

Pentecost 19 ~ Matthew 21:33-46 NLT Parable of the Wicked Tenant-Farmers

³³ "Now listen to another story. A certain landowner planted a vineyard, built a wall around it, dug a pit for pressing out the grape juice, and built a lookout tower. Then he leased the vineyard to tenant farmers and moved to another country. ³⁴ At the time of the grape harvest, he sent his servants to collect his share of the crop. ³⁵ But the farmers grabbed his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. ³⁶ So the landowner sent a larger group of his servants to collect for him, but the results were the same. ³⁷ "Finally, the owner sent his son, thinking, 'Surely they will respect my son.' ³⁸ "But when the tenant farmers saw his son coming, they said to one another, 'Here comes the heir to this estate. Come on, let's kill him and get the estate for ourselves!' ³⁹ So they grabbed him, dragged him out of the vineyard, and murdered him.

⁴⁰ "When the owner of the vineyard returns," Jesus asked, "what do you think he will do to those farmers?" ⁴¹ The religious leaders replied, "He will put the wicked men to a horrible death and lease the vineyard to others who will give him his share of the crop after each harvest."

⁴² Then Jesus asked them, "Didn't you ever read this in the Scriptures? 'The stone that the builders rejected has now become the capstone. This is the LORD's doing, and it is wonderful to see.' ⁴³ I tell you, the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation that will produce the proper fruit. ⁴⁴ Anyone who stumbles over that stone will be broken to pieces, and it will crush anyone it falls on."⁴⁵

⁴⁵ When the leading priests and Pharisees heard this parable, they realized he was telling the story against them—they were the wicked farmers. ⁴⁶ They wanted to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowds, who considered Jesus to be a prophet.

Q.1. At whom does Jesus direct this parable? Why?

Q.2. In this parable who do the landowner, the tenants, the servants, and the son represent?

Q.3. What does 'the vineyard' represent? From this parable what is the future of the vineyard?

Q.4. Why do the tenants treat the landowner's servants and son with such hostility?

Q.5. What will eventually happen to the wicked tenants v.41? When will this take place?

Q.6. What do the wicked tenants do that is wrong? What are the religious leaders doing that is wrong?

Q.7. Jesus quote Psalm 118:22f about a stone the builders rejected becoming the capstone of the building. What does he mean? Who are the builders, who is the stone, and what is the building?

Q.8. In v.43 Jesus says the kingdom will be given to people who 'produce its fruit'. Who is he talking about? What are the fruit?

Application: for reflection, prayer and action

Q.9. If you were an absent landlord and had to find trustworthy tenants, what would you look for?

Q.10. With whom do you identify in this story? Why?

Q.11. How would you rewrite the parable of vv.33-41 to reflect today's circumstances?

Q.12. How might you do more to make Jesus the capstone v.42 of your daily living?

Matt 20:1-16 (my suggested answers)

NB. Please answer the questions yourself. We all have different ways of answering; God may give you greater insights than mine. Put '*John thinks*' ... before each answer.

A.1. It appears Jesus is speaking to some of Jerusalem's Chief-Priests and Elders of v.23 and Pharisees v.45. These are the self-appointed leaders & authorities of the people. Jesus focuses on them because they are leading the nation in a very unhealthy, wicked direction.

A.2. The landowner is God, the tenants are Israel (represented by her leaders), the servants are the Prophets God sent to warn the people to return to Yahweh in faithful living, the Son is Jesus.

A.3. The vineyard represents the nation/promised land (now the Kingdom). It will be taken from Israel and given to others (Gentiles?).

A.4. The tenants treat the landowner's messengers badly because they have become self-focused and ignorant of the kingdom's focus on the poor, the sinners, the tax-collectors, the sick and even on Gentiles. When the messengers come, they don't listen or repent – they become violent.

A.5. The kingdom will be taken from the nation of Israel (represented by their leaders) and broadened to include those Jesus came to find, save and make fruitful. (see answer 4)

A.6. The tenants did wrong by not sharing their harvest with the landowner despite many warnings. The religious leaders are doing wrong by ignoring Jesus and not being open and welcoming to the poor, the possessed, the sick, the outcasts, the tax-collectors and the sinners. In trying to renew Israel they were actually burdening the people with too many petty rules and financial requests.

A.7. The builders are the people of Israel represented by the leaders, the stone is Jesus and the building is the kingdom.

A.8. The love and loyalty God asks of his people will be reflected in their attitude and behaviour, especially showing mercy to the needy and sinners and seeking justice for the poor, the marginalised etc.

A.9. Your answer – I would want tenants who are trustworthy, open to share, careful about judging others, welcoming of the wayward and generous with the resources they have been given.

A.10. Your answer

A.11. your answer

A.12. Your answer – this should probably include being fruit-bearers v.43 and the Fruit of the Spirit in Gal 5:22f.