

Family Bible Study

10/4/2026

you). He asks, what should happen to these horrible tenants? How do they respond (v41)?

9. In Mark's and Luke's versions of the story (Mark 12:1-12, Luke 20:9-19), the Jewish leaders realize that they are the "butt" of this parable and are indignant. But according to Matthew, Jesus asks them how they should judge the tenants. How does their participation in rendering judgment add to Jesus' intent in telling this parable?
10. Shifting from agriculture to architecture, Jesus quotes to the chief priests and Pharisees a verse from Psalm 118 about a cornerstone (v42). What is this "cornerstone"? What is the role of a cornerstone in a building? What or who is the "cornerstone" here? And why was it rejected?
11. The rock-image gets expanded, as Jesus describes the cornerstone becoming a stumbling block and also a falling stone that can crush someone. How can a stone be both a cornerstone, a stumbling block and a danger from above? Something to build on, as well as a danger?
12. To apply the parable to the Church, what is the produce that "God the vineyard-owner" is looking for in us? Consider this quote:

"What is fruitfulness? The word fruit, or a variation of it, is used fifty-five times in the New Testament and refers to a variety of results. Each one of the following is considered by God to be fruit: repentance (Mt 3:8; Lk 13:5-9), practicing the truth (Mt 7:16-21; Col 1:10), answered prayer (Jn 15:7-8), an offering of money given by believers (Rom 15:28), Christlike character, and winning unbelievers to Christ (Rom 1:13, 1 Cor 16:15).

The Bible clearly identifies numerical growth of the church as fruit. Many of the kingdom parables of Jesus emphasize the unavoidable truth that God expects his church to grow. In addition, Paul connected fruit-bearing with church growth: "All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it ..." (Col 1:6) Is your church bearing fruit and growing? Are you seeing the fruit of new converts being added to your congregation?"

from Rick Warren



Matthew 21:33–46

The Parable of Wicked Tenants

Jesus said: ³³ "Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a wine press in, and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. ³⁴ When the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. ³⁵ The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. ³⁶ Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. ³⁷ But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ³⁸ But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' ³⁹ They took him, and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. ⁴⁰ Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?" ⁴¹ They said to Him, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the due season."

⁴² Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? ⁴³ Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. ⁴⁴ And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."

⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶ And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.

Questions to Wonder with Kids

- In this passage, Jesus tells a story about a landowner who sets up a vineyard. Do you know what a “vineyard” is? What is grown there? What is it for?
- There are a number of different groups of people in this story. Who are they all? What do they do? How do they relate to each other?
- What happens when the vineyard owner asks for his share of the harvest owed him as rent to the land? Is it fair to not give it?
- What does the vineyard-owner do when the renters (“vinegrowers”) beat up the owner’s servants? Does he get mad? Call the cops? Send in the army and kick them out?
- Do you think they should have respected the owner’s son, like the owner thought they would?
- What would you have done if you were the vineyard-owner?
- What do the chief priests and the Pharisees say should happen to the murderous renters?
- Then Jesus switches from vineyards to talking about buildings, about a cornerstone, which is the most important part of the whole building, the stone that everything else sits on. What does he say about this stone?
- It’s funny to think about how a stone that is a “cornerstone” becomes a stone that people trip over and that also falls on them! Jesus can’t mean a real “stone,” can he? But if not a real stone, I wonder what he’s talking about...
- How did the chief priests and Pharisees take Jesus’ teaching? Did they accept it, do you think, or did they get angry? Why?

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Questions for Adults

1. In this passage, Jesus presents a parable, a story with a point. What is this story about? Who are the characters? What do they do? What is the crisis?
2. Because Scripture often refers back to itself, and even forward to itself, it’s important to see if there are any earlier mentions of “vineyards” in the Old Testament, for context. Isaiah 5:1-7 speaks of a vineyard that God created for his people Israel, and of Israel *as* vineyard. What happens to the vineyard in Isaiah? How does this story prepare us to anticipate when Jesus starts talking about a vineyard?
3. In this parable, what do the tenants do when the vineyard owner sends servants to collect the rent (v35-36)?
4. What does the landowner do then (v37)? Why would he think the tenants will act differently this time? Is the expectation realistic?
5. Why would the tenants think that by removing the landowner’s son, they would inherit the land (v38)? Is this an instance of unreality that shows that the story is not to be taken as real but rather as an allegory (story where every character represents someone else)? Or is it just an indication of how warped is the thinking of the usurpers? Or both?
6. Notice the fact that the son is thrown out of the vineyard walls and then killed. Just as Jesus will be—taken outside the walls of Jerusalem and then crucified. This detail adds to the allegorical nature of this parable.
7. The story ends without a resolution. The landowner is left with a dilemma—how to respond? He has thus far given the tenants a great deal of grace, showing uncommon self-restraint. Anyone in that situation might be expected to be angry and move decisively to remove the tenants, or just sentence them to death in retribution. But he does not. Why, do you think?
8. After Jesus lays out the situation of these horrible tenants, he and Pharisees” (two factions that don’t typically get along, mind