



THE FATHER OF A MURDERED SON

Part 82 of Luke's Gospel: Investigating the Man Who Is God

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Luke 20:9–18 | July 17, 2011

LUKE 20:9–18

⁹ And he began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard and let it out to tenants and went into another country for a long while. ¹⁰ When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, so that they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. ¹¹ And he sent another servant. But they also beat and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. ¹² And he sent yet a third. This one also they wounded and cast out. ¹³ Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.' ¹⁴ But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Let us kill him, so that the inheritance may be ours.' ¹⁵ And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? ¹⁶ He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others." When they heard this, they said, "Surely not!" ¹⁷ But he looked directly at them and said, "What then is this that is written:

"'The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone'?"

¹⁸ Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."

INTRODUCTION

Luke 20:9–18, "The Father of a Murdered Son."

"And he," that is Jesus, "began to tell the people this parable," which is a small story that tells a big truth. "A man planted a vineyard and let it out to tenants and went into another country for a long while. When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, so that they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. And he sent another servant. But they also beat and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. And he sent yet a third. This one also they wounded and cast out. Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.'

"But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Let us kill him, so that the inheritance may be ours.' And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him."

Jesus here is on his way to Jerusalem. He is days from his crucifixion. He is going to be murdered in a brutal and bloody way. And as he's approaching the cross and the crowds have gathered around him, he wants us to see human history and our lives individually from the perspective of God.

And this is very important because we live in a day where this is not encouraged. This is actually discouraged. We live in a day in which we want to see our lives and history from our perspective according to our own sinful desires and our own selfish pursuits, which can then even lead us to the point of questioning, is there a God? Or if there is a God, questioning the goodness of God. Is there a God? Does he care? Is he involved? Does he love us? And then we put ourselves in the position of judging God.

And then some of us can even go to the Scriptures and say, "I don't think God should ever get angry. He should never judge anyone. That whole issue of hell seems highly unnecessarily and over-reactionary. Perhaps, that was primitive teaching from a former day, thankfully we've evolved beyond that." And it's because we are the guilty looking at the judge and wanting to replace our position with his that we might judge him.

WHO DOES EACH CHARACTER IN THE PARABLE REPRESENT?

Jesus here wants for us to have an opportunity, in as much as we're able, with a three-pound, fallen brain and sinful proclivity and self-interest to put a hat on and to look at things, not from our perspective, but from God's perspective, to see our lives as God sees them, to see human history as God sees it. Now we're not God, so we have a limited capacity to do this. But in telling this parable, Jesus is trying to open our understanding to what it is like for God to deal with you and me and us. And he does so in the form of a parable.

For us to extract significant meaning from the parable, it requires that we go through, look at each of the characters and ask, to whom does that refer?

1. GOD IS THE LANDOWNER

We'll start with the fact that the story is told that there is a landowner, he owns the vineyard. He not only owns it, he planted it. He cultivated it so that it might be fruitful and he is away for a long season. Who is that? Well, that's God. That's God the Father. That's God the Father.

God made this world. It all belongs to him. It's his vineyard, as well as the nations of the earth belong to him. As well as, well, quite frankly, where you live—condo, dorm, apartment, whatever patch of earth you call home—that patch belongs to him as well. That's part of his vineyard. He made this world. The body that you and I inhabit is part of his created world. It's a gift that's been given to us that we might live a life that is pleasing to him.

So ultimately he's the owner of everything. He is the owner of everything because he is the Creator of everyone and everything. And what it says is that he, not only is the landowner, he is a Father. This is very important.

Sometimes it can be very difficult to emotionally connect with God because is God the kind of supernatural, immaterial force that is spoken of in pantheism, panentheism, monism, and general spiritism? Is God, like the deists say, the maker of the universe, but now an absentee landlord no longer involved in it? Is God, like eastern religions say, both good and evil? Are there multiple gods? Is there one God? Is God personal? Is God impersonal? Does God know me? Does God love me? Does God hate me?

When God chooses to reveal himself to us, he does so in a language that is to capture our affections. He uses the language of a father. Roughly fourteen times in the Old Testament, God is referred to as a Father, always in reference to the nation of Israel. And then when Jesus comes along, throughout the four Gospels, we read the language of God as Father appears some sixty times. And Jesus tells us to talk to God as a Father and to relate to God as a Father and to pray to God as a Father.

For you and me, this helps us clarify who God is and what God is like. He's like the perfect, loving, gracious Father. He lives us life. He gives us instruction, provision, protection, correction. That's our Dad. And our Dad owns everything and ultimately everyone has to give an account to this great Father. That is his roll in the story.

2. THE NATION OF ISRAEL IS THE VINEYARD

Number two, there is then the vineyard, the plot of land that is spoken of in the parable that the Father owns. The question is well, what is the vineyard? Well, in one sense it truly is all of creation because it all belongs to God. He made it all. But in this particular parable, it's narrowed specifically to refer to the nation of Israel.

And they would have heard, in the telling of the story, this metaphor of a vine as referring to them because it was a symbol that they used to represent themselves. And it went all the way back 700 years prior to Isaiah 5 where God says that "My people are like a vine to me. I tend to them that they might be fruitful."

Jesus uses this similar language, "I am the vine, you are the branches," that same kind of viticultural metaphor and imagery. And in the time when they went to the temple, they would have seen an enormous, golden vine, piece of ornate artwork. And where there was to be fruit, there were actually magnificent jewels. So as they would go to the temple to worship God, they would see this grand design and say, "That vine is supposed to be us. We're supposed to be fruitful. We're supposed to be fruitful."

In the same way, if you and I see a bald eagle, symbol of a bald eagle, we think, that's us. That's the symbol for America. If you're Canadian, you see a maple leaf, you say, "Eh, that's us." You just identify yourself with that symbol.

That's what the vine was for the Israelites, for the people of God here. And the point is that God wants them to get nourishment, sustenance, and life physically and spiritually from relationship with him that they might bear fruit. This would be spiritual fruit where they grow to be more like God wants. And this is where they would also be practically fruitful helping others know God, their lives to be improved, generosity and truth going out for the nations of the earth.

So that's the story. God is the Father who owns the vineyard, the nation of Israel in general and the people of God in particular are to be that cultivated, fruitful people that are a blessing to the nations of the earth.

3. THE CORRUPT RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND FALSE TEACHERS ARE THE WICKED TENANTS

Well, who are the tenants? The story says that these tenants are kind of like renters in our day. If any of you have a rental property or a condo, dorm, home, apartment, you rent it out to somebody and they're supposed to pay you rent, it's a bit like that.

The story is told there's this piece of land that's very fruitful and some tenants come and they rent it. They don't own it, they rent it. And their job is to cultivate this land, and to make it fruitful and then to take a percentage of their profit and then pay it back as rent to the landowner, which is a fair deal. Still works this way in a lot of places, both in our country and around the world. "I'll let you work the land. I'll still own it. You give me a percentage of profits." That's what they're supposed to do.

Well, lo and behold, the land is fruitful. They are turning a profit, but what do they do with the proceeds? They don't pay their rent. They don't give anything back to the landowner. They're stealing. They're greedy. They're stingy. They're selfish. They're thieves, like some of us, like some of you.

When you start to think, "It's my body. It's my life. It's my money. It's my house. They're my possessions. I don't owe God anything. I don't owe anyone anything. It's all mine." That's the same attitude that some of us have, and we don't give to God. We don't give to others. We don't give at all. And in so doing, what we're essentially communicating is, "It's not his. It's mine. I owe him nothing." That's not an attitude of gratitude. That's an

attitude of thievery.

Well, who are these wicked tenants? Well, ultimately, they're the sinful people of God and they're the sinful religious leaders. These would be those who keep fighting with Jesus throughout the story of the Gospel of Luke. Some of you are here and you're not Christians and you may misperceive Christianity into some of us thinking wrongly, "The non-Christians are the bad guys and the Christians are the good guys." And it's really not that easy because when you go to the Bible, there are sinners who sin and God tells them to stop and change by his grace. But then there are religious people who are sometimes the worst sinners of all.

And God is, at least, as displeased with their conduct as he is with the regular common-day sinner. And part of the problem with religious leadership is that it becomes very corrupted. And here's how it becomes very corrupted. It becomes very corrupted by figuring out what people want and then telling them that so that they'll pay for it. The Bible calls this false prophecy, false teaching and you can get very rich doing this. Like imagine how much money we can make in counseling if you came in and said, "I want you to say this is okay," and we did. That would pay very well.

What had happened in that day, the bad tenants, these wicked leaders, they were saying what everyone wanted to say. They weren't saying what God wanted to be said. When they spoke, they didn't speak the truth, they spoke lies. They weren't leading people toward repentance. They were leading people toward selfishness. They weren't encouraging people to obey God. They were encouraging people to tell them what they wanted to hear so that they could echo people's selfish desires and spend their money, thereby creating a religious system that was very profitable and fill their pockets for injustice.

So this is a condemnation on false religion and corrupt religious leadership. Those would be in the story the wicked tenants. These were supposed to be the Bible teachers and the priests and the kings and the leaders who are helping the people of God walk in the truth of God, and it wasn't happening.

4. THE PROPHETS ARE THE SERVANTS

Well, who then are the servants? 'Cause the story is told that the wicked tenants are getting profitable and fat and selfish, greedy, taking advantage of the grace that the landowner gives them, that God ultimately gives them. And the servants, then, are godly leaders who are raised up by God and sent to speak to people saying, "What you're doing is wrong. Where you're going is destruction. Who you're following is a false teacher."

These would include godly kings and godly priests in the Old Testament, but especially godly prophets. And God, oftentimes in the Old Testament, he refers to them by saying, "My servants the prophets." So the language here of the servant is the Old Testament prophet.

So you get the idea: The earth was made by God. Every nation belongs to God. You and I were made by God. God has given us life and breath so the air we breathe, the water we drink, the life we enjoy, the body we inhabit, the things we touch, the places we go, the people we meet, the objects we see, it all ultimately belongs to God. And we're here for his glory. We're here for his service. We're here as his possession. He's lavishly generous and good and he enables us to have life, and we're supposed to reflect his generosity by giving back to him and giving to others. And instead what we do, we become very corrupted. Some of us also become very religious, very stingy, very judgmental, very crooked, very hypocritical.

And so what does God do? He sends a succession of servants, particularly prophets. And he'd rise up prophets. And this is the story of the Old Testament. And God wants us here to view history from his perspective, not just ours. And the servants are those sent by God.

In the story one servant is appointed by the land-owning father. "Please go to my rebellious tenants and figure out why they don't pay the rent and why they're trashing my land and why they're taking advantage of my kindness." And the first servant goes and is beaten, near death, thrown out.

Imagine this is you. Let's say you live in one town. In another town you've got a rental home. You can't sell it because the market's upside down. This is not impossible. And you realize, "They don't pay their rent. And I hear they're trashing the place. So I'm going to send someone over there to knock on the door and see what's going on." They invite them in, beat them up, and throw them out. That servant then comes back to you. "How did it go?" "Well, from the hair pulled out of my head and the broken nose and the black eye and the cast, you might surmise, not well for our side." It didn't go well. They said, they're never gonna pay their rent and they just are defiant.

So the story is that the land-owning father says, "Okay, I'm gonna send another servant." It'd be a good day to call in sick. "Next." "What do you want me to do?" "Go knock on that door and see." "Oh, really? Okay." Same thing happens. They beat him up. They assault him and they throw him out. He comes back.

The story here is that God's pretty patient, right? How many of you at this point you're like, we need to just rent a whole season of "CSI," figure out how to hide the body. That's what we need to do. No, what God does, God says, "Well, send another servant." This is what he does with the prophets. He keeps sending the prophets to the nation of Israel and the nation of Israel keeps rejecting them. They're exiled, meaning they're cast out. They're harassed. They're opposed, sometimes beaten. Some are even murdered.

This is what God does. He sends loving, humble, truth-telling servants, the prophets. They receive a word from God and they communicate it either in written or in verbal form. And the people are hard-hearted, stiff-necked, and rebellious. They're a bunch of wicked rebels, and what they do is they oppose God and they persecute the prophets.

To be a prophet—Abraham Heschel says it right—it's both a distinction and an affliction. So, God picked you to be a prophet. "Yay, what's what mean?" You're gonna die. "Ah." See, nobody wanted to be a prophet. We read the Bible and I hear that all the time. "Oh, the people in the Bible, they had bad motives. They were just in it for themselves." Not the prophets. There's no kid in high school, you know, saying, "When I go to college, I'm

gonna major in being a prophet 'cause that's the slot I want for my life course."

You didn't want to be a prophet. God had to pick the prophets. The prophets didn't generally volunteer. God goes to [Jonah] and says, "You're going to be a prophet." "No, I'm not. I'm out of here. I'm done." God comes to Isaiah, "You're going to be a prophet." His first question is, "How long? How long?"

God comes to Jeremiah, makes him a prophet from his mother's womb. He gets out. He's the most depressed guy ever, ever. He's like a guy who lives in Seattle during a really bad winter wearing nothing but black. Right, listening to indie rock reading Edgar Allan Poe, [and] whose cat died. That's Jeremiah. That's how he feels. He writes a whole book called Lamentations, which is basically a bunch of crying poetry from a depressed guy who's not even allowed to get married. You read in Jeremiah, he says, "Cursed be the day I was born." That's a big statement. So what's the worst day of your life? "Birth. Birth. Every since then, it's just been downhill." He said, "Cursed be the man who brought the news of my birth to my father." Really? "It's a boy." "Curse you." That's a really depressed guy.

To be a prophet was difficult because you were sent by God as sort of this lone voice to tell all of the professing people of God. "You're wrong. You're in sin. You're in rebellion. You're being wicked. You're fighting against God. You've rejected the truth. Turn from your sin. Repent. Change. There's a sense of urgency. Do it now."

They would all get together and say no. Then they would bring in some religious leader they paid a lot of money and say, "We pay you to contradict that person. And then we'll pay you well. And if he doesn't be quiet, we'll kill him." And that's what happened to the prophet.

I wrote down some examples for you: Elijah ran for his life. Jeremiah was mocked and thrown in a pit, left for dead. Zechariah was murdered. And John the baptizer, beheaded. That's what happens to a prophet.

Back to the story that Jesus is telling, these are the servants that God has sent to us, to human beings, to rebels on the earth, to those of us who were enjoying his lavish, gracious provision. This is such an issue that when Stephen, an early church deacon, was preaching and they were getting ready to kill him, he had the most amazing sermon in Acts 7 and he says, "You stiff-necked people with uncircumcised hearts and ears, you are just like your fathers. You always resist the Holy Spirit. Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute?"

HOW DO WE BECOME THE WICKED TENANTS?

How do we become those wicked tenants? We decide we don't want to obey God, we want to be God. We don't want God to tell us we're wrong. We want to be the judge of our own life. And if God should send the Holy Spirit to convict us or a Bible teacher to instruct us—in those days it was a prophet or a king or a priest, in our day it's a missionary, an evangelist, a pastor or a Christian—we reject the truth. We rebel against the truth. We defy the commands of God and we do so boldly and arrogantly.

You see how kind God is. He kept sending people to be exiled. He kept sending people to be beaten. He kept sending people to be murdered. And that's what humanity did to the servants of God. That's what humanity does to the servants of God.

THE FATHER SENDS HIS SON

According to the story then, the father comes to one last effort. And the father determines, I will send my son. And the language is very significant. "Beloved son. I will send my beloved son. Perhaps they'll listen to him."

This language is very important. God is seeking here to get us emotionally connected so that as we view history and our lives and Scripture, we do so with a heart of God inasmuch as we're able. Now, how many of you are parents? Alright, you're parents? So when you hear the language of parent/child, it appeals to the affections, right, to the emotions? I've got five kids and I think okay, what if somebody hurt my kids? What if somebody killed my beloved son? Imagine that. That's the story.

So the son comes. He comes to the tenants, the wicked tenants, to human beings on the earth. That's the story, on behalf of the father, seeking to help and to serve and to mediate this difference, even though the father has done nothing wrong and the son has done nothing wrong and the people are totally guilty.

YOU AND I ARE THE WICKED TENANTS

And what happens? They see the son and they determine, "He's the heir. If we kill him, we can take everything." And they murder the beloved son. This is all about to happen as Jesus is on his way to the cross. It's days away. Emotionally, I need you to feel that. I need you to feel that you and I, friends, we're the wicked tenants. We've murdered the beloved Son. That's what we've done. When the Bible says that Christ died for the sins of the whole world, that God has laid on him the iniquity of us all, that's the Bible's way of saying, you, you have murdered the beloved Son, that his blood is on his your hands. This includes myself as well as a guilty sinner. The blood of the beloved Son is on our hands.

How would you respond if someone murdered your beloved child, your son, your heir? I mean, fathom that. Fathom that someone has done evil against you for years, rebelled against you, stolen from you, taken advantage of you, ignored you, harassed you, talked evil against you. People you've sent to try and work it out were just harassed, maybe even murdered and then you sent, as a final act of love, your only beloved son and they murdered them. This is the story of the world from the perspective of God.

And see some of you, you've really read the wrong books and listened to the wrong teachers because some of you would think, "God judges? That

doesn't seem right. God gets angry? That doesn't seem appropriate. There's a hell for people who don't apologize and repent? That's seems like a bit of an overreaction." That just shows how wicked we are. And the truth is, God is love and because God loves his Son, he has to be angry that we've murdered him, right? If you met someone and their child had been murdered and they said, "It doesn't really bother me, and I don't feel angry or upset and I really have no thought toward justice," you would declare you never truly really loved that child. It is impossible to see one that is loved be assaulted and even killed and not have a sense of righteous anger, appetite for justice and desire for something to happen. Correct? Because we're the guilty, we want to judge God. That just shows how wicked we are.

GOD IS LOVING AND HATES SIN

The story of sending the prophets, that's a few thousand years. This is a very patient God. When the Bible says that God is slow to anger, the wick burns for a few thousand years. How many of you, truly, would never treat your enemies like this? Patiently waiting, continually pursuing, lovingly enduring all kinds of suffering? We don't.

Because God is loving, he has to be angry when there is sin. Because God is loving, he has to be angry when there's injustice. When God is loving, he has to be angry when he is rebelled against and rejected. Because God is loving, he has to have a sense of justice, a sense of anger, even a sense of righteous wrath. When the Son is murdered, the beloved Son is murdered and God sent his only begotten Son to the earth and we murdered him.

WHAT WILL THE FATHER DO TO THE TENANTS?

Here's the question: What will the father do? What would you do? You all know what I would do. The thought of restraining my fury is something that I don't know if I could do. If I were God, this planet would have long ago been kindling. I would have kicked it like a soccer ball until I set it on fire. That's what I would have done with this planet and all of us. How many of you are with me? You say, "Yeah."

See, this is where, friends, hell makes perfect sense. People are like, "I don't understand hell." I don't understand heaven. Hell makes perfect sense. You hate God, you rebel against God. You oppose his messengers for thousands of years and you murder his Son. He's not happy, it goes bad for you. How's that not clear? Like, that's a surprise ending? What do you want a lollipop and a free trip to Disneyland and a back rub? That seems like the natural course of events. You pick a fight with God, ha, ha, you lost. Should have saw that coming. Right, somebody who's guilty over and over and over, they get arrested, go to jail. Nobody's like, "I can't believe that happened." Everybody's like, "Well, that's what happens."

Hell was made for the devil and his angels. You keep fighting God, that's the prison you go to forever. Here's what I don't get. You hate God, you reject him, you oppose him, and he's nice to you. He endures with you. He loves you. He speaks to you. He sends people who belong to him to extend a hand of friendship to you and he does it for years. That's amazing.

What's the father going to do? Here's the story: "What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them?" That's the question in Luke 20:15-18. "He will come and destroy," there's echoes of hell language, "those tenants and give the vineyard to others." God's going to work no longer primarily through the nation of Israel, but he's going to move on and work through other nations of the earth. "When they heard this, they said, 'Surely not!' But he looked directly at them," he's really emphasizing his point, "and said, 'What then is this that is written: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone'?" Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."

Jesus is saying, "I'm the beloved Son of God. The Father is away in heaven and he has sent me to the earth. It's all his vineyard and he's sent me to the nation of Israel to the supposed people of God. And you are about to murder the beloved Son just like you have the prophets." And they say, "Surely not." And Jesus says, "This is how it will be." And then he quotes Psalm 118:22 and he says, "Do you not remember roughly 1,000 years ago, it was written: 'the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,'" or the capstone, depending upon your translation.

JESUS IS THE CORNERSTONE

Here's the big idea. When you go to build something, you gotta get the right foundation laid, right? If you're gonna build a home, first thing's first, foundation, get it straight. It all starts with the first angle. The first corner. It's got to be a solid foundation. From there you can build everything forward. Any of you that have ever built a retaining wall in your yard or you've done any brick-laying work, first thing's first, start straight, start true. Get a good rock. Get a good stone. Get a good brick. Lay that one right. Get that one settled and secure and then you build everything else on it.

Well, the story here is like that. Many years prior, God had decreed that a temple be built that would essentially be his home where his people could come to worship him. And so they built it out of stone.

When we think of stone, we tend to think of rocks we move in our yard. I've been to Israel and the temple's no longer there because we don't need it. We have Jesus. But as you go underground where the foundation of the temple remains, these stones are enormous, like the size of a railroad car. They're huge. I mean, the fact that they quarried them and transported them and stacked them, I mean, it's an engineering marvel. I'm not exactly sure how all of this happened. So they quarried the stones—at least that's what the commentators believed this is in reference to—and they brought them all together and they were going to create the temple.

And there was one stone in particular that they looked at and said, "It's an oddball. It's the wrong shape. It's the wrong size. It doesn't work." And so it was rejected. It was thrown over on the scrap heap.

Then, as they started constructing the temple, they came to realize that oddball stone fits perfectly. Once we look at all that is required and necessary, that should, in fact, be the cornerstone, the capstone, the chief stone. That's the most important stone of all. So they reclaimed it from the quarry, laid it down

and then built the temple off of that stone. And Jesus says, "I'm like that."

See, we look at Jesus and first, he just looks like an oddball. "He's too rural. He's not urban. He's too single. He's not married. He's too poor. He's not rich. He's too powerless. He's not powerful. He's certainly not traveled enough. He's never been more than 200 miles from home. He doesn't come from the right family. They're poor peasants. His mom was a teenager. We don't even know where he went to college. We don't even think he has a degree. Certainly he can't be the Son of God. He's an oddball."

In addition, he just doesn't fit. He doesn't fit in the other religions 'cause he keeps saying offensive things like, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. I'm the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me. Your father's the devil. He says some stuff that's really hard for the philosophers and the religious professors at the community college to sort of work into their lecture without it turning into a debate. He's an oddball. He says things like, "I'm the resurrection and the life. That's a big statement from a thirty-year-old homeless guy. He just comes off like an oddball."

So he's cast off to the side. Religious people do this. Irreligious people do this. Philosophy professors do this. Historians do this. Sociologists do this. Psychologists do this. Some of you have done this. "He's just too odd. He doesn't fit." Off to the side. Jesus says, "No. I fit perfectly. I fit perfectly." Because he's perfect.

EVERYTHING HAS TO BEGIN WITH JESUS

The big idea is this: everything in your life has to begin with Jesus. That's the big idea. You say, "I want a great marriage." Start with Jesus and then build your marriage on Jesus. "I want to raise a family." Start with Jesus, then make some babies. "I want to have a business." Start with Jesus, then figure out your business. "I want to overcome some addictions, some sins, some hurt, some trouble in my life." Start with Jesus, work from there.

Anything you want to be or do all starts with Jesus. Don't let him be the rejected stone. And this is really the problem that some of you, quite frankly, are having practically with your life. You built your life, forgot Jesus and now you're trying to find a way to slip him in. It doesn't work like that. It doesn't work like that.

Some of you need to really honestly consider dismantling much, if not all, of your whole life. Say, "You know what? I'm trying to squeeze Jesus into my time, into my budget, into my life. Rather than squeezing him in, what if he went first? What if my first priority was get to know Jesus? What if my first priority was devotion to Jesus and what if I built my budget off of that? And my schedule off of that? And my career off of that? And my relationships off of that? And my marriage off of that? And children, if God should bless me with them, off of that? And grandkids off of that? And my life off of that? And my ministry off of that? And my death off of that?"

What if we started with Jesus? Some of you really need to consider what does it look like to just disassemble it all and start over with Jesus first. 'Cause the point is this, it's just like when you construct a building, a bad foundation means eventually it leans and then it collapses. You get the wrong cornerstone, it can't hold the weight, the angles get crooked and the architectural metaphor is it's only a matter of time before it crumbles. And life is like that.

God loves you and God wants your life to be fruitful back to the original analogy. He wants it to grow, and he wants it to be one that works for you to live in to honor him. And you can't build a life where Jesus is not in your life or just a part of your life. He has to be the cornerstone of your life. And Jesus says, "If you don't see me as cornerstone and you don't build your life on me," he said, "then I become a different kind of rock to you. I become the kind of rock that falls on you and crushes you."

For some of you, this is will be the last day of your life. And my hope, my prayer, my effort today is to get you to not reject Jesus, to not just cast him aside as an oddball because he doesn't fit your plan for your life. I want you to ultimately know, you need to consider God's plan and it's his life. But if you spend your days rejecting Jesus and then you die, the metaphor is that he is like this enormous stone that crushes you. And he uses this language of destroy and crush. And this is all language that is echo of hell.

Some of you would say, "I can't believe God would punish people." Friends, what would you do? What would you do if you were God? See, it's not enough to criticize God. You need a better plan. What would you do if you made the universe, if you made the earth? If you gave human beings life and breath and breathed your spirit into them and they rebelled against you? And starting all the way in the first days with Cain killing Abel, every time you sent someone to help them and tell the truth, they fought them. They opposed them. They persecuted them. They exiled them. They murdered them. And you waited a few thousand years patiently and you kept sending people to your vineyard, trying to help them out and finally you sent your beloved son and they murdered him.

GOD'S ANSWER IS JUDGMENT

What would you do? God's answer is justice. God's answer is judgment. God's answer is, "You better figure out what you're going to do with my beloved Son." Let me say this plainly and clearly. We're all the wicked tenants. Some of us just don't admit it. That's the only difference.

And friends, this is where God getting angry, God judging people, God pouring out wrath and sending them to hell, as a dad, I understand. That makes sense. I mean, I've got five kids that I love. At the thought that someone would murder my son, that's unconscionable. That they would murder my son just because they wanted to oppose me. That they would murder my son just because they wanted all that was his rightfully.

Here's the good news, what we call the gospel. You murdered the beloved Son. His blood is on your hands. His blood is on my hands. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. God has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Christ died for our sins, not only our sins, the sins of the whole world.

And the beloved Son was murdered, shamefully, painfully murdered. And we murdered him.

And three days later, the Father raised him from death. And the Son now looks at you and says, "The wage for sin is death. Since I died, why don't you tell me you're sorry and I'll have my death count for you? So that the Father won't be angry at you, so that you won't be eternally condemned, so that I won't be the stone that crushes you. I'll be the cornerstone that helps you rebuild a whole new life that glorifies God and bears fruit that will last."

So the Son looks at you today and he says, "How about your murder of me counts so that it would be my death in your place?" And then the Father looks at you and says, "If you will take that kind offer from my Son, here's what I'll do. 'I'll adopt you into my family called the church. I'll give you my name, the family name of Christian. And I'll call you my beloved son as well.'" You say, "But I hated your Son and I murdered him." "I know. But he's willing to allow his death to pay for your forgiveness. And if you will receive that, I'm willing to adopt you into our family. Not only that, because you were greedy and selfish and all you wanted was stuff, I'll give you an inheritance. I'll give you an inheritance that begins with the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit and it culminates where one day you will rise like the beloved Son rose and you will spend forever with me in a kingdom of lavish provision feasting, laughing, free of sin and suffering forever."

That's the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I don't know about you. I've been teaching the Bible here now for about fifteen years. When the Bible speaks of the gospel, the good news, the story of Jesus, it sometimes does so using another word called scandal. This is pretty scandalous. If you read in the paper tomorrow, "Evil people tormented an innocent man and murdered his son, and he forgave them, adopted them, and wrote them into his will," the whole planet would be buzzing about that event. That's exactly what the Father has done with the murder of his Son. That's exactly what the Son has done with his murder. And it's offered to you. This is the opportunity that God extends.

So if you're here and not a Christian, let me make this plain: If you reject this kind offer from God the Father and God the Son, you get what you deserve. There's no excuse for you. Don't judge God. Don't argue with God. The evidence is incontrovertible and you're guilt is certain. But, if you turn from sin and trust in the Son, forgiveness is assured no matter what you've done. No matter how wrecked your life is, Jesus is willing to become that cornerstone and help you rebuild a whole different life. And the Father is glad to receive you with open arms to adopt you forever as a beloved child and to give you an eternal inheritance. If you reject that kind offer, there's no excuse for you.

So here's what you do today, dear friend: you need Jesus. You need to turn from sin and trust in him. You need to tell him you're sorry that you've lived like the wicked tenant and thank him that he is willing to make his death count for your sin, and thank the Father that he's willing to adopt you into his family and that he's willing to help you and teach you and correct you, just like a great dad does with a rebellious child.

For those of you who are Christian, it's a good opportunity for us to revisit our life and ask, "Are there any aspects of my life in which Jesus is not cornerstone? Are there any aspects of my life where I'm living like the wicked tenant? It's my body. It's my money. It's my life." No, it's not. It all belongs to him and we're going to have to give an account. Are there any ways in your life that you're acting like the wicked tenants where God says things through the Holy Spirit or the Scriptures or through Bible teaching and you don't like it and you fight it 'cause you don't want to submit to God, you want to be God? That's how we get into all the trouble. Are there any areas of your life that you're not a fruitful vine? You're not living a life that is pleasing to God and profitable to others.

Then God is here to forgive you as a child, to correct you, to instruct you and to offer to you, in a very practical way, Jesus to help you rebuild that part of your life that it might be fruitful. I don't know about you. I'm amazed that God is like this 'cause this is nothing like me. If someone did this to me, I would be furious. If someone harmed my child, I would destroy them. And this is what God is like. Would you agree that he's loving? That he's patient? That he's gracious? That he's generous? That he's good? We are the wicked tenants. He is our good Father. Jesus is the beloved Son. Amen. That's where we have joy.

PRAYER

Father, as we consider this little story that explodes with meaning as it explains all of human history and the Bible, we want to say thank you, Lord Jesus, for being the perfect storyteller and the hero of every story in the Bible.

Father, we thank you that we get to call you Father. Of all the names that you could have chosen to reveal yourself by, that one is so special. For those of us who didn't have a dad, it fills a great longing. For those of us who had a bad dad, it's a correction of understanding. For those of us who had a good dad, we now see that he was just a dim reflection of a perfect Father.

Father, we thank you that you're our Father. We acknowledge this is your planet. This is your nation. This is your city. This is your body. This is your life. It's all yours and you've been generous and good to us. And some of us have been very greedy and stingy and we've not given or given back or been grateful. We want to repent of that now.

And Jesus, we thank you that after a few thousand years of prophets, starting with Abel who was murdered by Cain, you still came. You came knowing what we would do to you. You came knowing that we would murder you and you came. And you came to make enemies friends. You came to make wicked people righteous. You came to make murderers sons and daughters of the living God.

Jesus, we are scandalized by what you've done, but we want to repent of our sin. We want to say that we're sorry. We want to thank you for your kind offer of forgiveness and salvation. Father, we want to say thank you that you're willing to adopt us into your family. And Holy Spirit, we're inviting you to show us what does it truly mean to have Jesus as the cornerstone of everything we are, have, and do.

And we ask for that grace in Jesus' good name, amen.

