

## MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES

Parable: The Wicked Tenants

**Sermon 10**

Mt 21:33-46

### I. ILLUSTRATIONS—MARVELOUS SIGHTS

#### 1. MOUNT ST HELENS

##### a. Overwhelming Destruction

- 18 May 1980—8:32 am (PDT)
- 5.1 Richer scale earthquake shook Mount St Helens
- Eruption blew away 1300 feet off the top
- Ash/gas cloud 15 miles high—in 15 minutes—circled globe in 15 days
- Filled 24 sq miles of valley with ash—200 million cubic yards
- Lateral blast—300 mph—from north slope
- Devastated—250 sq miles land—4 billion board feet of timber
- Destroyed 250 homes, 47 bridges, 15 miles of railway, 185 miles of highway
- 61 people killed or still missing
- Deadliest most economically devastating eruption in US history
- At its base—Spirit Lake was destroyed—buried under 200 feet of ash

##### b. Marvelous Recovery

- First plants—purple-blue Prairie Lupine—take nitrogen from air not soil
- Within a year—Avalance Lilies sprouted through the ash
- Spirit Lake refilled—shallower, bigger, warmer and more fish
- New eco-system emerged
  - Almost 300 new species of wildflowers, shrubs, trees
  - Alder and Willow trees replaced Pine and Fir forests
  - Beetles and leaf-eating insects replaced ants
  - Chipmunks and squirrels replaced gophers
  - Previously absent—Robin, Lark, and Elk—now abound

#### 2. CIARAN VANA'S PAINTING—RESTORATION AND HOPE

**THIS IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES!!!**

### II. SETTING AND SITUATION

#### 1. THE VOLATILE SITUATION

- 8 centuries of invaders—Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Egyptian, Roman
- Political Unrest—Rising Nationalism
- Economic Oppression—Rising Taxes
- **Now**—Unconventional Carpenter-Rabbi—Unsettling Message—Unruly Crowds

## 2. THE SEETHING JEALOUSY

- He **taught** with authority—not as teachers of the law—and amazed the crowds
- He **cast out** and controlled demons—when nobody else could
- He **healed** the sick and **raised** the dead with power
- He **challenged** their abuse of power—pious legalism—and greed

## 3. HE WAS DETERMINED TO DISTURB THE ESTABLISHED ORDER

### a. His disturbing **miracle**

- Resurrection of Lazarus—**Jn 10**
- Jealousy and fear struck religious the leaders

**Jn 11:47-48**—*What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. If we let Him go on like this, all people will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.*

### b. His disturbing **idea**

- **Parable of vineyard**—**Mt 20**
- Late-comers get the same as early workers
- Last shall be first, first shall be last—**v16**
- Implication—Gentiles just as welcome as Jews!

### c. His disturbing **arrival**

#### 1. Triumphant **entry**

- Unmanageable crowds
- Children shouting ‘Hosanna’ could not be silenced

#### 2. Riding **donkey**

- *Not* a sign of broken humility
- Kings rode horses into battle—but a donkey when they came in peace
- **Solomon** rode a donkey the day he was chosen king—**I Kgs 1**
- **Zechariah** prophesied—Savior King would come this way—**Zech 9**
- **Messianic** King coming in peace—to the city of peace

### d. His disturbing **audacity**

- Cleansing the **Temple**
- Rebuking religious leaders and merchants

### e. His disturbing **symbolic prophetic act**

- Cursing the **Fig Tree**—and its miraculous withering
- Symbolized the coming sudden destruction of Jerusalem

- o Reminded them of the **Parable of the Barren Fig Tree**—**Lk 13**
  - o Jesus' call to repent and produce fruit—or be destroyed
4. THE CLASH OF AUTHORITY
- a. Religious leaders' challenge to His authority
    - o His stubborn refusal—to recognize their authority to challenge Him
  - b. **Parable of the Landowner**
    - o **Pitted Jesus against** chief priests, elders, and teachers of the Law
    - o **Set stage for Temple Confrontations** with Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees, Scribes
    - o **Set Jesus on final collision course with the Cross**

### III. BIBLICAL TEXT—Mt 21:33-46

**Mt 21:33-46**—**33** *“Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. 34 When the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. 35 The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. 36 Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. 37 But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ 38 But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’ 39 They took him, and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. 40 Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?”*

**41** *They said to Him, “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons.”* **42** *Jesus said to them, “Did you never read in the Scriptures, ‘The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief cornerstone; this came about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”*

**43** *Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it. 44 And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.”* **45** *When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them. 46 When they sought to seize Him, they feared the people, because they considered Him to be a prophet.*

### IV. EXPLANATION

#### A. BIBLICAL CONTEXT

1. PARALLEL TEXTS = **Mark 12** and **Luke 20**
2. MATTHEW'S CONTEXT DIFFERENT
  - a. Between **two parables not in Mark and Luke**—with disturbing messages
  - b. After Parable of **Two Sons**
    - The son who delays is more obedient—late-acting Gentiles still have a chance!

- c. Before Parable of **Wedding Feast**
  - The gospel is for all—even ‘sinners’ and Gentiles
- 3. CORNERSTONE QUOTATION = **Psalm 118:22-23**
- 4. OT PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD—**Is 5:1-7**
  - o God had planted and tended His vineyard—Israel
  - o It had produced only worthless fruit
  - o God would allow the vineyard to go to seed—lay it waste—and withhold water

## **B. CULTURAL BACKGROUND**

- 1. VINEYARDS
  - a. Agricultural lifeblood—like fig trees [last week]
  - b. Symbolized Israel’s prosperity and judgment
    - Millennial Peace—sitting under the vine
    - Destruction meant judgment—and curse upon owner
- 2. ABSENTEE LANDLORDS—WERE PREVALENT
  - a. Ways to pay rent
    - Fixed sum
    - Proportion of yield
    - Fixed amount of produce
  - b. Economic/political tension and problems
    - High rents and exorbitant taxes
    - Abuse of poor by rich landowners
    - Difficulty getting justice—plaintiffs had to drag defendants to court

## **C. THE PARABLE**

- 1. SYMBOLS
  - o **Vineyard** = Israel—the people
  - o **Landowner** = God
  - o **Tenants** = religious leaders
  - o **Servants** = prophets
  - o **Son** = Jesus
- 2. MEANING
  - o God cared for and blessed Israel—with bountiful means
  - o He entrusted care of the vineyard—to its religious leaders
  - o He patiently pled and waited—for harvest fruit—repentance and obedience

- He sent several prophets—to exhort people—to produce fruit
- But Israel continually rejected—persecuted—and killed them
- Finally—He sent His only begotten Son and Heir—they rejected and killed Him
- But His Son has become—the very cornerstone of His kingdom
- God will exact justice—punish His rebellious people—take the Kingdom from them
- He will give it to those who will obey Him and produce fruit

**THESE THINGS ARE MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES**  
**GOD'S MARVELOUS PROVISION—PRIVILEGES—PATIENCE—PROMISE**

**D. MAIN POINTS**

**1. GOD'S MARVELOUS PROVISION**

- a. **Landowner** provided **tenants** everything they needed to prosper
  - **Hedge**—prevents weeds from choking vines
  - **Winepress**—transforms fruit into useful product
  - **Tower**—lookout and protection against marauding robbers
- b. **God** blessed **Israel** with everything it needed
  - Bountiful land—of milk and honey
  - Kings and priests—to govern and minister
  - Law—to guide and bring prosperity
  - His presence—to care for and protect them
  - Prophets—to prepare them for His coming Son
- c. **But Israel** misused every provision
  - Used positions of authority to extort and abuse the poor
  - Turned His house into a den of robbers
  - Made a pretense of religion—with lengthy prayers and flashy giving

**2. GOD'S MARVELOUS PRIVILEGES**

- a. **Landowner** gave the tenants **freedom** and **fulfilment**
  - He invited those who had nothing—to use His land for their own good
  - They entered this mutual partnership—by their own free will
  - He left them alone—to tend the vineyard as they saw fit
  - For their mutual benefit—to serve Him and to help themselves
  - They had just one responsibility—bear fruit and return a portion to Him
- b. **God** set **Israel** free from bondage

- To worship—and serve Him
  - To choose—to obey His law or to disobey it
  - To minister—with Him as a kingdom of priests to bless all nations
- c. **But Israel** abused His law—and rejected His call to ministry
- Hypocrites—clean outside but full of robbery and self-indulgence
  - White-washed tombs—inwardly full of hypocrisy and lawlessness
  - Blind guides—misleading others with nit-picking legalism
  - Cultic religion of a privileged few—proselytizing only to control others
3. GOD’S MARVEOUS **PATIENCE**
- a. **Landowner** gave the **tenants** every chance to do the right thing
- b. **God** sent many prophets to call Israel to repentance
- c. **But Israel** ignored—disrespected—persecuted—and killed them
4. GOD’S MARVELOUS **PROMISE**
- a. The **Landowner** sent His son and heir—but the **tenants** killed Him too
- b. **God** sent **Israel** His only begotten Son—to rescue them—but they rejected Him too
- c. But this was the **most marvelous thing** of all!
1. Here Jesus applied the principle of His earlier Vineyard Parable
    - *The last shall be first, and the first last*—Mt 20:16
    - He who was despised and rejected—became the King and Victor
  2. The last—but greatest—prophet of all
    - Superior to all who came beforehand—the cornerstone of God’s grace
  3. The only one—who could restore the vineyard
    - Repair the brokenness of sin—and rebuild their relationship with God
  4. Through Him, God provided the **most marvelous gift** of all
    - His **promise**—*The last shall be first, and the first last*—Mt 20:16
    - **Now**—to those who had no hope—outsiders—He has given life eternal
    - The kingdom of God has been given to US—so we might produce fruit!

## V. APPLICATION

### A. GOD’S MARVELOUS **PROVISION**

1. GOD RICHLY BLESSES US AND OUR NATION WITH PROSPERITY
2. ACCOUNTABILITY
  - We must never take those blessings for granted
  - We should acknowledge that He is the One who gives them

- We should show gratitude—humbly thank and praise Him—and use them for His glory

## B. GOD'S MARVELOUS PRIVILEGES

1. GOD GIVES US FREEDOM AND OPPORTUNITY FOR FULFILMENT
  - Life, Liberty, and Happiness—are inalienable rights—endowed by our Creator
2. HE GIVES US A CHOICE—TO OBEY HIM—OR NOT TO OBEY HIM
  - But we choose—willfully and deliberately—to sin and rebel against Him
3. WE MAKE EXCUSES FOR OUR SIN—AND FUTILE EFFORTS TO ERADICATE IT
  - a. **Excuse**—sin is a **social** problem—how we are **morally** conditioned
    - **Incomplete remedy**—better **laws** will improve us and create a **moral** society
  - b. **Excuse**—sin is caused by **ignorance**—we misuse and abuse the good things in life
    - **Incomplete remedy**—better **education** will enlighten and make us a **better** society
  - c. **Excuse**—sin is just a **physical** thing—result of biological and emotional urges and flaws
    - **Incomplete remedy**—**science**, medicine and psychology can **cure** all these ills
4. ACCOUNTABILITY
  - In our broken world—evil is partly a result of all these things.
  - But we must acknowledge—sin is fundamentally a **spiritual problem**
  - God gives us **marvelous freedom** to choose—to obey—or to disobey Him!
  - We must take responsibility for our own individual wrong choices

## C. GOD'S MARVELOUS PATIENCE

1. GOD HAS ENDURED OUR NATION'S WILFULL REBELLION LONG ENOUGH
2. HE WILL NOT PATIENTLY ABIDE OUR SIN FOREVER
3. ACCOUNTABILITY
  - We must acknowledge that we cannot repair the vineyard by ourselves
  - We must repent—obey Him—and produce the fruit of righteousness
  - His timeless solution is still the answer today

**II Chr 7:14-15**—*If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayer offered in this place.*

## D. GOD'S MARVELOUS PROMISE

1. GOD SENT HIS SON AND HEIR TO RESTORE THE VINEYARD
2. HE PROMISES TO FORGIVE SIN AND REPAIR OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD
3. HE IS THE GATEKEEPER OF THE KINGDOM AND KEY TO LIFE EVERLASTING

- o He has **inherited** the vineyard and become the **Master** of the Garden
  - o He is the Master **Gardener** who **tends** the vine and makes it productive
  - o He is the **Vine** itself—in whom there is life that **produces** much fruit
4. ACCOUNTABILITY—WE MUST INVITE OTHERS TO
- o **Acknowledge** Him—as Lord of the Vineyard and Giver of Life Everlasting
  - o **Enter** into His kingdom—and inherit the Vineyard
  - o **Unite** with Him—and produce fruit that glorifies the Father

## VI. INVITATION

**There is a place of quiet rest,  
near to the heart of God,  
a place where sin cannot molest,  
near to the heart of God.**

**Refrain:**

**O Jesus, blest Redeemer,  
sent from the heart of God,  
hold us, who wait before thee,  
near to the heart of God.**

**There is a place of comfort sweet,  
near to the heart of God,  
a place where we our Savior meet,  
near to the heart of God. [Refrain]**

**There is a place of full release,  
near to the heart of God,  
a place where all is joy and peace,  
near to the heart of God. [Refrain]**