A Merciful and Loving God

5/12/19

Mark Series

Message 55

Mark 12:1–12 (CSB)

**THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD OWNER**

**12**He began to speak to them in parables: “A man planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug out a pit for a winepress, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenant farmers and went away. **2**At harvest time he sent a servant to the farmers to collect some of the fruit of the vineyard from them. **3**But they took him, beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. **4**Again he sent another servant to them, and they hit him on the head and treated him shamefully. **5**Then he sent another, and they killed that one. He also sent many others; some they beat, and others they killed. **6**He still had one to send, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ **7**But those tenant farmers said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ **8**So they seized him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. **9**What then will the owner, of the vineyard do? He will come and kill the farmers and give the vineyard to others. **10**Haven’t you read this Scripture:

**The** **stone that the builders rejected**

**has become the cornerstone.**

**11This came about from the Lord**

**and is wonderful in our eyes**?”

**12**They were looking for a way to arrest him but feared the crowd because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. So they left him and went away.

# 1. Jesus’ Parable was believable to the audience.

 A. Many properties in Palestine were owned by an absentee landlord.

1. The person who owned the land would lease it to a group of people who would farm the crops and take care of the property.

 2. In return, they would pay a percentage or amount of the crop to the landlord.

 3.This wasn’t a great arrangement and didn’t work well for the tenants.

4. So Palestine experienced a lot of unrest and unhappiness because of the arrangement.

5. The situation was probably similar to the practice of share cropping experience in the Southern U.S during the 19th and 20th centuries.

B. The only way for the tenants to eventually own the land they worked was if the owner died and he had no heir.

 1. Squatter rights were a part of local law.

2. If the owner died, and so too did the heir, the servants could become the master.

3. In Jesus’ parable, this is what the servants hoped to accomplish.

C. Everyone in Jesus’ audience would have known what He was talking about.

 1. Although He spoke in the form of a parable, the message was pretty clear.

2. The message of Jesus’ parable is this:

a. God had entrusted His people to the religious leaders so that they might be cared for, but they took advantage of this trust.

b. Even though God sent warnings, these warnings were met with opposition and violence, culminating in the murder of God’s chosen representative, His Son.

c. Because of this, judgment would come.

 D. Jesus was proclaiming judgment upon the religious leaders of Israel.

 1. They were misleading God’s people.

 2. They had turned the Temple into a marketplace for their own personal gain.

3. They had a history of persecuting and rejecting God’s servants, the prophets and messengers.

4. And here stood before them the Son of God.

 a. They were being given ONE more chance to repent and to turn to God.

 b. They were being given One more opportunity for eternal life.

 c. Instead, they chose to kill Him instead.

 E. What does this have to do with us, today?

1. In this parable we learn about God’s amazing love for us.

2. In this parable We catch a glimpse of how we often treat God and His message.

 3. Let’s look at this parable and see how it demonstrates God’s love for His People.

# 2. In this Parable, God is the owner of the vineyard.

4 Characteristics of God can be seen in this parable.

 A. **God is generous.**

1. “The vineyard was equipped with everything that was necessary to make the work of the cultivators easy and profitable.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

a. The owner of the vineyard didn’t make the work extra difficult or frustrating.

 b. Every thing they needed to succeed was made available to them.

 c. It is important to note that it was the owner who built the vineyard and all of its buildings and the servants simply were tasked with caring for it.

 2. Isn’t God still generous towards us?

a. Every thing we need to overcome and be victorious in this life has been given us through Jesus Christ.

b. Through Jesus we have salvation, healing, the empowering of the Holy Spirit, and the hope of a redeemed future.

 1. In Jesus we find freedom,

2. Deliverance

3. Hope.

3. When I ignore my time with God in prayer and worship, I lose sight of God’s generosity towards me.

a. I begin to think that more money, more time, or more opportunities will fix all of my problems.

 b. These things become the focus of my attention and worship.

 c. And I lose sight of what God has done for me and what He is doing for me.

 B. **God is trusting.**

 1. Jesus’ parable says that the owner went away.

 a. Several of Jesus’ parables feature this theme.

b. The parable of the talents features the master going away to a far country and entrusting his property to the servants.

2. The owner of the vineyard was trusting of His servants to do what was right while he was away.

 a. That is exactly what God has done for us.

 b. He is trusting us to do what is right and good until His return.

 c. This is called free-will and it is both a blessing and a curse.

 d. It would be so much easier if we could do no wrong.

 e. But that is not how God designed us.

 f. So, often, our freewill and choices get in the way.

3. *To quote our friend, Mike McPherson, “We all have free-will but we are not smart enough to do the right thing.”*

a. Yet, time and again, the generous and trusting God gives us opportunities to do what is right.

 b. Sometimes we get it right, sometimes we don’t.

 c. Like I said last week, God is looking for commitment not perfection.

d. Because Jesus’ relationship with God was perfect, mine doesn’t have to be.

 C. **God is patient**.

 1. How many of you are thankful you are not God?

a. We don’t have the same level of patience and compassion that God has.

b. Because the first time we sent a representative, and these tenants mistreated that servant, we would have blown the place up and started over.

 c. But not God.

 1. God, in His loving kindness, sent warning after warning.

 2. Finally, God sent His Son and Heir to act on their behalf.

 2. In this parable, we see what God was doing.

 a. He had sent prophets and messengers and signs and wonders.

 b. God’s people and their leaders rejected them.

 c. Now God was sending His Son.

 d. The Son could do what the previous servants couldn’t.

 e. To reject the Son of God is to reject God.

 3. Yet, God’s patience is on display.

 a. Although HE could have given up on us a long time ago, He didn’t.

 b. Although He could have quit chasing after us, He leaves the 99 to find the one that is lost and dying.

c. God goes to great and patient lengths to give us plenty of opportunity to repent and be changed.

d. But there reaches a time and a point when patience must give way to justice.

D. **God is just.**

1. In Jesus’ parable, after the tenants kill the Son and claim ownership of the vineyard, the Father returns to kill the farmers.

 a. The patience of God must result in the justice of God.

b. And it would have been unjust for these tenants to not be punished for the crime they committed.

2. We cannot emphasize the patience and love of God at the exclusion of the justice of God.

a. It is my prayer that the people of Licking, MO will come to know God as a God of peace and of love, not as a God of wrath and judgment.

 b. Yet, wrath and judgment will come to those who reject Jesus.

 3. The people in the villages of Palestine experienced the love of Jesus.

 a. They were fed by Him, healed by Him, and set free by Him.

b. Yet, this same Jesus was proclaiming God’s righteous judgment upon the religious leaders of the Temple.

c. What was the difference?

 1. The people embraced Jesus, and so experienced Jesus’ love.

2. The religious leaders rejected Jesus, and so experienced judgment.

d. It is very similar to our relationship with the Police.

 1. I consider many of the officers friends.

 a. I’m not scared of them.

 b. I’m not fearful of them.

c. I respect their authority and of what they are commissioned to do.

d. But because I am not actively breaking the law, I do not fear them.

 2. Yet many fear and hate these same police officers.

a. Usually because they had an encounter with an officer where they were breaking the law.

b. Our view of law enforcement is either positive or negative, depending on what side of the law we are on.

3. Likewise, Our view of God will either be positive or negative, depending on what side of God’s judgment we are on.

4. For those who love God, perfect love drives out fear.

5. Yet the same God who loves us, will bring judgment to those who reject Him.

6. The choice is ours.

# 3. The problem of humanity is that we believe we can get rid of God.

A. Philosopher Frederick Nietzsche famously declared over 130 years ago that “God is Dead”.

 1. Yet, here we are still talking about Him.

 2. Humanity has dedicated itself to the pursuit of killing God.

 3. Because, if there is no God, then we believe we can fill the void.

 B. Many people today still stumble over Jesus.

 1. I don’t need a Jesus!

 2. I don’t need a Savior!

 3. I don’t need a God?

 4. Yet, we do.

C. I know this is Mother’s Day, and many churches will be giving a message specifically geared towards mothers.

 1. There is nothing wrong with that.

2. But, this week, as I was at the graveside of one of my wife’s great aunts, I heard the preacher say something I have heard many times before at the graveside of a mother:

a. “Nothing would make her so happy as to know that her children and grandchildren were going to church and loving Jesus.”

 b. Where does this heart of a mother come from?

c. From the generous, patient, trusting, and just God that created her and loved her.

3. The greatest message I can bring today is not the virtues of motherhood, as great as that is, but the virtues of a loving and merciful God who loved us:

 a. When we were unlovable.

 b. When we were mean.

 c. When we were lost.

 d. When we were lashing out.

 e. When we were broken and stuck.

# Closing: Today we pray for those who have tried to do it all yourself.

A. For those of us who have tried to be our own God and Savior, in just a moment we will take time to pray.

B. For those who walked in with the cares of the world upon your shoulders, in just a moment, we want to pray with you.

C. For those who are not sure if God is even real, I want to pray with you to receive an encounter with Jesus in a way that is incredibly real.

D. For those fighting for your life, your marriage, your present and your future, we want to pray.

1. William Barclay, [*The New Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of Mark*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ndsb62mk?ref=Bible.Mk12.1-12&off=4198&ctx=+generosity+of+God.+~The+vineyard+was+equ), The New Daily Study Bible (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 2001), 328. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)