

Title: The Book of Mark: Part 35, The Religious Rejection of God's King

Speaker: Corey Brown

Passage: Mark 12:1-12

Big idea: The response to this parable shows us the condition of our hearts.

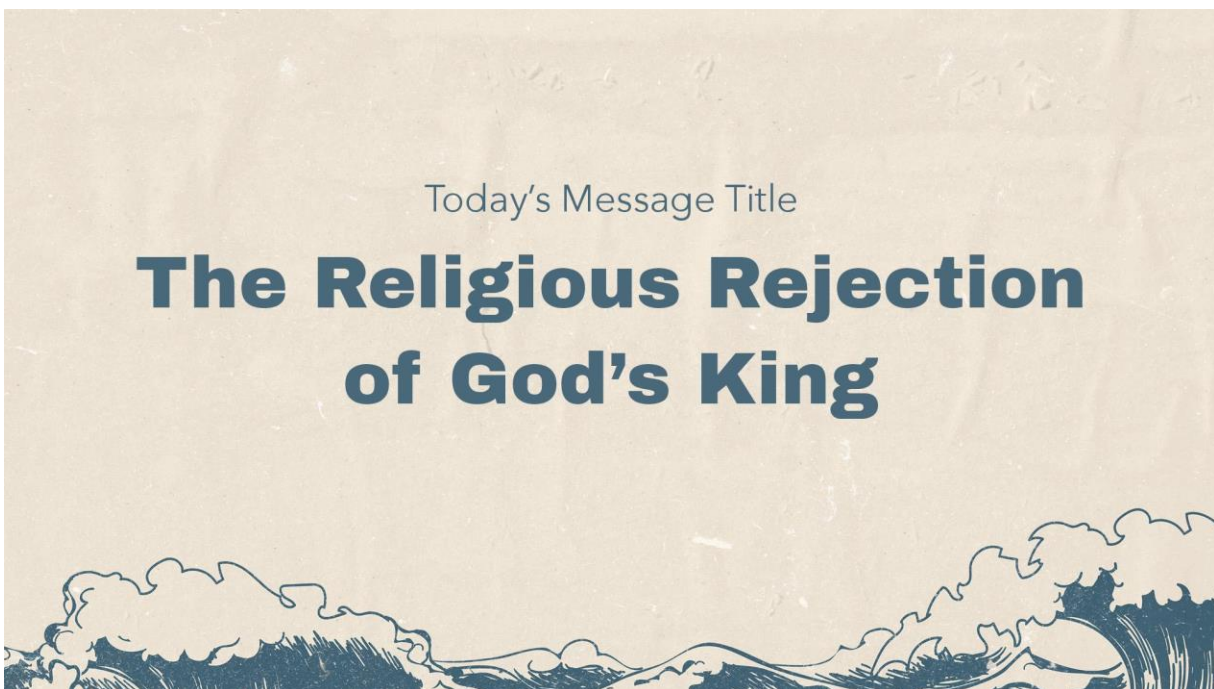


Today we are looking at a very famous parable of Jesus. It's actually the most hostile, contentious, and deliberate of all of Jesus' parabolic teachings.

Because this one is so drastically different from that of other parables, it is important to get a sense as to why Jesus speaks in a parable this way to the people, and for the purpose he is trying to accomplish.

Parables are:

- Stories with use of metaphors and allegories that include veiled or hidden meanings or moral implications.
 - Sometimes the parables are very easy to understand, other times they are not.
- Stories that use well known concepts to the hearers for a spiritual purpose (Mustard Seed, the Lost Coin/sheep/Sons).



¹He then began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. ²At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. ³But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. ⁴Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. ⁵He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed. ⁶"He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ⁷"But the tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' ⁸So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. ⁹"What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. ¹⁰Haven't you read this scripture: "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; ¹¹the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes?" ¹²Then they looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.

Mark 12:1-12

BIG IDEA

Our Response to this Parable shows us the **condition of our hearts.**



Mark 12:1, “He then began to speak to them in parables: ‘A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey.’”

Last week we walked through the authority of the Son of God. When Jesus and the religious leaders battle discussing where Jesus’ authority is from. The passage today is a continuation of Jesus being in the temple courts teaching people and interacting with the crowds.

We know that the twelve disciples are here with Jesus, that Jesus teaching brought in large crowds of people into the temple courts, and Jesus’ accusations of the way people were treating the Temple grounds brought a lot of attention from the religious leaders. So, there are the disciples, the crowd, and the religious leaders.

The Parable then depicts a vineyard with four elements:

1. The vineyard itself for grapes.
2. The wall for protection from animals.
3. The pit for the winepress.
4. The watchtower to protect from possible intruders.

Then, the farmer rents out the vineyard to hired hands, or appoints labourers to do the work of the land.

In this culture that was very common, so already the people listening are intrigued because what Jesus is saying is something they understood to happen regularly.

However, for the religious leaders, this instantaneously grabs their attention. They knew the Old Testament scriptures, the Scribes and teachers of the law, in particular, would have had massive portions if not the entirety of the Old Testament memorized. They would have immediately seen the connection to the story the Prophet Isaiah shares in Isaiah 5.

¹ I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. ² He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit. ³ “Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. ⁴ What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad? ⁵ Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled. ⁶ I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briers and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it.” ⁷ The vineyard of the LORD Almighty is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.

Isaiah 5:1-7

Isaiah 5:1-7 and Mark 12:1 look very similar and are set up exactly the same way. This connection would not have only pricked the ears of the religious leaders, but also would have instantly put them on the track of listening intently to how Jesus would relate his parable to Isaiah's. He has their full attention now.

Isaiah's vineyard statements were an indictment on the kings of Israel, how they treated God's Law, God's Land, and God's People. This has the potential to be very discouraging to the religious leaders.

Mark 12:2-3, "At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed."

Harvest season came, so the farmer sends a servant to the hired hands to see the yield of their work. Except, the hired hands do something terrible, they beat the messenger and sent him away, back to the owner of the field without any thought of recompense.

Mark 12:4-5, "Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed."

Then 'he' (the owner) sends another. They knocked him out and treated him shamefully. This word 'shamefully' could have a lot of connotations, but main point is that it is not used lightly by Jesus. It is the idea of profaning a man, possibly suggesting that they treated him the way the men of Sodom and Gomorrah wanted to treat the messengers of God, to have sex with them. Or to send them away from the city naked and exposed.

The treatment of the servants gets worse as the hired hands then killed the next one.

With each servant that comes from the owner, Jesus is growing the contempt of the audience towards the hired hands, and everyone is in agreement that these are truly evil men.

It should be clear to us now who Jesus is speaking about with regard to the owner, and the hired hands, or farmers, and the servants, or messengers.

- God is the Owner.
- The vineyard is the people of God.
- The Servant/Messengers are the prophets of God to the people.
- The Labourers are the human leaders of the people in rebellion to God.

Hard Hearts Reject **God's** **Messengers.**

(Mark 12:1-5)



The hired workers reject all the messengers of the owner looking for his take of the land, he is looking for fruitfulness and he ends up with rejection and mistreatment of those who come in his name. At the very least they say to the owner, "we don't care about what you want".

Even with how they are treating the messengers, or servants of the vineyard owner. The owner still desires the fruit of what he owns and so he does something astonishing:

Mark 12:6, “He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’”

This is the crux of the whole teaching here.

The owner will go to such lengths as to prove his ownership, to prove his right, to prove his commitment to what he has, that he is willing to send the heir to the entire fortune.

The closest literal translation should read, “his beloved son who he had yet to send”.

Sound like a familiar passage?

John 3:16, God’s only Son.

Mark 12:7-8, “But the tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.”

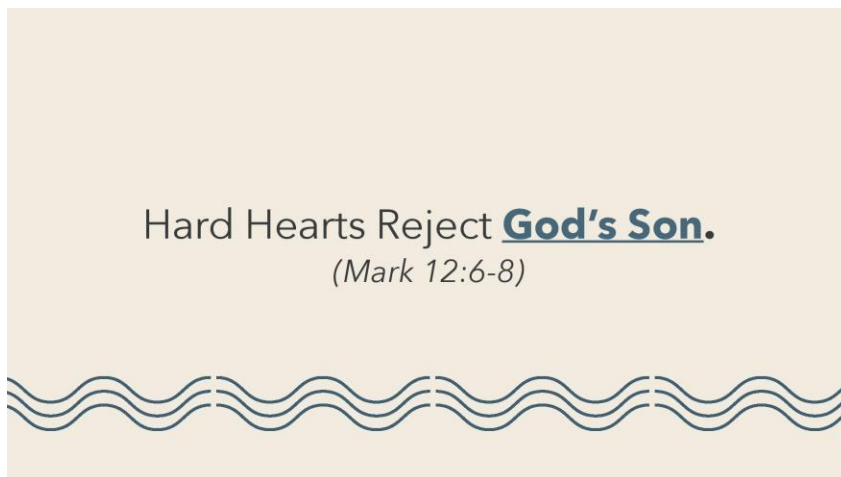
The tenants are thinking that the owner is dead because he has not come yet. They are thinking, clearly we can do whatever we want, because there has been no recourse, so if we can get rid of the heir to the fortune, we can take it for ourselves.

And that’s what they did. Jesus shares that they took the son and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.

Now to us this seems as clear as can be. Looking at this from the post resurrection side, we know exactly what Jesus was saying here. That Jesus, who is God’s beloved son, was sent to those who reject him, and they killed him to get him out of the way to indulge their own greed.

Matthew and Luke’s Gospels actually recount this parable a bit differently. Both record that the son was taken out of the vineyard, and then killed. Just as was done to Jesus, taken out of the city of his Father (Jerusalem) up to the hill outside the city of Golgotha and killed there.

People would be completely floored at the treatment of the rightful heir to that fortune.



Theologically it is here where we must spend our time.

Jesus has said to them as plainly as can be, “you, the religious, are the hardhearted and are rejecting God’s own Son, the rightful heir to all things”. It is this more than anything else that raises God’s wrath against humanity, that we would be so bold as to mistreat and even kill the Son of God, the King of the universe.

Mark 12:9, “What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.”

Once his son is mistreated, once his beloved is killed, this brings forward the anger of the owner and his vengeance towards the evil of their hearts.

God the owner of the vineyard will then remove the work from the tenants and give it to others. Others who are willing to treat his son and his vineyard the way they are supposed to.

Jesus then continues and draws the attention of his hearers elsewhere in Old Testament, from the Psalms.

Mark 12:10-11 “Haven’t you read this scripture: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”

This is from Psalm 118, which has previously been quoted by the crowds during Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. The people shouted “Hosanna, Hosanna in the Highest, Hosanna to the Son of David”. This was from Psalm 118.

Jesus refers to himself as the capstone. A Capstone is a stone that fits together as a Cornerstone, at the top of a column, or at the junction of a corner to hold the whole piece together.

Another way of thinking is that the cornerstone is the foundation upon which everything is built. If this stone does not fit, the whole thing falls.

Another thing that is interesting here is the play on words that Jesus uses in this text. We are unable to see it and understand it in English, but in Greek it makes great sense.

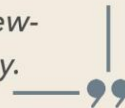
- The word “stone” is *eben* in Greek
- The work “son” is *ben* in Greek

See this similarity. The son from the story is the stone (*eben*) that they are rejecting, and the stone (*eben*) they are rejecting is God’s Son (*ben*).



Jesus thus connects the story’s son of the landlord (12:6) to the rejected messianic stone of Psalm 118:22 (12:10). This is also supported by the Hebrew wordplay *ben/eben* (“son”/“stone”).

“Mark” from ESV Expository Commentary Vol 8: Matthew-Luke. (p. 636) by I.M. Duguid, J.M. Hamilton. Crossway.





How appropriate is the application of these verses to the suffering and glory of Jesus! (cf. Mt 21:42; Mk 12:10; Lk 20:17; Ac 4:11; Eph 2:20; 1 Pe 2:7)

He suffered in his rejection by humankind, but the Father demonstrated his acceptance of the Son by making him the “chief cornerstone”.

*The Expositor's Bible Commentary,
Volume 5: Psalms (Revised Edition)*



Hard Hearts Reject **God's Plan.** (Mark 12:9-11)



There is only one way to Heaven, there is only one plan of salvation, there is only one King, there is only one Cornerstone, there is only one Saviour; there is only one plan that God has laid out for us to come to know him, be reconciled to him, and to be redeemed by him.

Mark 12:12, “Then they looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.”

They, the chief priests, scribes, and teachers of the law sought to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable about them.

Unlike Isaiah's vineyard allegory where it was the land and the kings of Israel who had failed the people. The religious leaders and the Sanhedrin are now seen as the wrongdoers. They are the ones under God's judgement, they are the ones under his hand, and they do not accept this.

This is so sad because the call of Isaiah after the pronouncement of judgement in chapter 5 is the statement of God sending Isaiah to be the mouthpiece of repentance to wayward Israel. The call to return to their God, to honour and worship him, to obey his commands, to depend on him. But, Jesus does not invite them to repentance, he leaves them with this story, because they know what they should do.

They have two options:

1. Repent of their wickedness in hindering and harming the people of God with their rules and regulations. Repent of their treatment of God's servants/messengers the prophets. Repent of their treatment of God's Son, the Owner's Son. And to acknowledge their need of grace.
2. Or, to reject it all.

Hard Hearts Reject **Godly Repentance.**

(Mark 12:12)

When our hearts are hard like this, we can so easily move away from what we know we should do and move towards self-righteousness, blame shifting, and accosting those who are pointing out our sin and our disobedience.

In this way we actually show ourselves not to be the onlookers in the story as Jesus teaches this parable, but we can actually show ourselves to be those whom he is directing this parable to.

Now this passage is not about us. It is not a prescription to modern day people because none of us are Jewish Scribes or part of the Pharisees and Sadducees of Israel, but we, all of us, share the same condition of heart. Our human hearts can be so hard against the things of God. It is our bend as humanity.

Hard Hearts:

- Reject **God's Messengers.** (Mark 12:1-5)
- Reject **God's Son.** (Mark 12:6-8)
- Reject **God's Plan.** (Mark 12:9-11)
- Reject **Godly Repentance.** (Mark 12:12)

For the Christian, we just do one simple thing, we change the words "Hard Hearts" to "Gospel Hearts" and "Reject" to "Rejoice In", we change our hearts attitude and affections, and we focus on Jesus.

The only remedy to this, is a focus, on Jesus, the Cornerstone. The Beloved Son. The King of God's Kingdom. To treat him rightly, to behold his love toward us and worship and revel in the majesty of his glory.

I want to leave you with what Charles Spurgeon the great English preacher said about this passage and how God responds to the hardness of our human hearts.

“If you reject Him, He answers you with tears. If you wound Him, He bleeds out cleansing. If you kill Him, He dies to redeem. If you bury Him, He rises again to bring us resurrection. Jesus is love manifest.”

Then he adds:

“Let us see for a minute who this Messenger is. He is one greatly beloved of His Father and in Himself He is of surpassing excellence. The Lord Jesus Christ is so inconceivably glorious that I tremble at any attempt to describe His Glory. Assuredly, He is very God of very God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and yet He deigned to take upon Himself a human form! He was born an infant into our weakness and He lived as a carpenter to share our toil. [...] He took upon Himself the form of a Servant and yet in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily! He is the Prince of the kings of the earth and yet He took a towel and washed His disciples’ feet! [...] Because of His Godhead you must not dare to harden your hearts. He is God’s Well-Beloved and if you are wise, He will be yours. Do not turn your back on Him whom all the angels worship! Beware, lest you reject One whom God loves so well, for He will take it as an insult to Himself—He that despises the Anointed of God has blasphemed God Himself! You put your finger into the very eye of God when you slight His Son! In grieving the Christ you vex the very heart of God—therefore do not do it. I beseech you, then, by the love which God bears to His Son, to listen to this matchless Messenger of mercy who would persuade you to repent.” (Spurgeon, “The Pleading”)