

Introduction: There are always at least two kinds of people, two ways of looking at things, and two ways to act. *** Consider 'absentee landlords'. Most people would prefer a local landlord who visits their apartment complex regularly and responds to telephone calls. Too often out-of-state landlords view their ownership as an investment and focus only on their rental income. *** I had a work friend in Springfield who put aside enough of his income to become a co-owner of an apartment building with his high school friend who became a bank vice president. He told me about renters who called him in the middle of the night because something broke and they wanted it fixed the next day. He and his friend had a network of repairmen, and would do their best to help their renters. He said that when they bought the property, they had not realized how much time they would spend helping their renters. I think it is safe to say that their renters would never want an 'absentee landlord'. *** But, there are some renters who view themselves as stewards of their landlord's property. They want to do what they can to keep it in good condition, and even go the extra mile to improve it. If the landlord lives far away, they always mail the rent check on time. And, when the landlord sends his local representative to check in on the renter, the meeting is always productive. *** I think you all see how this ties in with Jesus' main parable this morning. In the first sentence of the parable, Jesus implies God is an 'absentee landlord'. He has called His people to tend His vineyard so that it will bear fruit, which is His fruit because He both planted it and chose them to work it. And, He sends prophets and other gifted servants to His chosen workers to collect His fruit. *** When God's appointed workers become greedy, and want to replace Him as the owner of what is His to the point of becoming violent with His servants, destruction is the final step. *** God's workers must respect God in humility, and request grace to act responsibly. Even though God is the initiator of what people are called to do, each person has the responsibility to act according to His will. First, all must receive His grace. Then, they must exert themselves to co-operate with what He teaches them to do. *** We are now ready to process our passages to God's glory.

I. Jesus tells religious leaders a parable about a man with a vineyard and rebellious tenants who abuse his servants and kill His son, so the vineyard owner will destroy them; knowing they are the tenants, the leaders leave conflicted. (Mark 12:1-12)

A. Jesus begins a parable about a man who leased his vineyard to tenant farmers who refused to give him his fruit, abused his servants, and killed his beloved son. (Verses 1-8)

1. He began in parables to speak to them: Vineyard a man planted, he put around a hedge, he dug a vat to receive the wine, he built a tower, he leased the vineyard to tenant farmers and he went away. (Verse 1)

Three elements: There is the owner, the vineyard he planted, and hired farmers because he went away.

Vineyard: The vineyard is Israel (per Isaiah 5 and Psalm 80).

2. He sent to the tenant farmers, in the season, a servant that from them he might receive from the fruit of the vineyard; and, having caught him, they beat him and sent away empty. (Verses 2-3)

Sends servant: The owner sent a servant to collect the fruit of the vineyard. In the Isaiah passage, The Covenant God looked for good grapes (verses 2, 4).

Rebels: The tenant farmers beat the owner's servant and sent him away empty. So, rather than justice and righteousness, the owner finds only bloodshed and cries of distress (verse 7). Jesus modeled His parable on Isaiah's prophecy.

3. Again, he sent to them another servant, and this one they wounded in the head and treated shamefully; and another he sent, and this one they killed; and many others: some indeed beating, but some killing. (Verses 4-5)

Repeat and re-cycle: Jesus tells of three individual servants meeting with increasing violence until the third is killed. Then, he sent many more with the same negative results.

4. Yet one he was having: son, well beloved; he sent him last to them saying: they will respect my son. (Verse 6)

Respect beloved son: Jesus is teaching God's people to respect authority, especially God and His well beloved Son. It is clear God is frustrated by the rebellion of His chosen tenant farmers.

Jesus teaches respect, not rebellion.

5. Those tenant farmers among themselves said: This is the heir; come, let us kill him and of us will be the inheritance; and, having taken him, they killed him and cast him out of the vineyard. (Verses 7-8)

Kill heir: They falsely, foolishly believed by killing the heir they would inherit the vineyard.

Chosen stewards had a duty and responsibility to humbly respect the owner and his heir!

B. He then says the lord of the vineyard will destroy the tenant farmers and give the vineyard to others; when He quotes a Messianic Psalm to them, they have mixed emotions and go away. (Verses 9-12)

1. What therefore will he do, the lord of the vineyard? He will come and he will destroy the tenant farmers and he will give the vineyard to others. (Verse 9)

Destroy tenants: Jesus gives God's response: He will punish the rebels among Israel and will give the stewardship of His vineyard to others who will respect His gracious authority.

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2. Not this Scripture you all have read: The stone they rejected, those building, has been made into the head of the corner (cornerstone); from Yahweh became this, and is being marvelous in our eyes? (Verses 10-11)

Jesus quotes Messianic passage: Jesus is quoting Psalm 118:(22-23), a Messianic Psalm. We will use it both Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. He is saying worship God for His marvelous works.

3. They were seeking Him to seize, and they were afraid of the people, for they knew that against them the parable He spoke; and, having left Him, they went away. (Verse 12)

Torah experts: Jesus spoke this parable to chief priests, teachers of Torah and elders (Mark 11:27).

Mixed emotions and defeat: They are trying to execute a 'power play' against God's Son, but they are also afraid of the people. They are fighting conflicting emotions. So, experiencing conviction from God, these rebels slink away, lost in their rebellion.

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II. Pharisees and Herodians seek to trap Jesus on paying Roman taxes, His wise answer about divided obligations leaves all amazed; David describes how to worship God in response to His LOVE. (Mark 12:13-17; Psalm 86:6-13)

- A. Pharisees and Herodians set a trap for Jesus about paying taxes to Rome; Jesus gives a wise but difficult answer, acknowledging Rome and God, and all are amazed. (Mark 12:13-17)
1. They are sending to Him certain of the Pharisees and Herodians in order Him they may catch off guard in (His) words; and, having come, they are saying to Him: (Verses 13-14a)
Round two: The Jewish leaders walked away from Jesus conflicted and defeated; but, now they return.
New team: But this time they send Pharisees, highly respected for their dedication to Yahweh; and, Herodians, loyal to Herod, the Roman governor. A strange mixture of religion and state!
 2. 'Teacher! We had known that truth Thou are being, and not it is of concern to Thee about any man; because, not Thou are regarding person of men; but, of truth, the way of God Thou are teaching: Is it lawful to give tax to Caesar or not? May we give, or not we may give?' (Verses 14b-15a)
They set the trap: If He supports paying of taxes to Rome, His followers who need and expect Him to free them from Rome will turn on Him; but, if He opposes the payment of tax to Rome, Herod could arrest Him for rebelling against Rome.
 3. But, He had known of their hypocrisy; He said to them, 'Why Me, you all are tempting? You all must bring a denarius that I may see'. (Verse 15b)
Jesus responds to hypocrisy: He knows this is a hypocritical alliance, united only in their hatred of Him. He asks for a common Roman coin worth a day's wages.
 4. They brought it, and He is saying to them, 'Of whom (is) this image and superscription?' They said to Him, 'Caesar's'. (Verse 16)
They admit to Caesar's image: They give the straightforward answer, suspecting nothing.
 5. But Jesus said to them: The things of Caesar, you all must give to Caesar, and the things of God, to God'. And they were being fully amazed at Him. (Verse 17)
Wisdom: Is Jesus separating secular and sacred? The Pharisees cannot offend Rome in front of the Herodians. And Solomon said, 'Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death' (Proverbs 11:4, RSV). Jesus also endorses what Paul later wrote to the churches in Rome about God ordaining human government (Romans 13). The Herodians are glad they can collect taxes.
Great Commandment: But, the truth is that everything belongs to God, because He made everything (Psalm 24:1). Jesus wants all to remember The Great Commandment that His people must love God with all they have (Deuteronomy 6:4-7). So, they should respect Rome and not rebel against God.

Jesus teaches respect, not rebellion

Fully amazed: The people in this unholy alliance realized they were trapped in their own trap. They may not have understood all we do now, but they marveled at Jesus' wise and godly answer.

- B. David's Psalm describes how God's people live The Great Commandment by worshipping God with all they are because of His Great LOVE. (Psalm 86:6-13)
1. Thou must give ear, Yahweh, prayer of me / Thou must pay attention to voice of my supplications // in day of my distress I will call (to) Thee / because Thou will answer me. (Verses 6-7)
Requests: David requests The Covenant God to hear his prayer and pay attention to the pouring out of his troubled soul.
Plea and reason: In his day of distress David will call to Yahweh because David is confident he will receive an answer.
 2. None like Thee in the 'gods', Adonai / and none as the deeds of Thee. (Verse 8)
Adonai: Adonai is unequalled in His person (very being); and, unequalled in what He does!
 3. All the nations which Thou have made will come and worship before Thee Adonai / they will glorify Thy name // because great (are) Thou and doing wonderful things / Thou (are) God alone! (Verses 9-10)
All nations: People of all nations will come to Adonai, bowing before Him, worshipping and glorifying His Name.
Reasons: He is worshipped because of the wonderful things (on the order of the ten plagues on Egypt) He is always doing, and He is being The ONLY God.
 4. Thou must teach me Yahweh the ways of Thee / I will walk in Thy truth / Thou must unite the heart of me to fear Thy Name // I will give thanks to Thee Adonai, my God, in all the heart of me / and I will glorify Thy Name to eternity. (Verses 11-12)
Grace and gratitude: David requests Yahweh to graciously teach him to live in His ways and unite his heart in the fear of faith with the result that he will be grateful.
True worship: David wants to obey The Greatest Commandment to love God with all his heart. And he is inspired to write that one day all nations will do this. Jesus applied Adonai to Himself when He quoted Psalm 110:1 – Yahweh said to my Adonai (Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42). Because of the work of Jesus, this may now happen:

All nations will worship The Covenant God with undivided hearts

5. Because the strong LOVE of Thee great upon me / And Thou have delivered my soul from lowest Sheol. (Verse 13)

Declarations: David declares the strong LOVE of Yahweh is upon him; and, he has been saved from the deepest depths of hell.

Application: We must all bow down to God in humble submission because His wonderful deeds, the greatest IN His Son, demonstrate His strong LOVE and salvation.

Conclusion: Jesus tells a parable aimed at the Jewish leaders confronting Him so they can see themselves as selfish and rebellious leaders of God's people Israel. They realize it is aimed at them and it is not their time to overpower Him, and depart unchanged. They regroup, form an uneasy alliance, and try to trap Him between Rome and the Jews. He responds with great wisdom and a humanly impossible directive that amazes everyone. Centuries earlier, David wrote a song describing how to give God the worship He deserves.

Jesus teaches respect, not rebellion