

**Message #43****Mark 12:1-12a**

I never was any good at art. I can't draw and I can't paint. But all of us can admire those who can do that. There is a type of art that I was reading about called "In Your Face Art." In fact, there is an art exhibit actually called "In your face Exhibit." As near as I can determine, the point of this kind of art is to force it to jump out at you so that it forces you to look at it. Artists do this with bold colors, bold sketches and drawings on a variety of subjects.

When we come to this text in Scripture, we come to a text in which Jesus uses what we could call an "In your face parable" to force the religious frauds to look straight at Him and straight at truth.

They had just challenged Him concerning His authority so He fires a parable at them that is designed to confront them of their arrogance right to their face.

We may recall that Jesus is in the Temple in Jerusalem and He is being confronted by the chief priests, scribes and elders (Mark 11:27). Their goal is to kill Jesus and Jesus is actually going to let them do that.

What Jesus decides to do is to tell them an in-your-face parable that reveals how despicable these guys really are. Now a parable is an earthly story designed to illustrate a heavenly truth. Jesus had already backed these boys into a corner. They had brought up a question of authority and Jesus had outfoxed them with His answer (11:27-33).

So now Jesus decides to go on the offensive and tell them a parable that they will figure out is aimed straight at them (12:12).

**JESUS TELLS A PARABLE THAT IS DESIGNED TO SHOW THAT THE PHONY JEWISH RELIGIOUS LEADERS HATE, MISTREAT AND KILL GOD'S SERVANTS AND GOD'S SON SO ONE DAY GOD WILL COMPLETELY DESTROY THEM.**

Now this vineyard illustration is one that is very similar to the metaphorical analogy that Isaiah the prophet gave in Isaiah 5. In that illustration the "vineyard" was Israel (Is. 5:7). As we shall see, there is clearly an application we may make from this. Now there are thirteen parts to this parable that we want to see:

The "man" in this parable is God the Father. He is identified as the owner/master/lord (kurios) in **verse 9**. A masculine noun is used, indicating that God is not a woman, He is a man. The vineyard is Israel, a nation He planted in this world. The farmers or vine-growers are the religious leaders, including the chief priests, scribes and elders. Their responsibility was to care for the property and fruit of it until the owner returned.

**PART #1** – A man/owner/master planted a vineyard. **12:1a**

The man owns the land and the man decided to plant a vineyard in the land. He did not just possess this land; he specifically took the time to plant his crop in the land. This shows us that God is not a Deistic God who just created the world and then lets it run by itself. He is very much connected to everything that is happening in His world.

It is clear from what follows that this owner went to great trouble to see to it that his vineyard could become “healthy and productive.” He cleared the land and planted it with choice vines.

**PART #2** – A man/owner/master put a wall around the vineyard. **12:1b**

Walls were not easy to build. They were either built by having a hedge of thorns around the property, kind of like a multi-stranded barbwire fence or they were built by piling stones around the property. When we were in Patmos, there were stone walls that had been built on the sides of hills to protect the livestock. The purpose of the wall is to protect the property.

The man wanted the vineyard protected. The specific job of those caring for this vineyard was to care for and protect all that which was within the wall.

**PART #3** – A man/owner/master dug a vat under the wine press. **12:1c**

Digging wine vats was not easy. This is hard, systematic, first class work. He actually dug out of solid rock two vats. The above vat was where the grapes were crushed and the lower vat was the place where the juice ran through a channel into the vat container. The owner went to great trouble to set up everything necessary in order to succeed in producing fruit.

**PART #4** – A man/owner/master built a tower. **12:1d**

These towers could stand some 15-20 feet high. This watchtower was a lookout tower that enabled an owner to look over his land and also look beyond the borders of the land to spot any enemies. It also became a place of shelter and storage.

The watchers and vine-dressers lived in a tower and would look down on the property. If they saw some approaching predator animal or robber, they would sling stones at them from their high position. This is still a good military strategy. Get as high as you can and look down.

The Devil cult of the Mormons live in the Wasatch Valley in Utah. If you look to the east side of the valley, up on top of the mountain was a military post established to monitor this evil cult. They were able to look down on the Salt Lake City Valley and monitor the Mormons.

**PART #5** – A man/owner/master leased out his property to vine farmers. **12:1e**

Now the owner was going on a journey. The Greek word for “journey” was used to refer to going to another country. This owner was not only going to another country, but to another planet. He was in heaven and He left His property and people into the care of leaders, who were supposed to point the people into the truth of His Word.

Now this was a normal practice in the Mediterranean world. Absentee owners often leased out their land to others. They were responsible to care for it and harvest the crop and pay what was owed on the lease. It is true they could enjoy fruit for their labors, but they were responsible to see to it that the owner’s interests were well-cared for.

The owner was going to be gone for a while and He put his property in the care of supposedly skilled farmers. It was not their property, it was his property.

**PART #6** – A man/owner/master sent His servant to receive some produce at harvest time. **12:2**

When harvest time came, the owner sent his servant to get the harvest that belonged to him. He was owed harvest rent. The lessees were responsible and accountable to pay what they owed.

The owner had great expectations for those caring for His vineyard. He expected them to work and bear fruit. It has been said that it could take about five years to produce a good crop that was marketable.

God expects His people to develop and mature. He expects His people to blossom and bear fruit and He expects leaders to create an environment in which that will happen.

**PART #7** – The servant was taken and beaten and sent away empty-handed. **12:3**

The response to the owner’s servant is “shocking.” Rather than give the owner’s servant what is due, they beat him and sent him away with nothing. That word “beat” means this was a beating and thrashing to the point of flaying and skinning (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 102). This is not just a little shoving; these servants were mutilated.

**PART #8** – The man/owner/master sent another servant and they mistreated him. **12:4**

Again the master sent “another” of the same kind of servant and they wounded him in the head and they treated him shamefully. The wounding on the head speaks of repeatedly striking him on the head. They treated him brutally and with contempt and shame.

**PART #9** – The man/owner/master sent many other servants. **12:5**

They killed one; they beat some and they killed others. There is obviously an ascending escalation of violence against anyone connected to the owner.

This is one amazing verse. If anyone treated those who work for me disrespectfully one time and actually touched them in a dishonorable way, not only would I be in their face, but I would pursue legal action to put that person behind bars.

So one question we must ask when we read this is why this owner would send someone to these evil people time and time again when you know how they will be treated. Why would God do this? There can only be one answer. God continues to reach out to those who have rejected Him multiple times. He gives people multiple opportunities to respond to His grace even when they have treated Him horribly.

**PART #10** – The man/owner/master sent his beloved Son. **12:6**

This time the owner sent someone different than a servant. This time the owner sent His Son. The wording here shows that Jesus is the beloved, only begotten Son of God and this shows the contrast between servants and the Son of God.

Jesus is shaming these religious leaders by saying that His Father thought if I send My own Son, they will respect Him and give Him what is due. That is what they should have done.

That word “respect” can mean to respect and reverence someone by a change of attitude or it can also mean to show remorse or shame for past behavior (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p.157)

Truth is God knew they wouldn't accept His Son. In fact, He clearly said that in Isaiah 53:3. They would despise Him and reject Him.

**PART #11** – The vine growers knew this was the Son and desired to kill Him and take the inheritance. **12:7-8**

Keep in mind that these leaders get it. They know what Jesus is talking about. Look carefully at the facts He brings out:

**(Fact #1)** - They know Jesus is the God-Savior-Messiah-King. **12:7a**

Do you see this—they know who Jesus Christ is?

**(Fact #2)** - They plot to kill Jesus. **12:7b**

They are plotting and planning to kill the Son, knowing who He is.

**(Fact #3)** - They want to kill Jesus so they can keep the inheritance for themselves. **12:7c**

They figure if they kill the Son, the inheritance is all theirs. They can run things. These leaders are not interested in people knowing God's truth, they want to dominate people.

**(Fact #4)** - They did kill him and did not even give him a proper burial. **12:8**

Think of this—they know this is the Son and they would not even give Him a proper burial. This shows the total disregard they had for His Son.

**PART #12** – When the owner himself comes he will destroy the vine-growers and give the vineyard to others. **12:9**

Do not miss two statements here: “He will come!” “He will destroy!”

Martin Luther said, “If I were God and the world had treated me as it treated Him, I would kick the wretched thing to pieces.” But God had another plan first and instead of kicking the world to pieces, He sent His own Son to offer His grace and His salvation from sins. But there will come a time when He will come and He will kick this world to pieces and He will destroy.

Jesus is promising devastating judgment will come specifically to religious leaders who did not point people to Christ. He will come and destroy those who were responsible for the death of His son. Who is responsible now? Our sins.

Now Jesus warned these Jewish religious leaders that He would give His vineyard to another (**v. 9**). Now the big debate is who are the others to whom He will turn over the vineyard?

- 1) Some say it is a reference to the Church.
- 2) Some say it is a reference to the Gentiles.
- 3) Some say it is a reference to the Apostles.

Perhaps it is a reference to all of the above. God’s program did move out to Gentiles through the ministry of the Apostles and churches were formed. For the past 2000 years there has been no fruit production coming from Israel.

**PART #13** – The Scriptures teach that God will establish a cornerstone that will either be accepted or rejected. **12:10-11**

Now the Scriptures to which Jesus is referring is Psalm 118:22-23. Jesus is predicting that one cornerstone will be rejected but it will become a marvelous sight to the eyes of the people of God. That cornerstone is none other than Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:20). This was all predicted to occur. He was rejected by these religious leaders, but those of us who know the Lord realize that Jesus Christ is the most marvelous things our faith eyes have ever seen.

Now the response of these leaders to what Jesus said is in **verse 12**, they were seeking to seize Him. But they feared the people. They knew He was talking about them, but they did not dare lay a hand on Him. So they went away and so did He.

There is One Cornerstone—Jesus Christ. God gives many opportunities for people to accept Jesus Christ. Know this; God will not ignore what happened to His Son. He will not forget about the horrible death He died to save sinners from their sins.

God invites all to come to faith in His Son, but if you refuse you will be eternally destroyed. That is the in-your-face truth Jesus taught in this parable.