁸

³⁶ Mark 15:10.

³⁷ Mark 12:8.

³⁸ Matthew 21:42-44.

This morning by God's grace we have an opportunity to fall broken on the stone. We have an opportunity to be broken upon Christ.

“A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”³⁹

It is our relationship to Christ that matters.

As someone said and I had never heard this before recently. I think it was John MacArthur who said people talk about personal relationship to Christ is this and everyone has a personal relationship to Christ. But it might be a bad one. It might be a bad one. We don't enter into it. We all have a God with whom we have to do, every one of us, individually, personally must stand before him on that day.

May the Lord grant that we will this day fall broken on his Son the Lord Jesus.

Let us pray.

³⁹ Psalm 51:17.