

Mark 12:1-12 An Attempted Takeover Falls Ch. PM 7/9/2023

As we have been studying the Gospel of Mark, we have been seeing a growing power struggle between Jesus and the priests, scribes and elders.

With that power struggle growing, our hero Jesus told a story. But it was not a story to soothe them nor was it a story to get a laugh and relieve the tensions. Surprisingly, Jesus suddenly told a story in order to square off and confront them! Up until now, Jesus had carefully avoided confrontation with the priests and scribes. But now, in the wisdom of Jesus, the time had come. These supposed religious leaders were not willing to die for their cause. Jesus was.

So, what story would Jesus tell in order to confront them? The story Jesus told was an old story borrowed from Isaiah. In Isaiah chapter 5, the story was told of a vineyard. But even there, even for Isaiah, it seemed to be a borrowed story.

The earliest we find this story is the garden of Eden. God made a Garden to care for Adam and Adam to care for the Garden. Adam had an attempted takeover.

The Isaiah 5 story. God made a vineyard to care for Israel, and Israel to care for the vineyard. Isaiah seemed surprised at how bad the grapes turned out, despite how good was the care of God.

Fast forward to Mark chapter 12. Jesus told a parable. God made a vineyard to produce fruit for His vine-growers, and asked His vine-growers to produce fruit for the vineyard. It was an attempted takeover. So, that brings us to the main point of this sermon, which is: **Jesus taught a story of an attempted takeover by vine-growers in order to reveal that we are either for or against Him.**

1. God has patiently provided well for His vineyard; He sent us many gifts and faithful messengers, expecting good fruit from us. (v.1-5)

In verse 1, the parable of Jesus is clear. A man created a vineyard. The vineyard was the first gift. There were many gifts along with it. A fence, a necessary deep pit for the winepress, a tower, and permission to use it all for a fair leasing price to vine-growers. The man we now know as the owner of the vineyard then went away – even traveling to another country, showing the gift of trust.

The owner showed generosity, thoughtfulness, provision, patience, and trust.

Verse 2, the patient owner expected one thing. Fruit. From grape vines, he expected grapes. From well-stocked supplies of a well-furnished vineyard, one might expect a lot of grapes. Perhaps some of the grapes would come in the form of wine, so that it could be delivered to the traveling owner in another country.

Verse 3 is the first indication for the patient owner that something was wrong. It is shocking that the vine-growers take his servant, and beat him, and send him away empty-handed. What does empty-handed mean? Without fruit. Nothing to show for all of the investment that the owner had made in the vineyard, fence, tower, pit, and the assigned vine-growers.

Verse 4 contains more indications that something was wrong. This time, after the patient owner sent another servant to the vine-growers, they struck him on the head, and treated him shamefully. Worse than empty-handed. Shame and loss!

Verse 5, the patient owner sent another servant to the vine-growers. What did they do to him? *“him they killed.”* The story just got ramped up. Let me read Mark 6:27-28, where Herod killed John the Baptist, and we read *“the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison and brought his head on a platter...”* John the Baptist was not the first one that they killed. A pattern emerges - the patient owner sends servant after servant to the vineyard, while the vine-growers had an equally long pattern of mistreatment. Verse 5, *“...he sent another, and him they killed. And so with many others: some they beat, and some they killed.”*

There was a long history of God's prophets being disrespected and killed. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Micah, Amos, and most recently, John the Baptist, whose mission from God Jesus had just defended in 11:29-33. John's Baptism was a baptism from heaven. John's preaching was a preaching of repentance. Was there true repentance? Not on the part of Herod! God sent prophets. No fruit.

There was a long pattern of lack of repentance, lack of spiritual fruit from the prophets that God had sent as messengers with the gift of the Word of God!

All along, what God had been patiently cultivating was repentance. Where is the fruit from all of God's generosity, thoughtfulness, provision, patience, and trust. Romans 2:4, *“do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?”*

2. God's well-loved Son was sent, was rejected, then was vindicated. (v.6-10)

Verse 6, the owner had one other type of servant that he had not yet sent. The owner still had his own son, his son whom he loved. He had not yet tried sending His son. Verse 6, *“...Finally [the owner] sent [his son] to [the vine-growers], saying, ‘They will respect my son.’”*

There is no one greater that the owner could send than his own son. Will he really send His son? The surprising answer is yes. The pattern of patience is a greater pattern of patience than we even thought.

Did those vine-growers respect the owner's son? No, and verse 7 provides us their internal conversation. The vine-growers *“...said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’”*

That is the beginning of attempted hostile takeover. It first takes place in hearts and in conversations. What was the resulting action? That action came out of their hearts. Verse 8, *“and [the vine-growers] took [the owner's son] and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.”* There was no fruit. They disrespected the owner by killing his son, and they did not even have basic decency to properly dispose of the body.

Verse 9, Jesus asked the priests, scribes, and elders this question regarding the story, “*What will the owner of the vineyard do?*” Everyone knows. The owner of the vineyard is under full-on assault. He has experienced a loss of his son and other servants. He must take action now, or the owner of the vineyard is no longer the owner of the vineyard!

But there is one thing that the vine-growers seem to have forgotten. The vineyard belongs to the owner. The owner is patient, but the owner is not about to lose the vineyard. The owner is still intent on harvesting fruit from His vineyard.

The final action of the parable is the action of the owner, and that is what brings the story to completion. The owner who has formerly gone into another country, after his son was killed and his son’s body dumped, will respond. As our Lord Jesus tells the story, it goes like this, the owner “...*will come and destroy the [vine-growers] and give the vineyard to others.*”

Stop and imagine the scene. Ever since the owner left the country, these vine-growers had really settled into the vineyard. They had dispatched each of the servants, and there were many. They beat and killed them all. When the son came, they took murderous action with pre-meditation, with the greedy intent to inherit the entire vineyard as a result. But with what horror they must have looked up one day to see the owner arrive at the vineyard, heavily armed. If it were a movie, this is the point when the screen goes black. These words appear on the screen: He destroyed them all. He did not destroy the vineyard. He did not allow them to destroy His vineyard, for it is His! Instead, the vineyard was removed from the care of evil vine-growers, and was restored to the care of vine-growers who care for the vineyard according to the instructions of the owner, and for fruit to be produced for the owner.

There is one large warning that comes out of the parable, and it is tucked within the word “attempted.” Don’t mess with the owner! All you will succeed in created is an attempted takeover. This is a worldwide message to anyone who would try to do damage to the church of Jesus Christ. It might seem like the church sits vulnerable and unprotected, and easy pickings for the evil planning of unscrupulous and greedy people. It seems like they could easily take over the church. But that will never happen. This is a parable about the Lord, and His ownership of His church! Everyone and anyone who has interactions with the Lord’s people, has to answer to the Lord Himself! Be warned.

This points us to the cross of Christ! Jesus taught the cross, before the crucifixion even happened. After finishing this parable, now Jesus asked these religious leaders whether or not they had read a certain sentence from the Bible! Verse 10, “*Have you not read this Scripture: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone...’*”

Jesus is the Son of God who was being rejected, and would soon be severely rejected.

Jesus is the stone of the building that God was working on, and Jesus was being rejected by the priests, scribes, and elders. They were supposed to be building up the Kingdom of God, but instead they rejected the Son of God, who was the most central, the most significant, and the most crucial piece of the construction of a building for God a movement for God. They could try to do away with the Son of God, but all that would result would be that they will be discarded themselves.

Jesus will not be unseated from His own Churches. If a church ceases to honor Jesus Christ, then it ceases to be a church of Jesus Christ. They cannot steal the glory of Christ in the church. Christ gets all the credit and glory and attention for having grown grapes for the vineyard, and converts for His worship and service. There is no vine-grower who can push Jesus aside and takeover the church. There is no elder or minister who can succeed in an attempted takeover. The church belongs to God, and God will protect His church. God will protect His church fiercely!

Don't mess with the owner of the church!

1 Corinthians 3:10, *“According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder, I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”*

1 Corinthians 3:17, *“If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him.”*

3. If we won't receive God's Son/messengers, we are fighting God. (v.11-12)

The vine-growers made a big mistake. Since the owner was gone, they thought that they could gain something by this bloody method. But they did not gain control of the vineyard.

Verse 11, Jesus Himself quoted the following verse - Psalm 118:23, *“...this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.”*

God was not stunned by the rejection of Jesus. This is what God the Father had planned all along, and we know that because of Psalm 118. The parable of Jesus emphasized the rejection of the Son. This ancient prophecy from Psalm 118 showed that God the Father had planned that the rejection and killing of the Son would happen and then would be reversed! Psalm 118 prophesied the resurrection of Christ! What is marvelous in our eyes? The resurrection! What was the Lord's doing? The resurrection, and how it vindicated Jesus. This is how the parable is properly understood.

Let's go back to the parable's statement by the owner, when he said, *“They will respect my son,”* we at first assume that as saying that they should respect My

Son. But God was saying it with authority “*They will respect my son.*” Before this is over, my son will get the respect that He deserves, and anyone who does not respect my Son, will answer to Me.

Verse 12, the scribes and priests, “...*were seeking to arrest [Jesus] but feared the people, for they perceived that He had told the parable against them. So the left Him and went away.*”

The story of Jesus really got to the priests and scribes! It touched their consciences! They knew that the story was about them! This is fascinating, because not all of the parables of Jesus were understood by the listeners! On this day, they understood the parable, were impacted by the parable, but they still did not repent.

Jesus had come into the temple seeking the fruit of prophetic ministry, which is repentance. This moment had been predicted for generations – the moment when God would finally send His Messiah. But the people rejected the constant calls from the long line of prophets to turn to God and repent.

Jesus was standing right in front of those who want to kill him, the priests, scribes, and elders, and Jesus is saying that even after they do kill Jesus, that Jesus will still be the cornerstone, still be the head of His church.

Everything hinges on Jesus. Are we following Jesus? Look at the generous heart of Jesus in Matthew 23:37, “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!*”

Conclusion:

1) Repent. How do we respond to the messengers that God sends? Do we welcome them, or do we seek to silence the voice of God in them? The lesson of the parable is not to be confined to the bad religious leaders to whom Jesus was talking that day. It applies to all of us tonight. If God did this to his own priests, scribes and elders, because they hardened their hearts, will God spare us, if we show the same hardness of heart? The application to us is to repent. All the prophets have been saying to repent, and now the Son of God is saying to repent. As Jesus said all the way back at the start of this book - Mark 1:15, “*the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.*” Repent of your attempted takeover of your own life. You were trying to run your own life, instead of having Christ run your life. Repent! Think of how this passage teaches this so clearly. When Jesus exposed these wicked men, two different reactions were possible. A and B. A) they could see themselves as they really are, repent from their sin, and turn to the Lord, trusting Him alone to grant forgiveness and healing. Or the other possible reaction is B) they could harden their hearts against the one who exposed them, namely Jesus, and they could let anger of heart turn to bitterness of heart,

and then resolve to get rid of him. Option B is what happened to the vine-growers in our story. Option B is what happened to the priests and scribes. In the end, the vineyard was given to others. In the end, the ministry of God was taken away from these priests and scribes, and it was given to others. Why? Because the priests and scribes could understand that the teaching of Jesus was about them, but they refused to repent. The clear application of this passage to us is to repent. When the word of Christ is teaching you how you have sinned against God, I plead with you to repent.

2) Be thankful that Christ has built you into His spiritual vineyard, His spiritual temple His Church. Let's consider the apostle Peter. Peter had times of stubbornness and refusal to repent. Peter denied Jesus 3 times and Peter was rejected, and it was looking really bad. But then Christ restored Peter. Christ changed Peter's heart and granted him the gift of repentance. All we can say about post-repentance Peter, is that he was thankful. So, look at the pathway of Peter, the ark of Peter's path - Peter, whose name means rock, was rejected, and then brought back in. That is the same arc, the same pathway of Christ himself. Rejected, then brought back in. Listen to Peter give us wise advice tonight. Besides repenting, the other application is being thankful. I close with these words from Peter, which are also the words of God in 1 Peter 2:4-5, "*As you come to Him [Christ], a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*" 1 Peter 2:4-5. Be thankful that Christ has built you into His spiritual temple.