

“In A Fight With God For What Isn’t Yours.”

Description

1-2Then Jesus started telling them stories. “A man planted a vineyard. He fenced

Mark 12:1-11 MSG

I’ve read this parable many times during my life including the last 12 years as part of devotionals for Lent, but today (3/17/21) I had a new revelation about it. Jesus clearly articulated in the parable that the vineyard didn’t belong to the farmhands, or renters who were maintaining the vineyard during the growing seasons. If you understand the concept of sharecropping, serfs, or tenants, then you’d see that in exchange for their livelihood or work, they give back a share of their yield (whether they profit or not) to the landowner. In this parable, the people working on the vineyard have no ownership or real claim to the land, or harvest; it belongs to the landowner and he is entitled to his share of the yearly harvest upon demand. It is interesting in this parable that they people managing the land feel entitled to something that is not rightfully theirs, even so to the point that they are willing to abuse AND kill messengers/collectors sent by the owner. As i read it this time two thoughts came to my mind

Are you faithful enough to enter a hostile environment?

The landowner in this parable (God) knew the wickedness of the farmhands, and that they would deal harshly with whomever he sent to them. Even so, God sent messengers (prophets) to help the people turn from their wickedness, and return to him. *As I’m writing an additional thought came to mind that this parable even relates to tithing, in that when the landowner sent the messengers to collect his share of the harvest which is similar to God when he asks us to RETURN a tithe to him. The harvest, like our wealth/income doesn’t belong to us in that God is the actual source of all of our increase, and because it is his from the beginning, we are merely RETURNING a portion of what he gave us. The RETURN is us being faithful and showing honor with what he has entrusted us with; the farmhands in the parable had no claim or ownership to the vineyard (I’ll address that next).* After the initial violent interaction, the later messengers were aware that they would be entering hostile territory, and that it could go badly, but more importantly they understood and honored him who sent them on the assignment. Is your faith and trust in God strong enough to follow his guidance/directions even when you know the people will reject you, and there could be physical or reputational harm? Even I struggle with the idea of willing walking into a situation that I know could turn out bad for me, even though I clearly received the directions from God. We must get to a point where our convictions and faith in God overrides our fear of others. The messengers I believe wore it as a badge of honor that they were called on by the landowner (God) to deliver a message on his behalf. What will you do when called upon by God to deliver his message to others?

Do you know who you’re fighting?

The farmhands were so blinded by greed, jealousy, envy, etc that they didn’t even stop to consider

who they were fighting against, or the consequences of their actions. Their desire to own the vineyard and keep the harvest (profit) led them to violently attack the messengers, and not even consider the offer or terms of the landowner (God). They ignored the original terms that they had agreed to when they settled on the land, because in order to live or work a vineyard, there would have been an agreement or terms to what you must pay/RETURN to the owner yearly in exchange for your dwelling. It is interesting when one considers how soon people forget where they came from, or what they agreed to when they begin to see money, or feel that they have advanced beyond the original terms. Each time they were confronted by a new messenger, rather than seeing it as an opportunity to correct their errors and get back on good terms with the landowner (God), they instead doubled down and went further down a path of destruction. The landowner desiring not to see the people perish or have to resort to violent actions continued to send help for them to improve their conditions, yet they rejected each offer.

It is important to understand that when you are a messenger and people are hostile towards you, it is not you that they are rejecting, but it is the message or the one who authored the message. For us believers, this parable should provide some solace in that we see that rejection and violence by unbelievers is not a new tactic or concept, but has been going on since the beginning. Understand who it is that has called/sent you, and the purpose or role that you play. Walk confidently and boldly, trusting in the landowner (God) that he will protect you, and that as long as you are walking in faith AND obedience, that all is well in the end, regardless of the outcome

Reflection Time

What role have you played in this parable; the farmhand, or the messenger? Do you trust the landowner (God) enough to RETURN his portion, and/or deliver his message boldly in the face of those who may reject it? What do you need to ask for in order to walk and proclaim his message more boldly? Have you found yourself fighting against God, when you originally thought that it was just a person you were resisting? Take a moment to ask God for insight and discernment so that you don't find yourself mistakenly at odds with God instead of with his servants.

Category

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2. It Is NOT What It Seems

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