

## The Parable of the Tenants

<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 marvellous 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*

Moscow in my early 20's - I lived in a rented apartment which my company rented for me through a real estate broker that we'd found called Dovesgate - who were based in Essex.

At one point the Russians owner of my apartment began phoning me and shouting in Russian at me - none of which I understood. He did this with regularity.

One morning a week or two later he phoned our office. My secretary Sasha came to me and told me she had my landlord on the phone and unless we paid him \$12k by midday he'd cut my head off. In the moment, I laughed as you do when you are about to be assassinated and I corrected Sasha's English and said ' he's going to slit my throat not cut my head off'.

I'll never forget how she replied.

"I do know the difference slit your throat and cut your head off and he's definitely going to cut your head off."

At the time I had no idea I would one day be standing here teaching the parable of the tenants and applying that near death experience and it's implications to your lives.

We each have a psychological force that dictates our behaviour. You could call it the thing that drives you. This is obvious and is common sense. We all have goals. We all have a things that we are seeking after and pursuing.

The problem is - we don't just have one of these goals. We have many. We have multiple forces and they are often in conflict with each other. We might reach one of our goals but to do that necessitates losing the other.

This is all going on internally and we don't like to admit that we are angry or fearful or greedy so what we do is keep a lid things.

A therapist would tell you that is called repression. We aren't of course all of those.

The Bible's diagnosis of us is that we are all repressing and denying something utterly fundamental about ourselves.

But what is that?

It's the fact that the unregenerate and unborn human heart is not just indifferent to God but there is a contempt and enmity and anger.

We don't want God to be in charge. We want to be in charge.

I'm not angry with God. Jesus begs to differ - yes you are.

In Romans 8: 4 Paul write to the church there:

'The natural mind is enmity towards God. It will not submit to the law of God. Indeed it cannot'

We all have an innate anger towards God that we will not admit and this affects how we live and view our lives.

Unpack this through the parable in 3 ways.

Tenants relationship to the owner  
Tenants relationship to the messengers  
Tenants relationship to the son.

The owner

Pretty self-evident in the parable. The tenants must tend the vineyard for the owner. The owner has gone away, and he's left a load of tenant farmers to look after things for him.

They have to tend it by his word. In other words - he instructs them -as a boss does- and he gets the profit from their labours. After all he's the one who took the risk and who made the investment.

It's his vineyard not theirs.

You just need to look at Isaiah 5 or Jer 2 to see that in the OT Israel was described as the vineyard. The parable is addressed to the leaders of Israel, but it's also addressed to us.

You have a biological life. An emotional life and a spiritual life. You have talents and creativity and some of this depends on where you were born. You have a certain amount of power and privilege, and you've been given all sorts of things by divine providence - not by right.

The thing Jesus wants you to see is that you are a tenant farmer. You mustn't look on your life and your gifts, resources, professions and intelligence in any way as yours.

You are not the owner of your life. Jesus is.

What happens in the parable?

The tenants huge mistake is they start to act like owners. They cease to listen to the messengers and want to keep the profits and the produce for themselves.

Bring me on to my second observation.

2. The tenants relationship to the messengers.

He sent them messengers and each one got beaten up.

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35 "The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. 36 Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way.

But let me give this in a broader perspective. God, in his mercy, never gives us just one chance to repent.

What he does is he sends repeated messengers into our lives to tell us we are not owners....to shatter the illusion that we are independent and self-sufficient and have everything on plan and sorted under our direction.

The messengers, if we let them, tell us we are not our own masters.

Once you grasp this it changes your relationship with God and with your possessions.

Not only are you not the owner but everything in the vineyard is his. He asks us to give back the first fruits of the vineyard to him. Which is silly really because the vineyard is his in the first place.

So I can remember aged 23 working out to the last pound what 10% of my income was and giving it to God.

My messenger was a sermon I listened to given by my Vicar on giving to God. It could well have been on this exact passage.

Your messenger may have been a parent or a friend who at some point in your life tried to get you to see the truth and urgency of gospel.

Some Bible teachers talk about 'providential messengers'. This can be a tragedy or a frustration. An unfulfilled longing or an illness.

Sometimes people will complain about God saying look at the mess my life is in. How can I believe in God when this happened to me.

The opposite is actually true....

He is sending a messenger.

You can have goals and agendas that put you in the driving seat - but eventually life has a way of sending a messenger to show you are not the owner. Somebody else is. Jesus is.

You not in charge

You not the owner

You the tenant

If you don't grasp this your life will eventually be crushed. That is the invitation present here. Stand on the rock - the cornerstone- or be crushed under it.

Maybe right now there are messengers coming into your life telling you that you are this. Sometimes we battle over this. We think we need a certain thing for our happiness and fulfilment and that need relinquishing.

He is and wants to be your fulfilment and to have your attention and focus. Salvation is simply giving Jesus back what is already his.

### 3. The tenants relationship to the son

Now we get to the heart of the matter. When the son arrives, their enmity erupts and spills over.

Underlying our unhappiness and complaints about our lives lies a deeper anger. It's an anger against God and an unwillingness to give him control.

Most people say I'm not angry with God indifferent maybe. But you know you are on the way to becoming a Christian when you see this. Your sin isn't a violation of this or that rule. It's an unwillingness to let Jesus rule. To call Jesus Lord you need to

give up the reigns and take the crown off your own head and put it on his.

Famous atheist Huxley said he objected to morality because it interfered with sexual freedom. He was honest that rejected God because he wanted to sleep with women.

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This may make you feel a challenged- Jesus mean it to.

He was crushed so that we don't have to be.