

"The parable of the Tenants"

An advertisement in a community's weekly newspaper offered "a thoroughbred police dog" for only forty pounds. This seemed like a reasonable price, so someone called the number in the ad and made an appointment to see the dog. Imagine their dismay when the dog in question looked like a cross between a poodle and a schnauzer. A bit outraged, the person asked, "What do you mean, calling that mutt a thoroughbred police dog?" "Don't be deceived by his looks," was the solemn reply. "He's under cover."

One of the fundamental truths about God and communicating with people is that He has never done it under cover. He has always been open, displaying His existence through creation and displaying **miracle, signs** and **wonders** through chosen people.

All in an effort to get people to listen to Him so that He can take care of them and love them. And there were many times when God showed His authority over the elements and people through various means.

But as we all know people throughout the ages have always had problems with authority. I'm sure even some of you guys have had problems with authority especially at school or even your parents.

One day, Jesus was in the temple teaching. The chief priests and the leaders of the people did not like the things which Jesus had been doing and were questioning His authority. And so once again Jesus answers their questions using a parable. "Listen to this story," Jesus said to them. **Mark 12:1 "There once was a man who planted a vineyard and built a wall around it.**

Now let me say from the start, the landowner is God. And today God is still the Landlord, we are still the tenants, and the harvest is still the same, souls. Let me also say that it was God who planted the vineyard. And the vineyard is the Jews because God established a covenant with them.

Mark 12:1 "After he had finished building the wall, he dug a winepress". God also put a wall around it, which basically means it was God who protected it. He also dug a winepress in it, which again means that it was God who gave the Jews His Word. **Mark 12:1 "Next he built a watchtower.** Notice again Who is doing all the work here; it was God who built a watchtower and God who gave them priests.

Now I know that most of us don't own our homes the vast majority rent someone else's accommodation. And for those of us who do rent, know that can't stop the landlord from coming into his own house. Because He is the one who owns it, it's His property but He rents it out for us to use.

And that's basically what happens here in **Mark 12:1 "When everything was finished, he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey.** You see God allowed the Jews to rent His land and because Jesus uses the word "**Rent,**" this tells us that God as owner of the vineyard is establishing due diligence.

God, as the owner of the vineyard is establishing His ownership by collecting rent from them. Now we who rent today pay our landlord a specific amount of money every month, but God isn't looking for money. He's looking for fruit, the fruit of His people, the Jews.

And guys you need to know that God is still looking for fruit today. **Galatians 5:22+23 "But the Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control."** What kind of person are you?

You see you guys may not be Christians at the moment but God willing you will be.

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But because you're not Christians yet doesn't mean that you can't be a loving person, a joyous, peaceful and patient person. It doesn't mean that you can't be kind and good, faithful to your parents, humble and self controlled.

Have you ever been left in the house on your own? That's a huge responsibility isn't it? Because this means that your parents trust you enough for you to take care of yourself and act accordingly in the house when they are out for a while. You see God did the same thing; He rents the vineyard out to His people and goes off on a journey.

In other words just like our landlord do when they rent their homes to us, there is a huge element of trust involved when it comes to renting. God left the vineyard in their care for a while but also promised that He will come back to collect the rent.

And so **“The tenants began working in the vineyard.” Mark 12:2 “When the harvest time came, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.** Now part of my rental agreement with my landlord is that I won't neglect or trash his home. And part of your agreement with you parents is that you will stay in their home but you need to do what they ask. And if they ask you to tidy up your room and keep it tidy, then you need to do just that, keep it tidy, because that is your parent's home and they own everything in it.

But part of God's rental agreement was that when harvest time approached, His rent was due and payment is made by the fruits of His people, and God is expected to be paid as agreed. Because we need to remember through all of this, that this is God's land, God's fruit, He owns the land and everything in it.

Mark 12:3-5 “The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. “Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way.

So the time for payment is due and God sends His servants, the prophets, to collect the payment. God first sent men such as **Noah, Moses, David**, the prophet **Isaiah**, and others to tell the people of His love for them and to call them to turn from their wicked ways, but many would not listen. God made a covenant, and the Jews agreed to it by agreeing to follow God's ways.

And so now God wants to collect the Good Fruit that has materialised from His people following His ways. And the prophets were basically God's collectors and channels for Him to speak through. But the priests of old seized the prophets, they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third.

In other words they silenced those prophets who warned them of rent being due and that their fruit was not worthy. Then God sent other servants to them, and He kept on sending them more and more prophets.

And guys if we get anything from this we need to see just how patient God is with His people. But it didn't matter how many prophets God sent because the people just treated them the same way. The Jews beat, persecuted, stoned, and killed the prophets. **So what is God going to do now?**

Hebrews 1:1+2 “In the past God spoke to our ancestors many times and in many ways through the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us through his Son. He is the one through whom God created the universe, the one whom God has chosen to possess all things at the end”.

Mark 12:6 “Finally, he sent his son. ‘Surely they will respect my son,’ he said.

God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus, and thought to Himself; surely they will respect my son.

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It's not as though they weren't expecting Him, this is what the prophets were telling people would happen. The prophets told God's people that Jesus was coming and that Jesus is the promised Messiah.

And did they respect His Son, Jesus? No. Mark 12:7 "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.'" Mark 12:8 "So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him."

When the Jews saw Jesus, the Jews gossiped among each other, priest to priest, Rabbi to Rabbi, Jew to Jew. They said; "This Jesus claims to be the Son of God, come, let's kill him, crucify Him!" Let's take his inheritance because we want the vineyard for our own and we (the Jewish leaders) will bring the people back into our control.

And loved ones this is something we all need to be aware of. We cannot claim something that doesn't belong to us. At youth club every single week someone loses money and on the rare occasion someone else finds it and hands it in. But if one of the staff finds it and asks has anyone lost money, its amazing how there are a few will always say it was me. But on further investigations we actually find that some kids were claiming money that wasn't even theirs to begin with.

The church doesn't belong to us; it belongs to Christ who paid for it. Your very life doesn't belong to you; it belongs to Christ who paid for it. The vineyard didn't belong to the Jews, it belonged to God. So God sent His own Son, Jesus but again they didn't respect Him.

You know what they did to Him, don't you? That's right, they crucified him. They took him into custody and had Him arrested and threw him out of the vineyard and they dragged Him off the streets and threw Him out of Jerusalem, and killed him. They crucified Jesus.

God gave them a chance. He even gave them a second chance and a third. But when they rejected His Son, that was their last chance. See you guys Jesus is our last chance too and not only is He our last chance, He is our only chance. There is a very good reason why the Bible says that Jesus is coming back a final time.

I know the Bible talks about the 'Second coming of Christ' but I think sometimes people think, well maybe there will be a 'Third Coming'. No guys, there is no third coming, Jesus is not coming back to give us another chance, when He comes back that's it, if your not ready for Him now it will be too late.

That's why Jesus is our last and only chance. But when the Jews reject this last chance what's going to happen? That's the question Jesus asks next. Mark 12:9 "When the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" Mark 12:9 "He will bring them to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time."

God owns it and can do whatever He likes with it and rent it out to whomever He wants. After Jesus rose from the dead, the Creator of the world is coming back.

And for those who didn't follow Jesus, He says in Mark 12:10 "Jesus replied, "Surely you know that the Scriptures say, 'The stone that the builders tossed aside is now the most important stone of all.'" Matthew 21:43 "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."

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Those who persecuted God’s people are going to be tossed into the fire. In other words, the chief priests and elders pronounce judgement on themselves, and they knew their time was done when the temple fell in 70 A.D.

And so Jesus will bring others into His vineyard as tenants. These "other" people now include Gentiles who follow Jesus, and they will bring forth other believers. The Gentiles would appreciate what they have been given to rent and use. Mark 12:12 “When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parable, they knew he was talking about them”.

Electric lights are so common today that we never even give them a thought. If I was changing a light bulb and I dropped one and broke it, I wouldn't worry about it. I would just go and get another one. That hasn't always been true.

I heard a story about when Thomas Edison was working to invent this crazy contraption called a "light bulb." It took a whole team of men working for twenty-four hours to put just one light bulb together. The story goes that when Edison's team was finished with one light bulb, he gave it to a young boy to carry upstairs. Step by step he carefully carried it, afraid that he might drop this priceless piece of work.

You can probably guess what happened; the poor boy dropped the bulb at the top of the stairs. It took the team of men twenty-four more hours to make another bulb. Finally, tired and ready for a break, Edison was ready to have his bulb carried upstairs. He gave it to the same young boy who dropped the first one. That's true forgiveness. Mr. Edison gave the boy another chance!

God offers that same kind of forgiveness today. He offers man a second chance, and a third! We're living in the last days loved ones, don't reject Jesus. Are we so different from those people to whom Jesus directed the Parable of the Tenants?

The world has appropriated all the good things that God has provided on this earth. The planet has an abundance of everything. Yet half the world fills its barns whilst the other half starves. We tolerate and idolise the high-flyers of this world. But the day of judgement will come. It has come for many of our so-called entrepreneurs.

God has taken away their corner of the vineyard and has found new tenants for the likes of those who have thrived on deceit and corruption. The world has abused its freedom and is failing in its trust to deliver the harvest, the souls of men and women.

The only thing that has changed from the original parable is the scale, the size of the vineyard and the number of souls to be saved. What has also changed is our ability to harvest that vineyard. We have a better opportunity of carrying out the Great Commission now than when Jesus first gave it to mankind. Through telephones, emails etc, it's a lot easier today in many ways. But what is not so clear is the question of our resolve to bring in the harvest.

In the film 'Home Alone' 8-year-old Kevin McAllister is accidentally left behind when his family takes off for a vacation in France over the holiday season. Once he realizes they've left him home by himself, Kevin learns to fend for himself, and eventually has to protect his house against bumbling burglars Harry and Marv, who are planning to rob every house in Kevin's suburban Chicago neighbourhood.

Kevin's mother Kate is frantic when she realizes that she and the family have unintentionally left Kevin behind in Chicago, and she tries to make it back to Chicago as fast as she can, getting help from a polka band leader named Gus Polinski.

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Now Kevin as young as he was managed to look after himself, but he also realised that the world is a not a safe place to live. Can we change the world? No, of course not, but we have the ability and the authority to change anyone we can reach out and touch.

There will always be people who want to take ownership of the church. There will always be people who want God's people under their control. There will always be people who want to take something which doesn't belong to them. There will always be people who want to hurt you in one way or another.

Can we help to bring in the human harvest? Will someone have grown in Christ because of our influence? If we can say 'yes' to that question; if we have helped someone along life's way; if we have encouraged someone; if someone is one millimetre closer to Jesus now because of us; if we have done any of these things we have helped with the harvest and the world is a better place.

As long as we remember the words of Maltbie D. Babcock, 'This is my Father's world'. God owns this world and everything in it.