

# Giving God What Belongs to Him

## Matthew 21:33-46

<sup>33</sup> “Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. <sup>34</sup> When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.

<sup>35</sup> “The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. <sup>36</sup> Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. <sup>37</sup> Last of all, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said.

<sup>38</sup> “But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and take his inheritance.’ <sup>39</sup> So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

<sup>40</sup> “Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”

<sup>41</sup> “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,” they replied, “and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.”

<sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

“The stone the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone;  
the Lord has done this,  
and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”

<sup>43</sup> “Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. <sup>44</sup> Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.”

<sup>45</sup> When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them. <sup>46</sup> They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.

## Setting

Parables: conveying a message while probing listeners to think

Matthew 21:1-11	The Triumphal Entry
Matthew 21:12-17	The Cleansing of the Temple
Matthew 21:18-22	Jesus Curses the Fig Tree
Matthew 21:23-27	The Authority of Jesus Questioned
Matthew 21:28-32	The Parable of the Two Sons
Matthew 21:33-46	The Parable of the Wicked Tenants
Matthew 22:1-14	The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

## The Parable of the Tenant:

Vineyard	People of Israel
Landowner	God
Tenants	Religious Leaders
Servants	Prophets and Messengers
Son	Jesus Christ

1. A Privilege Entrusted by God (v. 33)

<sup>33</sup> *“Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place.*

- God (who is infinite, sovereign, all-knowing, all-powerful) chooses humankind (who is limited to space and time, limited in our knowledge and strength, who is prone to sin and rebellion against God) to do his work.

- The landowner prepares the vineyard to enable the tenants to produce fruit:

Puts a wall around the vineyard	To protect it from wild animals
Digs a winepress	For the process of fermentation
Builds a tower	Watchmen can look after the vineyard

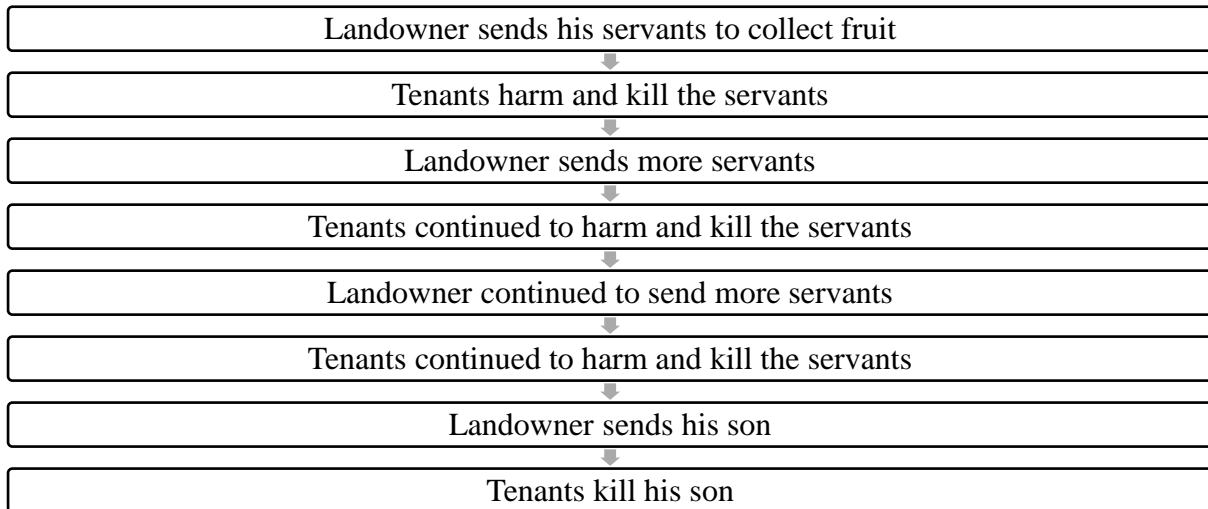
- As God entrust us with the privilege of his work, he makes preparation, he equips us, he assures that we would be able to bear fruit.

2. A Patient & Compassionate God (vv. 34-39)

<sup>34</sup> *When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.*

<sup>35</sup> *“The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. <sup>36</sup> Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. <sup>37</sup> Last of all, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said.*

<sup>38</sup> *“But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and take his inheritance.’ <sup>39</sup> So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.*



**Deuteronomy 34:6-7**

<sup>6</sup> *And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup> maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.”*

- We would think that the landowner should have made the tenants pay, but God's response is to continue to reach out to his people. Our God is a loving, compassionate, and gracious God, he is patient, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. He sends people, he gives opportunities. His last resort was sending his own son. Sadly, even that did not change the people.
- God gives humans freedom of choice. God will appeal to us, but God will not coerce us to do what we do not want to do. In the parable, the tenants had made up their mind to reject the landowner. They intentionally rejected and murdered the servants and the son. In doing that, they made it explicit that they did not want to be under the landowner. They wanted the land for themselves.

**John 11:48-50**

*"If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation." Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish."*

- The religious leaders rejected Jesus because they did not want to lose their temple, their nation, their power, their status, the glory that they received from people, their comfortable and prestigious life.

3. A Just God (vv. 40-44)

<sup>40</sup> *"Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?"*

<sup>41</sup> *"He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time."*

<sup>42</sup> *Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures:*

*"The stone the builders rejected*

*has become the cornerstone;*

*the Lord has done this,*

*and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"*

<sup>43</sup> *"Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. <sup>44</sup> Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed."*

- God is compassionate, he will reach out and appeal to his people. But, when sin is not repented after countless appeals, there will be judgment. Evil will not go unpunished.

**Deuteronomy 34:6-7**

<sup>6</sup> *And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup> maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. **Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished;** he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation."*

- The calling of God's chosen people is to glorify God, to represent and reflect God, so that the other nations would know the God of Israel of the one true God. Israel failed. Jesus fulfilled what Israel had failed to do. Jesus glorified God and pointed people to God. Every tongue and tribe can become part of God's people.

**1 Peter 2:9-10**

*<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

- Our calling as God’s people is to represent and reflect God, to glorify him, so that others would know Christ.

Before Christ	Prophets and messengers	God’s word through Scripture
Jesus Christ	God dwelling in flesh: a revelation of who God is	
After Christ	The presence of God through the Holy Spirit	
	The family of God through the Church	

- God has blessed us with a good life. Just like the landowner who was gracious to let the farmers in, to have a place to stay, a vineyard that guarantees fruit, God gives us breath of life, provides our needs, equips us, and Jesus came to give us an abundant and eternal life. Yet, when the focus is on ourselves, we become ungrateful, greedy, we become entitled and arrogant, we begin to do things grudgingly, we begin to hoard things for ourselves, we begin to withhold things from God.
- The religious leaders served the Lord in the temple (they performed priestly duties, rituals and rites for the people). They followed the laws that was given. They would have been “good Christians” who did all the right things today. But, their heart was far from God. They served God and the people for their own benefit. They enjoyed the praise and recognition from the people. They were unwilling to give up those things, therefore they rejected the very son of God that they were supposed to be serving.
- We are equally susceptible to the temptation of withholding what belongs to God. We are prone to sin, we are capable of evil, we are driven to gratify our flesh. When we are focused on ourselves, on what we can get out life, like the tenants, we would want the land for our own. We want the glory for ourselves. We can’t see how much God has blessed us with, that he has given us everything we need, and much more.
- Our response to all that God has done, given, and showed us, will bear consequences. God will bring vindication and judgment.
- How are we responding to our calling as God’s people to represent and reflect God, to glorify him, so that others would know Christ?

4. A Rejected Cornerstone (v. 42)

*<sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:*

*“The stone the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone;  
the Lord has done this,  
and it is marvelous in our eyes”?*

- A stone that the builders thought they could not use, they rejected it, and in due course the stone became the most important stone in the building.
- Jesus quoted Psalm 118:22-23. The original context is about Israel being in a situation that they seemed to have been defeated by their enemies, but through the intervention

of God, Israel was miraculously delivered, and they triumphed over their enemies. The rejected stone, Israel, became the cornerstone through the deliverance.

- Jesus was referring the stone to himself. The people were rejecting him. But, God will raise him from the dead and he will be vindicated. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus became the cornerstone, the most important piece. He is the only way to God, he is the foundation of our faith.
- The people may have rejected Christ, but God was working his purpose:

**Genesis 50:20**

*<sup>20</sup> You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.*

5. A Prophecy Fulfilled (vv. 44-46)

*<sup>44</sup> Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.”*

*<sup>45</sup> When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them. <sup>46</sup> They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.*

- Instead of repenting, the religious leaders were offended, and in return they did exactly what Jesus say the tenants did in the parable. They plotted against him, got one of his disciples to betray him, they falsely accused him, and got him crucified.
- They wanted to stop the people from following Jesus, so they thought killing him would solve the problem. But, that became the very foundation that drew people to Christ. His death and resurrection became the mark of Christianity, and many more became followers of Christ. Jesus is the cornerstone on which everything is built upon, he holds everything together. We will not have success in fighting against his ways. His work and his will continue, with or without us.

## Prayer Items

1. We will be grateful for God's blessings.
2. We will revere and respond to our compassionate and righteous God, trusting in his love and judgment.
3. We will glorify God and not withhold what is due to God.
4. We will represent and reflect God to the people around us.

### Church

1. Protection and Grace during this Pandemic.
2. God would open doors for us to reach out to the community around us.
3. God will guide and bless the ministries of the church.
4. The Lord will teach us to discern and understand His purpose and plans for the church.
5. The church will grow in love and unity. We will reach out in love, overcoming every form of prejudice, pride, and selfishness, with a deep desire to see Christ formed in every heart.

<sup>34</sup> "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-35)

### 6. Passion Week

- (i) The message of the cross and resurrection will transform our lives
- (ii) Spiritual renewal and breakthrough.
- (iii) Good Friday and Easter Service

### Healing

1. Vikram's family & Jayaraj – Covid-19
2. Si Yun (radiotherapy) & Jayden (asthma)

### Malaysia

1. God will deliver us from this pandemic.
2. Covid-19: healing and recovery (physical, mental, and economic).
3. Wisdom as the government begins the vaccination plans.
4. Compassion: people in power and with resources will show compassion and love towards those who are in need.
5. Grace and protection for school children and teachers.
6. Racial reconciliation.
7. Justice and Mercy
  - The poor, oppressed, foreigners, widows, and orphans.
  - Pray against the works of greed and corruption.
8. Leadership and good governance.
9. The Church will be God's instrument for unity, integrity, and racial harmony.