

Mark 12: 1-12; “This is the Heir”, Sermon # 93 in the series –
“Astonished at His Teaching”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on
August 21st, 2011, In the Afternoon Worship Service.

The setting of this episode in the life of our Lord, is the temple. Our Lord Jesus was walking in the temple and was confronted by this group of men who were the religious rulers of Israel. He was therefore speaking this parable, not to His own disciples, but to these chief priests, the scribes, and the elders who had come there to confront Him. They had come to Him, asking Him by what authority it was, that He had cast out the moneychangers and turned over their tables and the seats of those who sold doves. Just two days before this He had ridden into Jerusalem on the colt, the foal of a donkey, and multitudes were shouting “Hosanna!” “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” These religious leaders of Israel had no doubt heard about these things, and perhaps even saw Him riding in triumph themselves; and they were indignant. Jesus was not submitting to their religious authority. He was going ahead and doing things which were upsetting their man-made religious rules and expectations. They thought that they were the true leaders in Israel, but really, they were false. They expected the Lord Jesus to be someone who should bow to their religious authority and submit to their false system of interpreting the Scriptures and leading the people by their own self-devised system of authority, and not the authority of God. This is why they said to Him in the passage just before this in Mark 11: 28 – “By what authority are you doing these things?” “And who gave You this authority?” They did not believe that Jesus had authority to do these things. But Jesus’ authority came from His Father; from God. Being the Son of God, He had ample authority in Himself to do all that He was doing. But we find that the Lord Jesus submitted Himself perfectly to His Father, and did nothing on His own initiative. In John 12: 49 Jesus says, “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.” “And I know that His command is everlasting life.” “Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.”

Here in our text, it says, “He began to speak to them in parables”. You say, “I only find one parable here; not more than one.” Yes, that is true, but in Matthew’s gospel, in Chapter 21, you will find that Jesus told these same men the parable of the two sons, and the parable of the marriage of the king’s son. All these parables were spoken at the same time, but only this one is recorded in Mark. The parables which Jesus spoke to His disciples and to the multitudes usually depicted the truth of the kingdom of heaven, and how some enter it, and others do not. Those parables are meant to reveal the truth to those persons who had ears to hear. This parable, and the others I mentioned a minute ago, do the same thing, but they are a grave warning to the leaders of Israel of what would most certainly come to them, and to their nation, if they did not repent. Indeed we can go further than

this, and say that this parable is a prophecy in historic and parabolic form of what would most certainly come to the nation of Israel and her leaders because of their rejection of the prophets and Christ Himself. He could have told them these things plainly, but He spoke to them in parables so that His purpose would be fulfilled; to lay down His life at the specific time which the Father wanted; at the time of Passover, so that He would fulfill the Scripture in every respect. There are a number of things that we can learn about God; about wicked men; and about ourselves in relation to God, from this parable. First; this afternoon, we want to think about the goodness and kindness of God toward Israel and us. Second, we want to think about the stubborn insolence of wicked religious men toward the prophets and Christ. And lastly, we want to think about God's and Christ's marvelous triumph over them.

1st of all – We want to think about the goodness and love of God toward Israel and us.

Verse 1 says, “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.” The man who planted the vineyard represents God the Father in this parable. The Vinedressers are the leaders in Israel down through their various generations in its history. God was the One who plants nations, and He intended that in His planting of the nation of Israel, that they were going to be His special people. Deuteronomy Chapter 7, and verse 6 says, “For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.” Jesus says that God the Father leased the vineyard to vinedressers. The leasing to the vinedressers, is God's giving authority to the leaders in Israel to lead, to teach, and to build in righteousness; a nation to God's glory. And His “going into a far country” means that there would be a long time of God's not seeming to take notice of the vinedresser's work, but His waiting in terms of His coming to seek for fruit and His final evaluation of them. All this was all of God's goodness; with Israel and it is His goodness with ourselves as individuals and as a nation as well. Let us apply this way to ourselves. All that God gives to individuals and all that He gives to a nation, in His goodness, is on lease from Him. He “rents” it to us, as it were. He gives everything that we need to work with, for His glory. He blesses us with many blessings and shows us His goodness, and He expects a return for what He gives us. If you, or the nation that you live in, have been given great privileges in terms of the blessings of truth and material advantages; He expects that you will give Him a return; “some of the fruit of the vineyard.” This is only reasonable. The Lord is full of goodness. Because He has given the United States of America both the truth of His Word and great material privileges, He expects to see our trying hard to live righteous lives before Him.

He is the One who has put a hedge around us by His giving us many good things; a Constitution and good system of political government; freedom of

religion; His Word and many Bible-believing churches to worship in. And He has shown us His protective care and provision for some hundreds of years now. But He also expects that He will receive a return. And we can say from this parable that there are some times where God comes and focuses on us. He is looking for fruit. And when He comes, He can surely tell whether we have been really trying to do His good will and bring forth fruit to Him. The fruits will be there for us to show Him. All the fruits of righteousness come through our Lord Jesus Christ. It says so in Philippians Chapter 1, and verses 9-11. “And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” We need to ask ourselves now; whether we are a Christian or a Christian leader; if this is the way that we are praying for ourselves and for one another? God has dug a place for the wine vat. It is the place where He expects to see the fruit of righteousness. It is first of all in your heart where the grapes are pressed and the juice is to be seen, and then the juice of the grape is to be seen flowing out of your heart and into the actions of your life. Are you trying to make your life a good tree? Matthew 12, verse 33 – “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit.” Let us understand that God is good in all that He gives, and let us determine to make our tree good by the grace of Christ.

2ndly - We want to think about the stubborn insolence of wicked religious men and the patience of God.

Verse 2 says, “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.” “And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed.” Again he sent them another servant, and at him they threw stones, wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully treated.” “And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some.” The servant (singular) is representative of a numbers of servants sent by God. Matthew’s gospel confirms this by mentioning them as “servants”. You now understand that the vineyard that is here being spoken of in this parable is the nation of Israel. And you can see from the way that Jesus told the parable that there was not simply a problem with the religious leaders of Israel in His own generation; there had been a problem at many points; down through many generations, ever since the times of the Divided Kingdom after Solomon. This proves the patience of God. You can see this clearly if you will turn with me over Isaiah Chapter 5. “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.” “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.” “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge

please, between Me and My vineyard.” “What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it?” “Why then, when I expected it to bring forth grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?” “And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard; I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; and break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.” “I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned or dug, but there shall come up briars and thorns.” “I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain on it.” “For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant.” “He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold, a cry for help.” What more could God have done? He set a hedge around Israel, it says here. He made them separate and distinct from other peoples by bringing them out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, and planting them in their own land; a land flowing with milk and honey. He gave them His commandments in the moral and ceremonial law. He gave them civil statutes and a government both spiritual and civil. He gave them all the means to become great and to bear fruit unto Himself. For all of this goodness that he showed them, He only expected what was reasonable; that they would give Him some the fruit of the vineyard, some of the fruit at the vintage time. This they did not do; instead, they brought forth wild grapes. If good grapes are the fruits of righteousness; wild grapes must be the sinful inedible fruits of unrighteousness. God could take no pleasure in them. It means that they fell into idolatry (the false worship of other gods) and they fell into many other sins as a result. Immorality, oppression of other people, unkind and unloving attitudes and sinfully selfish actions characterized them at many points in their history.

So God would take away their protection from them, and allow the Chaldeans and the Babylonians to come in and destroy and burn the temple and break down the walls of the city of Jerusalem. In Isaiah 5, the prophet is describing the destruction of the 1st temple and the judgments which surrounded that. In this parable Christ recounts the history of Israel’s rejection of the Word of the prophets sent to them by God, leading up to that time in which He spoke, where He relates that these insolent, wicked men would reject Him. I believe that Christ, as the Son of God, and 2nd person of the Divine Trinity, could remember exactly the incidents of abuse and murder that took place. I will reference two of them; these going along with the description given in the parable. 2 Chronicles 24: 17 – “Now after the death of Jehoiada, the leaders of Judah came and bowed down to the king.” “And the king listened to them.” “Therefore they left the house of the Lord God of their fathers, and served wooden images and idols; and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem because of their trespass.” “Yet He sent prophets to them, to bring them back to the Lord; and they testified against them, but they would not listen.” “Then the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, who stood above the people, and said to them, “Thus says God: ‘Why do you transgress the commandments of the Lord, so that you cannot prosper?’” “Because

you have forsaken the Lord, He also has forsaken you.” “So they conspired against him, and at the command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the Lord.” “Thus Joash the king did not remember the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but he killed his son; and as he died, he said, ‘The Lord look on it, and repay!’” And turn over also to 2 Chronicles Chapter 36, verse 14 –“Moreover all the leaders of the priests and the people transgressed more and more, according to all the abominations of the nations, and defiled the house of the Lord which He had consecrated in Jerusalem.” “And the Lord God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His dwelling place.” “But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy.” To me, what is remarkable about these verses is the great patience of God in relation to dealing with wicked men. He strove with these sinners; speaking to them by His servants the prophets until there could be found “no remedy” it says here. Let us understand that insolent wicked men do try the patience of God. In fact anyone who despises the goodness of God to them and who will not repent of their sins, tries the patience of God. But God will have his way with all men. In Romans Chapter 2, verse 4, the Apostle Paul says, “Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” “But in accordance with your hardness of heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds...” To apply this; there is a time element involved in God’s patience. He will give time, but He will make sure that the believer truly wants to repent of all of his sins. Don’t test the patience of God. Keep short accounts with Him. Learn, by His grace to mourn over your remaining corruption. Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Then, finally, we want to think about God’s and Christ’s marvelous triumph over this wicked opposition. (Verses 6-12)

“Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’” “But those vinedressers said among themselves, ‘This is the heir.’” “Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.” “So they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard.” “Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do?” “He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others.” “Have you not even read this Scripture: ‘The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.’” “This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?” “And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for they knew that He had spoken the parable against them.” “So they left Him and went away.” The triumph of Christ, here, over His enemies, was complete. He had been enabled to tell His greatest enemies, who should have been His greatest friends, that He had

been sent from God; that they were guilty of disrespecting Him; that He knew that they knew that they understood Him to be the Heir; the true Messiah, but still hated Him, and intended to kill Him so that the inheritance; the religious leadership of the nation would be still be theirs. What they did not understand and could not reckon with; was His willingness to go to the cross, and His resurrection. And He even told them of this, in parabolic and prophetic form. “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.” “This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.” He told them that His resurrection would secure His having the inheritance of the leadership of the true Israel of God. He even related this in such a way that they understood that He was speaking the parable against them. What a complete triumph over His enemies! Let me close by asking if Christ’s triumph is marvelous in your eyes? Is it not marvelous that the worst that men could do to Christ, only ended in His complete triumph over them? And will it not be so, also, with us? Since we are trusting in Him we shall indeed have the victory over all of our earthly and spiritual enemies through us. Let us rejoice and be glad that no matter what may happen to us in this life, that God will always lead us in triumph in Christ. Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!