

True Fiction: Murder Vineyard

Matthew 21:33

Why Parables?: Parables conceal things from those too proud to listen, reveal things to those who are humble enough to receive, fulfill prophesy in some cases, bring about deeper thoughts, and make things memorable.

Another way to look at it is that some things are too complex for your current conscious thought because your presuppositions will stop you from getting it. Thus, those who are proud will have things concealed from them. Many have barriers to ideas...even if they are good ideas. With a parable, your mind has to unpack the story in order to understand it. While you unpack it, you change how you think about the subject. Most of Jesus' parables, you won't get until you first change how you think about the given subject and change how you view the subject. Many parables cannot be understood until your thinking is changed. And when you finally get it, oftentimes you realize that you're on the wrong side of the story. Today's parable is one of those.

Read Matthew 21:33: Jesus was talking to the Pharisees. At the beginning of the parable, they didn't understand what Jesus was on about or who He was talking about. However, they did understand in the end.

The meaning to the Pharisees: The land owner was God and the vineyard was creation. The fruit was the result of the work. There was bad fruit for selfish action and good fruit for obedience to the law of God which stated: look after the poor, the widow, and those who are far from home.

The servants/slaves are the prophets who came before to claim the fruit of the vineyard. These were the ones killed by the attendees of the creation.

The farmers that tended the creation and killed the prophets, were the priests and teachers of the law. The priests and teachers of the law served God in the office of bringing about the good fruit that God sought out of His creation. But rather than fulfill the plan of God and assist in his rescue of the Earth, they sided with human kings.

The History: After leaving Egypt, the priests led the people in their pursuit of God. Over time, Israel instituted a kingship, and the kings started doing king 'things'. There were wars and infighting for the throne. There was a civil war and the split of the kingdom. There were wars against innocent people and alliances made with nations that hated God. There were atrocities and human sacrifice on high places and low places for crop growth and stuff. There was a new push for military and political might.

The nation was trying to make its own strength. Do you know who doesn't have the strength to contribute? The poor, the widow, and the foreigner. As a result, the needy were not only neglected but were persecuted.

God wanted His nation to rely on Him for strength and security such that they had all their time and energy to be kind and to trust His plan to make the world better by obeying His laws of mercy.

Where were the priests (farmers) while the monarchy was doing these things and getting away from God? They were siding with the kings in all their political decisions in exchange for comfort and influence.

So when they failed, what did God do? He sent prophets. The prophets convicted them of their evil and foretold the coming of the owner's son, Jesus. So the priests persecuted the prophets.

For example: Elijah was persecuted by King Ahab and Queen Jezebel after challenging the prophets of Baal. Jeremiah was mocked, beaten, and imprisoned for proclaiming God's judgment on Judah. Zechariah was stoned to death by order of King Joash. Isaiah was traditionally believed to have been @!#\$%^&* by King Manasseh. And for what?

Read Isaiah 1:16-17 and Zechariah 7:8-12.

So we can see the priesthood opposed God's ministers. The Guides have become the opposition and accusers. They accused and opposed the prophets as well as the Son. The Hebrew word for Opposer/Accuser/Prosecutor is Satan.

The decision of the farmers to OPPOSE the son is what decided the matter. It was the deciding factor. It was the cornerstone. If they accepted the Son, the cornerstone would be solid to build upon. If they rejected the son as a satan, the cornerstone would crush them. How they treated Jesus determined which fate.

How they treated Jesus was the cornerstone. The decision to accept Jesus would be a starting point to build the new creation. The decision to reject Jesus would condemn them. So it is with all of us. We all have this decision. We all have this cornerstone.

Thus, the responsibility of the creation was being removed from them by Jesus and handed over to fishermen, Samaritans, and Gentiles because they were willing to listen.

So Jesus concealed that he was referring to the Priests until it was too late. He revealed to everyone not only how the Priests failed at their job and what God actually wants from His creation, but he also revealed that Jesus Himself is the salvation. He brought about deeper thought in how we view God, ourselves, and creation. He fulfilled prophecy by establishing himself as the cornerstone. (see Psalm 118)

Greater Meaning: Rejection is the only sin that can do you in. When did the land owner decide he was done with the evil farmers? It wasn't when they rejected the servants, but when they rejected the heir.

This is an uncomfortable subject. We discussed this acceptance a few weeks back and used a long sentence to explain salvation. *You are reconciled to God and His standard by God showing you mercy that you don't deserve because you gave Him the opportunity to show said mercy by trusting in His love and good intentions toward you because of the things He's done for you.*

Namely, it is trusting that Jesus was God incarnate expressly for the purpose of demonstrating:

- How He loves you
- How you should love others
- How you should trust Him for your wellbeing rather than live in fear constantly hoarding resources.

In other words, just accepting who He is, what He did, and trusting Him to forgive you. That's it. This is the start of tending the vineyard. This is what will bring about the good fruit in our world.

But what happens if you reject the son? What happens if you reject the heir? What if you don't use the vineyard as the owner intends? What happens when you throw the messengers out and raise the fruit of your own prosperity rather than mercy?

- Answer 1: the owner of the vineyard will take it away from you and give it to someone who can bring about mercy. You lose your place as a steward of creation
- Answer 2: the owner of the vineyard will deal with you "harshly". "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end"

Will God release people that only seek to take for themselves upon his New Creation? Will wretched people be allowed to ruin it for everyone else? No. That would spoil everything all over again. This would be an eternal curse, even for the wretches, to make us immortal as we are now. Those who do not accept the son will have their titles taken away and then they will be, at the very least, left-out. And if you're not in the creation, where are you left out to? I'll let you fill in the blanks.

It's hard to believe. But there are people obstinate enough to never stop seeking their own benefit. People who will never trust God to provide. People that are broken enough that they insist on only tending the vineyard their way, for themselves...heralds of destruction that God will not allow forever.

Reflection Questions:

- Which side are you on?
- Have you accepted God's forgiveness?
- Have you accepted what Jesus did for you?
- Are you willing to let go of your perceived control and trust God to take care of you?
- Are you going to obey in your treatment of others?
- Or will you be left-out?