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Matthew 21:33-46 (niv)

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

In this parable; 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.'* The *'son'* who came represents none other than *'Jesus.'*

This parable has much to tell us about...

➤ **GOD**

...This parable reveals God's TRUST.

The owner of the vineyard entrusted the care and wellbeing of the vineyard to the tenants.

God pays us the compliment of entrusting us to carry out His work.

...This parable reveals God's PATIENCE.

Matthew 21:34-36

The owner of the vineyard is a great example of how God is patient with us.

God bears with all our wrong living and patiently waits for us to turn away from our wrong doing and to return to pleasing Him.

...This parable reveals God's JUDGEMENT.

Matthew 21:40-41

The tenants disqualified themselves because of their wrongdoing and total lack of disobedience.

God's judgment is when He takes out of our hands the task which He meant us to do if we fail to do so.

This parable has much to tell us about...

➤ **US**

...This parable reveals our PRIVILEGE.

God has not only given us a mission to accomplish; He also gives us the means whereby to achieve it. It is a privilege to serve God and His purposes!

...This parable reveals our FREEDOM.

God is no task-master; He is like a wise leader who allocates a task and then trusts a man to do it using their skills and initiative.

...This parable reveals our ACCOUNTABILITY.

There will come a day of reckoning for all of us. We will be answerable and accountable for the way in which we carried out the tasks God gave us to do.

...This parable reveals the DELIBERATENESS of human sin.

Sin is the opposite of God and He cannot associate with sin as revealed by Jesus when He cried out on the cross “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*”

Deliberate sin is when we carry out and commit something that we know is exactly opposite to what pleases God.

This parable has much to tell us about...

➤ **Jesus**

...This parable reveals the CLAIM of Jesus.

This parable shows quite clearly Jesus lifting Himself out of the succession of the prophets. Those who came before Him were the messengers of God; no one could deny them that honour; but they were servants; Jesus is the Son!

...This parable reveals the SACRIFICE of Jesus.

Jesus went willing and open-eyed to His eventual death on the cross.

Matthew 21:37

In trying to reach us with His love, God finally sent His own Son. If we ignore and reject God's gracious gift of His Son, then we reject God!

...Jesus reinforces His rebuke.

Matthew 21:42

Here Jesus directly addresses the audience by reciting to them **Psalm 118:22** *The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.*

At this point in the parable Jesus changes the imagery from the tenants who rejected the servants and the son to the builders who rejected the stone.

The tenants by killing the son destroyed themselves, and the builders by laying aside the stone that became the cornerstone made them look foolish.

Jesus refers to Himself as *"the stone the builders rejected."*

Acts 4:11 (niv) *He is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.*

This stone which the builders rejected was the most important stone in the whole building!

Matthew 21:44

Jesus used this metaphor to show that one stone can affect people in different ways, depending on how they relate to it.

Isaiah 28:16 (niv) *So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who relies on it will never be stricken with panic.*

The idea behind this Old Testament prophecy of a stone is summed up in Jesus. Jesus is the foundation stone on which the church is built and the cornerstone that holds it all together. He is the capstone as the head of His Church.

To refuse His ways and to reject Him would result in being crushed into living life completely separate from Him.

These two pictures of the vineyard and a stone were familiar to every Jew who knew of the prophets that went before Jesus.

Matthew 21:45-46

...Application

So what does this parable mean to us today?

What can we learn from this parable?

The essence of the Christian life can be summed up in one word ***"relationship"***. God wants to have a relationship with us.

In trying to reach us with His love, God finally sent His own Son. If we ignore and reject God's gracious and most valued gift of His Son to us - then we reject God.

The choice is ours!

We should live by the same attitude of David the Psalmist;

Psalm 119:33 (tlb) *Just tell me what to do and I will do it, Lord. As long as I live I'll wholeheartedly obey.*