THE LORD OF THE VINEYARD

Mark 12:1-12

As we come to chapter 12 of Mark, let's take a moment and remember what has happened so far since the beginning of chapter 11. The events in these chapters take place during our Lord's passion week. Jesus is in Jerusalem for the Passover feast. He has repeatedly told His disciples that here He will be rejected, betrayed, arrested, tried, and executed.

On Sunday Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem to the cheers and praises of the crowd. The next day Jesus had gone into the Temple and created quite a mess. Jesus had cleared out the Temple, casting out the people who were profaning the House of God by buying and selling in its courts, 11:15-17. This event had caused the religious leaders, who profited greatly from the business that was conducted in the Temple, to look for a way to destroy Jesus, 11:18.

Now, a day later, Jesus is back in the Temple and these men see their chance to discredit Jesus. Apparently, they have regained some of their composure, and they approach Jesus in Mark 11:27-33 and demand to know why He is doing the things He does, vv. 27-28. They ask Him, "**By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?**" It is a clear attempt to discredit Jesus in the eyes of the people of Israel.

Jesus is not about to be trapped and He turns the tables on these men. He asks them a simple question concerning John the Baptist. All they have to do is tell Jesus what authority John operated under and He will tell them by what authority He does what He does, vv. 29-30.

Jesus knew what authority John had operated under. Jesus operated under the same power: the power of God! But, Jesus also knew that these men would never admit that.

These religious leaders clearly demonstrate their hypocrisy by seeking an answer that made them look good. If they said that John was sent from God, then Jesus would expose their hypocrisy, because they had rejected the message and ministry of John. If they said that John was operating under his own power, they would lose face with the people, because the majority of Israelites believed that John was a true prophet sent from God, vv. 31-32.

Instead of taking a stand, these men chose to say that they do not know, v. 33a. When they refuse to answer, Jesus also refused to answer them, v. 33b.

Jesus could have allowed the matter to die right there, but He used the opportunity to expose the religious leaders for the hypocrites they were. In the parable that follows, Jesus really answers their question. And in this parable He not only exposes the sinfulness of the religious Jews, but He also exalts the majesty of Almighty God.

Instead of focusing on the negative attitude of the Jews, I want to concentrate on the picture of God in this parable. Today's lesson is ***The Lord Of The Vineyard***. As I do, I want you to see ***His Goodness***, ***His Grace*** and ***His Glory***, as they are revealed in this parable. The main truth I want to drive home today is this: ***Those who reject the grace of God will eventually face the wrath of God***. With that in mind, let's notice the ways ***The Lord Of The Vineyard*** is revealed in this parable.

1 Then He began to speak to them in parables: "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.

2 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.

3 And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed.

4 Again he sent them another servant, and at him they threw stones, wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully treated.

5 And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some.

6 Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, 'They will respect my son.'

7 But those vinedressers said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.'

8 So they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard.

9 Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others.

10 Have you not even read this Scripture: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone.

11 This was the Lord's doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes'?" , Psalms 118:23

12 And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for they knew He had spoken the parable against them. So they left Him and went away.

I. THE LORD OF THE VINEYARD AND HIS <u>GOODNESS</u> v. 1

Verse one describes a man who planted a vineyard. He built a hedge around that vineyard to keep wild animals out. He dug a wine vat, or a depression, to collect the juice that would be harvested from the grapes grown in the vineyard. He built a tower so that a watchman might keep a diligent eye on the vineyard so that it would be protected. He placed his vineyard in the hands of men assigned to farm it, then he left it in their care.

Verse one is almost a direct quotation of Isaiah 5:1-2. In Isaiah 5:1-7, the prophet Isaiah gives this same kind of analogy about the planting of a vineyard. Listen to Isaiah's version:

1 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.

2 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.

3 "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard.

4 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 good grapes, Did it bring forth wild grapes?

5 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.

6 I will lay it waste; It shall not be pruned or dug, But there shall come up briers and thorns. I will also command the clouds That they rain no rain on it."

7 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.

In Isaiah, as well as in Jesus' parable, the Lord of the vineyard is God, the Lord of Hosts. The vineyard is Israel, God's people. It's easy then to extrapolate the meaning of other characters in the story: The husbandmen are the Jewish religious leaders. The servants are the prophets God sent to Israel. The well-beloved, only Son of the Lord of the vineyard is the Lord Jesus.

The One who plants the vineyard → God the Father.

The vineyard → Israel (cf. Isaiah 5:1-7).

The tenants → The religious leaders of Israel.

The servants → Faithful prophets.

The beloved Son → Jesus.

The others → The apostles and true believers

With this in mind, it is clear to see that **verse 1** refers to the goodness of God toward Israel. The nation of Israel was often pictured as a vine.

Jesus is sharing this parable while standing in the Court of the Gentiles at the Temple. Just over one shoulder is the Mount of Olives with its side literally covered with grapevines. Over the other shoulder is the majestic temple built by King Herod. On the door of that temple is carved a huge and magnificent grapevine. That grapevine is embellished with leaves of pure silver and gold. The grapes that hang down are precious jewels. Often, wealthy Jews would add another expensive leaf or another precious stone to that vine. The Jewish leaders have no doubts about what the Lord is talking about in this parable. He is talking about the nation of Israel.

God had tenderly raised up His vine in a land called Egypt. Then, He had taken that vine and transported it across the burning sands of the Sinai and He had planted it in Canaan. There it took root and there it flourished. God had given His vine a good land in which to grow. He had given it His Word. He had given it His protection. By God's Own testimony, He had done everything He could have done to ensure the success of the vine called Israel. Isaiah 5:4a, "**What more could have been done to My vineyard That I have not done in it?**"

In spite of God's goodness and love to Israel, she had never returned that love to Him. Isaiah 5:4b, "**Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, Did it bring forth wild grapes?**"

Still, God continued to care for His vine; to bless His vine; to protect His vine and to dress His vine. And, in spite of their waywardness, Israel was forced to concede the goodness of God, Psa. 73:1, "***Truly God is good to Israel.***"

There is no question that every saved person in this room today would have to confess that God has been good to you! We are not Israel, but there was a day when He came to us in our bondage to sin, dug us up by the roots, and gave us a new life as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, Eph. 2:1-22; Col. 1:12-14. God has been good to us!

Add to our salvation all the blessings He has given us. Add to that all the prayers He has answered. Add to that the fact that He is ever with us; that He loves us eternally; that He meets our needs; and ten thousand other truths; and we must confess that God is good to His people!

Isn't it also true that God is good to those who don't even know Him? Consider this earth He gives to all people to enjoy. Consider the food and water He gives to all people to nourish their bodies. Consider the air He gives to all people to breath. Consider the fact that He allows people who despise Him, reject Him and hate Him to keep living on the right side of the dirt. Consider the fact that, if you are not saved today, you are still not in Hell! Consider these things and at least acknowledge that God is good to all people!

Since He is good, He deserves to be praised by all living creatures Psa. 118:29, "***Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever,***" .

II. THE LORD OF THE VINEYARD AND HIS <u>GRACE</u> v. 2-8

Having planted the vineyard, and having done everything necessary for the vineyard to succeed, the Lord of the vineyard sent his servants to gather his portion of the profits. It was common in those days for landowners to allow sharecroppers to farm the land for a percentage of the harvest. The owner usually received between one-third and one-half. The farmers got the rest.

When this land owner sent his servants, they were cruelly treated by the farmers. The first one was beaten, v. 3. The next one was stoned and wounded in the head, v. 4. The next one was killed, v. 5a. After that, he sent a steady stream of servants to get his profits and they were all either beaten or murdered by the men trusted to care for the vineyard, v. 5b.

After all the servants had been destroyed, the landowner sent his only son to them. He hoped they would receive the son as if he were the landowner himself, v. 6. But, just as they had destroyed all the slaves that had been sent, they also destroyed the son, v. 8. They believed that by killing the son they could claim the vineyard for themselves, v. 7.

This section of the parable is designed to speak to the religious leaders of Israel. They had been entrusted with the spiritual wellbeing of the nation. Time and again they led the nation astray. God, in His infinite grace, sent them judges, prophets, and other holy men of God to lead them back to the right path. Each time God sent a man of God, Israel refused to hear his message. Some were beaten, some were killed, but all were sent away empty-handed. Israel rejected prophet after prophet, culminating in John the Baptist whom they beheaded. Yet, God kept on sending them His men and His message. What grace!

The same thing is true today! God has given people witness after witness in an effort to call people to Himself. Why does God still call the wayward to come to Him? Why does He still reach out to them in an effort to see them saved? He does it because He is a God of infinite love, grace and mercy. He does it because He desires the salvation of sinners more than He does their judgment in Hell, 2 Pet. 3:9, "**The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance**."

God does it so that you might have a chance to be saved from your sins. God does it so that your loved ones might have the opportunity to be saved!

The Jews thought that by killing the Son they could have the vineyard for themselves. Those religious men would never have admitted it, but they wanted to be their own god. They wanted to run the show. They wanted everything for themselves. They wanted the wealth, the glory and the power, and they did not want to share it with anyone, especially if that person was an uneducated, carpenter without a pedigree from Nazareth! They could not stand the thought of acknowledging Jesus as Messiah and God.

What they failed to understand, and what so many people still fail to understand, is when you get the Son, you get the vineyard and everything in it! When you get the Son, you become a child of God, 1 John 3:1-3. When you get the Son, you become a joint-heir with Him, Rom. 8:17. When you get the Son, you get all the blessings Heaven has to offer, Eph. 1:3.

All these things that I have been talking about are the products of God's patience and grace. If we got what we deserved, we would be dead and in Hell today. But we are not dead and we are not in Hell! We are alive. We are still breathing God's air and enjoying God's blessings. We are partakers of God's grace today!

What grace that He would even call us to come to Him for salvation! What amazing grace that He would keep seeking, calling, loving and drawing until we came to Him! Praise God for grace!

If you are not saved, run to Him and call on Jesus. He is your only hope, 1 John 5:12; John 14:6. If you are saved, develop an attitude of gratitude and thank Him for His grace in your life.

III. v. 9-12THE LORD OF THE VINEYARD AND HIS <u>GLORY</u>

The lord of the vineyard is left with no choice. The landowner had tried to work with the farmers time and again, but they refused to listen to him. Now, because they have rejected his servants and killed his son, he will come in wrath and destroy those who have taken what is his, v. 9.

So it is with the leaders of Israel. They have rejected every attempt God made to call them back to Himself. They either abused or killed His messengers. Even John the Baptist, the servant God most recently sent to them, was rejected and beheaded. Now, they have determined in their hearts to destroy the very Son of God.

Jesus had demonstrated His deity and His identity to the Jews on many occasions, His miracles and His message all cried out that He was the Son of God. Yet, these men wanted the vineyard for themselves and they were willing to kill their Messiah to get what they wanted. And, they did kill Him! They pushed

Him to Calvary and there they crucified the Son of God. They literally took the Son of God out of the city and murdered Him there, Heb. 13:12.

Jesus was God's final messenger. When they rejected Him, they were saying no to God for the very last time. There was nothing left for them but judgment. And, that judgment came in just a few short years. Jerusalem was destroyed and the Temple was torn down. The Jews rejected God and His Son and they paid a terribly high price for their decision. Because they rejected the God of grace, they are forced to face the God of wrath.

The same is true today! Jesus is God's last word to humanity. If we reject Him, we have no more hope of salvation. Here is what you need to know. One day, you will stand before Jesus Christ. You will either face Him as Savior or you will face Him as Judge.

Romans 11:22 is an interesting verse. It says, "***Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God***." On the one hand, God is good to those who come to Him in faith, He forgives them; He saves them and He gives them everlasting life in Heaven, Rom. 10:13. On the other hand, those who reject Him will face Him in judgment, Rev. 20:11-15. You will either face the Lamb or you will the Lion. The choice is yours!

Whether you know it or not, you are guilty of murder. It was you and your sins that put Jesus on the cross. We are all guilty of rejecting and killing the Son of God. We will either repent of our sins and be saved, or we will face the Lord in judgment one day. God will be glorified either way!

In verses 10-11 Jesus changes the imagery. He stops talking about a vineyard and He starts talking about a building. He quotes Psa. 118:22 to make His point.

The key to a good foundation was a perfectly straight cornerstone. That stone, if straight would ensure that the building would be plumb and square. If the stone was not right, the building would not turn out right.

The Jewish leaders looked at Jesus and decided that He was not a fit cornerstone. Jesus simply did not meet their expectations. He did not fit their mold, so they rejected Him out of hand and were even willing participants in His death.

Why did they kill Him? They hated Him because His holiness and His Words exposed their sins. They were left with no choice but to either repent or retaliate. They chose to retaliate and they condemned Jesus to die.

Jesus tells them that the very stone they rejected has become the head to the corner. God ignored their assessment of Jesus and set Him as the cornerstone upon which He would build His church. They thought they were getting rid of the problem when they put Jesus to death. In truth, they were signing their own death warrants. God would get glory through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ!

When Matthew recorded this parable, he added this verse, "**And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder,**" Matt. 21:44. That's what everything comes down to. Either you will fall on Jesus and be broken in conviction, repentance and salvation, or He will fall on you and crush you to powder. Again, the choice is yours!

Conc: When Jesus finished the parable, the Jews wanted to arrest Him and deal with Him, but they were afraid to do anything because the people respected Jesus as a great rabbi. However, the Jewish leaders hated Him and wanted Him dead. They confirmed in their rejection of Jesus, and God was confirmed in His judgment of them.

They made their choice and they would have to live with the consequences. The same is true in our lives.

It is clear to see the goodness of God; it is all around us! Every day, God proves His love and His goodness through the precious gifts He gives us. His goodness should be enough to cause us to come to Him, Rom. 2:4.

It is also clear to see the grace of God in our lives. He has given you opportunity after opportunity to repent and to come to Jesus. He has kept you out of Hell for another day. That should make you want to come to Jesus and be saved.

Then, think about the fact the one day God will get glory from where you spend eternity. He will be glorified when you join Him in Heaven, or He will be glorified when you confirm His righteousness and your sinfulness when you go to Hell.

Today, the choice is yours. God is offering you a chance to be saved. He is offering you a chance to have all your sins forgiven. He is offering you an opportunity to avoid Hell and make Heaven your eternal home. If He is calling you, please come to Him today and be saved.

If you want to thank Him for His goodness and His grace; this would be a good time to do that!