

从凶恶园户的比喻来认识历史向我们所彰显的那一位伟大的神——马可福音 12:1-12

Seeing the Greatness of God from the History Revealed in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants—Mark 12:1-12

Introduction and Outline

- Scripture reading: Mark 12:1-12; 1 Peter 2:4-10
Mark 12:1-12 (NASB 1995)

1 And He began to speak to them in parables: “A man planted a vineyard and put a wall around it, and dug a vat under the wine press and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. 2 At the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order to receive some of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers. 3 They took him, and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 4 Again he sent them another slave, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully. 5 And he sent another, and that one they killed; and so with many others, beating some and killing others. 6 He had one more to send, a beloved son; he sent him last of all to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ 7 But those vine-growers said to one another, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!’ 8 They took him, and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. 9 What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others. 10 Have you not even read this Scripture:

‘The stone which the builders rejected,

This became the chief corner stone;

11 This came about from the Lord,

And it is marvelous in our eyes?’”

12 And they were seeking to seize Him, and yet they feared the people, for they understood that He spoke the parable against them. And so they left Him and went away.

- This parable shows us both the sinfulness of man and the greatness of God. Of all Jesus’ parables, this one covers the broadest historical scope. This parable is like a magnificent painting, displaying the vast history as God has orchestrated it before our eyes. The focal point of this historical panorama is Israel, the nation specially chosen by God.
- Earlier, Jesus responded to the religious leaders' challenge to His authority with a clever question (Mark 11:27-33). Then, Jesus took the initiative to expose their wickedness and pronounce God's judgment on them with three parables (Matthew 21:28-22:14), of which the parable of the wicked tenants is the richest in its message.
- Title: Seeing the Greatness of God from the History Revealed in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants—Mark 12:1-12
 1. The Gracious Provision of God (v. 1)
 2. The Long-suffering Patience of God (vv. 2-5)
 3. The Sacrificial Love of God (vv. 6-8)
 4. The Righteous Judgment of God (v. 9)
 5. The Faithful Word of God (vv. 10-12)

The Gracious Provision of God (v.1)

- “Vine-growers/tenants”: They are the farmers hired by the landowner. They live on the owner's property and farm his land for him. When the harvest comes, the tenants can keep a portion of the produce for themselves, while the rest must be given to the landowner.

- “Vineyard”: Grape vine is a symbol of Israel (c.f. Psalm 80:8-19). By the time of Jesus, grape vine had become a cultural emblem representing the Israelites’ identity. They used many vine motifs in their temple decoration.
- “The owner of the vineyard”: Obviously, it refers to God. Although it’s titled "the parable of the wicked tenants," the real protagonist is the landowner. This parable intends to give us a comprehensive view of God's greatness!
- “A wall...a vat...tower”: The landowner did everything he could to ensure the growth of the vineyard, providing it with all the resources it needed. The same picture is also presented in the parable of the vineyard in Isaiah 5:1-7. This should’ve made the tenant’s job very enjoyable.

The purpose of the wall is to protect the vineyard, preventing it from being trampled by wild animals; the vat is built so that the farmers can enjoy the fruits of their labor; and the tower is to provide the tenants with a place to live and rest, offering shelter from wind and rain, and a place to store their goods...

【Analogy】 How many blessings and benefits have we received from God? Family, friends, food, air, health, peace, strength, talents... Hasn't God cared for us in every possible way? Shouldn't we be grateful for these things? Shouldn't we bear fruit for God, repaying His grace with acts of true worship? God has been so good to us.

【Warning】 Human nature is insatiable. We often take for granted the abundant grace we’ve already received, yet we begrudge the things God, for our own good, withholds from us. God protects us daily with innumerable grace from possible disasters. In the news, we see famine, war, and natural disasters happening every day. Why haven't they happened to us? Is there any other explanation besides God's abundant grace?

The Long-suffering Patience of God (vv. 2-5)

- “Sent a slave to the vine-growers...”: In the context of that time, it was very common for a landowner to send slaves to collect the produce. The tenants were required to turn in a portion according to the agreed-upon ratio. There’s nothing unusual about this practice.
- “They took him, and beat him and sent him away empty-handed”: This is utterly against common sense and would never happen in real life! The audience couldn’t imagine such rude and violent tenants. As hired workers, they depend on the owner for livelihood and to support their families; yet, they showed not the most basic respect for the owner. Not only did they not express any gratitude, they even refused to fulfill their basic obligation. In addition, they even used violence to repay kindness with evil. This is unimaginable malice.
- “Again he sent them another slave...”: Even worse than the first slave. This one was wounded on the head and treated shamefully.
- “And he sent another”: At this point, the audience should’ve started to frown. Is it really wise for the landowner to do this?

- “That one they killed”: Now that murder has occurred, the landowner will surely change his strategy, right? With such lawless villains, what the owner should do is to go to the court, send soldiers, and quickly bring justice on their head. However...
- “So with many others...”: Do you see God's long-suffering patience? Throughout the Old Testament, God continually sent prophets to Israel who condemned sin, called them to repent and return to God, hoping they would bear fruit of repentance and worship God. God tirelessly sent prophets to gather fruit, but how did the Israelites treat these prophets?

Isaiah was sawn in half, Jeremiah was put in stocks and later thrown into a muddy pit, Micaiah was struck in the face, Zechariah was stoned to death, Jezebel killed many prophets, and John the Baptist was just recently beheaded by King Herod...

Martin Luther once said, "If I were God, and the world had treated me as it treated Him, I would kick the wretched thing to pieces." It's good that Martin Luther is not God; otherwise, I'd surely die a horrible death...

【Reflection】 In today's world, one thing that really shows me God's long-suffering patience is the popularity of false teachers who spread demonic teachings in the name of Christ. One pastor says, *"The fact that these people are still alive is sure proof that God's long-suffering patience is truly beyond our comprehension."* I am in full agreement with this statement.

The Sacrificial Love of God (vv. 6-8)

- “He had one more to send, a beloved son...”: There's no more slave to send. The last one he could send is his own son.
- “They will respect my son”: This is not to say that God made a mistake by wrongly trusting those wicked men. Instead, it emphasizes that when God sent Jesus, He did so with the good intention of “not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance”.

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

- “He sent him”: The audience were certainly shocked by this. They'll surely kill his son! Who would do such a thing? Given the previous events, the landowner should have sent an entire army to destroy these evildoers and take his vineyard back. Yet instead, he sent his only beloved son. It's an unimaginable act of self-sacrificing love!
- “But”: Not really a surprise to God. Jesus' death was the Father's plan from the beginning. The surprising element is from a human perspective. Looking at what the tenants did from a human standpoint, it was completely unimaginable, shocking, and appalling.

【Principle】 From a human perspective, rejecting Jesus indeed has an unimaginable and shocking element to it.

- “Let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours”: Their motive was to claim ownership to the property. In reality, religious leaders had long claimed ownership to God's property. Even before they killed Jesus, they already considered God's kingdom as their own (c.f. John 11:48).

【Principle】 Essentially, all who reject Jesus do so because they want to claim ownership to God's property—money, time, body, family. So when Jesus asks you to leave everything to follow Him, you'll want to murder Him in your heart.

【Wonder】 Yet God would use the most extreme evil of man to accomplish the most key step in redemption—that **the perfect and sinless Jesus would bear all the sins of all believers on the cross, paying the full price for all their sins by His extremely painful sufferings on the cross.** Behind the most heinous sinful act of man, what we see is God's greatest act of sacrificial love.

The Righteous Judgment of God (v. 9)

- “He will come and destroy the vine-growers”: Matthew says “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end”. One day, God will execute severe judgment upon all evildoers. God's nature has a righteous anger against sin.
- “Will give the vineyard to others”: Matthew says “will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers **who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons**”. Who are these other vine-growers, or the new leaders who will faithfully manage God's kingdom and pay God faithfully at the proper seasons? Of **Acts 2:42** (the early church) “They were continually devoting themselves to **the apostles' teaching...**”
Matthew 19:28 “...you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

The Faithful Word of God (vv. 10-12)

- “Have you not even read this Scripture...”: The evil you're planning to do and its ultimate outcome have already been prophesied in Psalm 118:22-23! You are fulfilling the prophecies of the Old Testament with your evil scheming!

【Principle】 All the evil acts of man are to fulfill the whole prophecy of the Bible. If I weren't yet a believer, this would've shocked me to wake up to reality! God's Word is so truthful that even the sins of sinners would eventually work out to fulfill His prophecies.

- “The chief corner stone”: The first stone builders would lay in the foundation of a building. It determines the direction and connection of all other stones, and hence the entire building.
1 Peter 2:4-5 “And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”