

God is in Charge

Acknowledging God's position of authority.

Small Group Notes

Matthew 21:33-46 (niv)

...Background

In this parable, the Chief Priests and the Pharisees knew well what Jesus was meaning. Everything Jesus said was familiar to His audience.

The Jewish nation represented the '*vineyard of God*.' "*The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel*" (**Isaiah 5:7**). The hedge (*wall*) was a thick-set thorn hedge, designed to keep out both the wild animals who might ravage the vineyard, and the thieves who might steal the grapes. Every vineyard had its wine press. The wine press consisted of two troughs either hollowed out of the rock, or built of bricks. One was a little higher than the other, and was connected with the lower one by a channel. The grapes were pressed in the higher trough and the juice ran off into the lower trough. The tower served a double purpose. It served as a watch-tower, from it they could watch for thieves when the grapes were ripening; and it served as lodging for those who were working in the vineyard.

The actions of the owner of the vineyard were quite normal. In the time of Jesus, Palestine was a troubled place with little luxury. It was common to have absentee landlords, who let out their estates and were interested only in collecting the rental at the right time. Even the action of the tenants was common. The country was seething with economic unrest; the working people were discontented and rebellious.

Before we look into this parable in more detail, let us establish first that the '*vineyard*' represents the '*nation of Israel*.' The '*owner*' represents '*God*' and the '*tenants*' represent the '*religious leaders of Israel*.'

The '*messengers*' who were sent represent the '*prophets sent by God to foretell the coming of Jesus*' and who so often rejected and killed. The '*son*' who came represents none other than '*Jesus*' Himself.

...Overview

This parable has much to tell us about...

1. GOD

This parable reveals God's *trust*.

This parable reveals God's *patience*.

This parable reveals God's *judgment*.

2. US

This parable reveals our *privilege*.

This parable reveals our *freedom*.

This parable reveals our *accountability*.

This parable reveals the *deliberateness* of our sin.

3. JESUS

This parable reveals the *claim* of Jesus.

This parable reveals the *sacrifice* of Jesus.

Jesus *reinforces* His rebuke.

...Discussion

➤ Breakup into pairs and discuss questions 1 and 2.

1. Who do you identify with in this parable, the servants or the tenants?
And why?
2. How would you have acted in the place of the landlord after your servants were killed? Would you have sent more? Would you have sent your son?

➤ Back as the larger group discuss questions 3, 4 and 5.

3. Does the deliberateness of our sin disqualify us from God's promises?
Present if you can Scriptural evidence to reinforce your view.
4. What can we do to eliminate our sin?
Explain...
5. How privileged do you feel to be serving God?
Do you show enough gratitude for this privilege?