

Scripture: Isaiah 5:1-7; Mark 12:1-12

### A Parable (Story) of God's Wounded Love

Beloved in Christ, children can wound the love of their parents by their disobedience. Especially when they are a little older. If they disobey, or disrespect their parents over and over again, it hurts even more. The same can be said between a husband and wife. If the husband is unfaithful, the love of his wife is deeply wounded!

And so is it for the relationship between God and His people. In this relationship of love, God freely chose us in Christ, washed us and made us His children, but also His bride. God's love can also be wounded. We don't often think of it in this way.

But we see this in Jesus' parable in Mark 12. Jesus here tells Israel's story in the form of a parable, using the metaphor of a vineyard. It's a parable of His people rejecting God's love. And the wounding of His love culminates in their rejection of His only begotten Son, Jesus, whom God the Father sent to them. Their rejection of His Son (and His authority) is the proof of their wickedness.

In this parable, God reveals His wounded love to rebellious Israel, His own beloved people. We see that

1. His love perseveres (vv.1-8)
2. His love judges (v.9)
3. His love triumphs (vv.10-12)

1. He perseveres in His love (vv.1-8)

A. He planted her (v.1). She did not choose Him. God chose her and He planted her. In verse 1, Jesus appeals to God's song of His disappointing vineyard in Isaiah 5:1-7, a Scripture no doubt the chief priests, the scribes and elders were very familiar with.

Israel is pictured as the vineyard belonging to the LORD. He prepared it. He planted it. He did everything for it. He built a tower in it to care for it, a fence/hedge to protect it. He made a wine press in it, expecting it to bring forth fruit – all for His praise and the glory of His grace. In other words, He was looking for a response of faith and love, of total reliance on Him.

B. He sent servants to her (vv.2-5). In this parable, Jesus adapts His teaching to the farming methods of that day. It was common for landowners to be absent. They employed middle men to supervise the tenant farmers. In this parable, the owner leased the vineyard to the vinedressers ("some farmers" NIV) and went to another place.

We read in verses 2-5 that at harvest time, he sent a servant to the vinedressers, "*that he might receive some of the fruit of the vineyard from the vinedressers.*" How did the vinedressers respond to this servant? "*They took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed.*" At this point,

parable becomes very touching. It is shocking. The servant returns: he not only carries with him no grapes. In addition, he shows evidence of mistreatment and abuse. Does the owner fly into a rage and punish the offenders?

No, The owner then sends another servant. How did they respond to him? They threw stones at him, wounded him in the head, sent him away, treating him shamefully. And again, the owner sent another servant, and they killed him. Still the owner sent many other servants. Some they beat and some they killed.

The vinedressers/tenants are those who ruled in Israel – the chief priests, the scribes and the elders. They represent God's people. They were rejecting the message of the prophets, the word of the Lord and the warnings with it. The servants are the prophets whom the Lord of the vineyard sent. He sent them. This word "sent" is used 4x in this parable. God sending His servants was His act of love, of compassion to them. The Lord was looking for faith and trust from His vineyard. He poured out His blessings on them. He was looking for the response of faith, of love, and thanks from His bride!

Yet what was their response to the message of the prophets? Beating, throwing stones, treating them shamefully, even killing the prophets. Through Jeremiah, the Lord says *"Since the day that your fathers came out of Egypt until this day, I have even sent to you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them. Yet they did not obey Me..."*. (Jeremiah 7:25-26).

Yet He persevered in His love to His rebellious people, coming to them again and again through His servants. It was not the prophets they were first of all wounding, but the Lord who sent them!

Why does God keep on sending preachers? It's an act of His love! Why? He's reaching out for a response! The Lord know what lives in our hearts – if we are receiving His Word by faith or chaffing against it; that is, inflicting wounds on His love.

What the vinedressers did to the messenger they also did to his son.

C. Finally, He sent His Son to her (vv.6-8). This is the culmination of His enduring love! What farmer in his right mind would send his son to such tenants? *"Therefore, still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying 'they will respect my son.' Did they? But these vinedressers said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours. So they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard."*

Of whom is the son a picture here? Jesus, the Son of God, the One speaking! He is not merely the messenger but the beloved Son and Heir to the entire vineyard. At His baptism we hear these words, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"* (Mark 1:11).

Perhaps they would listen to Him, respect Him? After all, He is representative of His Father, sent with the Father's authority, come in the flesh. He is the last and the final Word of the Father. Yet how did they respond? They wanted control. They wanted to be God. They wanted to be in charge of their lives. They wanted to keep all the blessings of God for themselves and not share it with the Gentiles. Kill him, then we have full say! *"Come, let us kill Him, and the inheritance will be ours."* That's what they did. They took Him, killed Him and cast Him out of the vineyard (Hebrews 13:12).

'Rid the world of Him. Cast Him out – out of the schools, out of Christmas, out of Parliament Hill, out of the courts. Let's cast Him out of our hearts. Let's cast Him out of our lives and homes. Keep out His message, keep His servants out of our lives. We can do what we want with our lives.' If man can dispense with God, or even kill God, then man can become god!

How far will the owner let the vinedressers go? How long will He persevere in His love? Where is His justice? We that in verse 9. This brings us to our second point.

## 2. He judges in His love (v. 9)

Verse 9 says, *"Therefore, what will the Owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vinedressers and give the vineyard to others."* The vinedressers here represent the rulers of Israel. God will come and destroy them.

His vineyard was not Israel's possession, but God's possession, His work, His purpose, the apple of His eye. They have deeply wounded the heart of God, but He will not let His work go to ruin. The word for owner, translated literally, is 'lord.' This word is doubly appropriate here. He is owner but also God as Lord.

You cannot love without justice. Love includes justice otherwise love has no meaning anymore. His justice, His righteousness, prevails over their tyranny, the tyranny of these rulers in His vineyard. They can't get away with it and continue in their unrepentance. God must judge them, otherwise they think there are no consequences for sin. They rejected the message, the Word of God, even the Son of God Himself.

But God is not ethnic. God is not bound to a certain nation of people. The Jewish leaders would lose their place. They would be destroyed.

But would His judgment on them mark the end of God's vineyard? It looks as though the schemes of the rebellious tenants will wreck the owner's vineyard! But they do not prevail. Nor can they. His vineyard would remain. He would give the vineyard to others. To whom? We see a hint of that in Mark 11:17. God's house, in this case, His vineyard, is to be a house of prayer for all nations, the Gentiles. He who destroys this rebellious house (the temple) because of its unfaithfulness can resurrect a new house! She will bear fruit!

His mercy triumphs over judgment. Our sins may be great, but His mercy is more. We must repent of our sin and turn to Christ for mercy. In His love, Christ takes the judgment on Himself for all who believe in Him. In Him, in Jesus alone, is mercy and pardon. This brings us to our third point.

### 3. The triumph of His love (vv. 10-12)

Even now, Jesus reaches out in His divine love to the chief priests, the scribes and the elders. He says, *“have you not even read this Scripture...”* He directs this question to those who study the Scripture and have this Scripture. *“Have you not even read the Scripture: ‘the stone which the builders rejected, has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’ (vv.10-11)?*

Jesus quotes Psalm 118:22-23. To whom does the stone ultimately refer? This prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus. He is the stone. The builders rejected this stone. Who are the builders? It refers in part to the leaders in Israel. They rejected the stone; that is, Jesus. That rejection Jesus speaks about in Mark 8:31, *“the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priest and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.”* He *“was wounded for our transgressions.”*

The stone they rejected, cast out, and killed *“has become the chief cornerstone”*, in His resurrection to life from the dead, the seeming defeated One! The chief cornerstone, literally, the head of the corner, is the corner by which the entire new temple, His body, the church, is fitted together.

This is the Lord’s doing! This is marvelous, beyond our comprehension. They kill His Son, but God in His glorious plan uses their rebellious action to raise Him to life and build His new temple, the church, a house of prayer all nations. He who is killed is raised to life. *“He ultimately takes it upon Himself to produce the fruit that His Father wants to taste.”*

We, who by nature are dead and rebellious, are raised to life through faith in Him by the power of His Spirit who raised Him to life to bear fruit. It’s a miracle; it’s beyond our comprehension. It is a miracle of grace that He, by His Spirit, now reigns in your hearts so that you may love Him, walk with Him, love your neighbor – expressed in obeying His commandments.

After Christ arose, ascended, poured out His Spirit on the church, the apostle Peter said to the rulers of the people, *“This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:11-12).*

After hearing this, how do the chief priests, scribes and elders respond to Jesus? See **verse 12**, *“They sought to lay hands on Him . . . for they knew He had spoken this parable against them. . . .”* But they would not repent! The delegation of the rulers of Israel are beginning to act like the vinedressers/tenants in this parable.

Don’t reject the Son; otherwise it will be bad for you too! Rejection of Christ and His message but also humiliation is painfully apparent, even in the church. But it’s Christ who is ultimately wounded. But all the frustrations in serving in His vineyard, in the church, in no way frustrates the ultimate harvest to come.

You are His vineyard. All the privileges are yours by trusting in Him alone for your salvation. He gives you the fruit He looks for. He looks for a response of trust. Is Jesus your Savior and Lord? He wants your heart, your love, a life of thanks, your witness. That's a fruit-filled life. Live it to the full! Amen.

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