

Christ Is the Foundation of Our Life

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Matthew 21:33-46

Matthew 21:33 "Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country.

You are God's vineyard. This parable begins with a detailed description of God's love for you.

He has planted you in his word. He has built a wall around you, which is the doctrine of fellowship. He does not want wolves sneaking in to snatch you away. He has given you a tower to watch over you. That tower is your pastor and elders.

Later the farmers who take care of the vineyard will attempt to steal the vineyard from the master and his son. The master does not allow it. The master is jealous for his vineyard.

Just so God loves you. The Lord says, "I am a jealous God." I am jealous for you. He is not willing that anyone should snatch you away. You are his. Therefore, God has given you a wall and tower and planted you in his word.

34 "Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. 35 "And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. 36 "Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them.

Verse 35 really emphasizes the progression of sin and hatred. The first one they merely beat, but by the third they are pelting him with stones. Where does this anger come from? Scripture doesn't explain but it seems likely they are thinking, "we did the work we deserve the fruit." Whatever the reasons they allowed the sin to grow until they even killed the son. Just like Cain allowed his sin to grow.

Jam 4:1 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?

Anytime you find anger like this wheeling up inside you, then you know there is something wrong with your attitude. We like to tell ourselves that our anger is justified, that we are right. These men told themselves they deserved the vineyard. God's word reminds us that our anger is not the righteous wrath of God.

James 1:20 the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

Anger like this is a warning that there is something wrong with you. The problem is not with someone else but with you. God warned Cain that he needed to confess his sin and not allow the anger to take over him. Anger that is not repented of will result in greater sin.

37 "Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 38 "But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' 39 "So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him.

Jesus is specific here they not only killed him but cast him out of the vineyard. Jesus was foretelling that they would cast him out of the city. This is true both figuratively and physically. They took him out of the city to die, but also, they cast him out of their lives.

Isa 53:3 He is despised and rejected by men

John 1:11 He came to His own¹, and His own² did not receive Him.

This is the grace of God. He does not send the law but his son. He does not deal with these men with the sword but with patience, calling them to repentance.

This is the ultimate sinfulness of man that they despise this grace and kill the son. Those who despise the son are without hope. God's grace extends even to the sending of his son to die for us. Yet, if that son is rejected there is nothing left but God's wrath.

40 "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?" 41 They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons."

The Greek word for evil is kakos. The Jewish leaders use the word twice Κακοὺς κακῶς. These are wickedly evil men.

It is the chief priests and elders themselves who pronounce judgement. Just like David when he was confronted by Nathan the prophet.

Unlike David when the truth is revealed they do not repent.

Jesus warns the Jewish leaders:

"whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder"

David when confronted by his sin fell onto Christ and was broken by God's word. His pride was broken. His image of himself was broken. He was broken in repentance but through Christ he was saved.

These Jewish leaders will not allow themselves to be broken in repentance and thus the judgement of God in Christ crushes them utterly.

Remember Christ's words here when God's word confronts you with your sin. Will you humble yourself and rend your heart? Will you fall on Christ and be broken in repentance, or will you be crushed by God's judgement?

42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: `The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD'S doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes1 '? 43 "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. 44 "And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder." 45 Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. 46 But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet.

The quote which Jesus refers to here is from Psalm 118:22. This is the same Psalm which is quoted when Jesus rides into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."

In his commentary on Psalm, Luther does an excellent job of explaining this verse:

Wise masters in the crafts are building. They look closely at each stone and arrange them in the right spot to create a solid, enduring, lasting edifice, without cracks or gaps between the stones. In their work they find a stone which will not fit. They turn it every which way. They try it in multiple spots. Still, it does not fit. It creates cracks and gaps. It causes the wall to lean. So, they threw it away.

Along comes a builder greater than they.

"You fools," he says, "I will take this stone and I will use it as a foundation. On this foundation a will build a solid edifice, such as the world has never seen. It will be great, and it will remain forever."

When the people see what was built with the rejected stone they respond, "This is the Lord's doing" That is this must be the work of the Lord for only he is such a master builder who could build such a thing. "And it is marvelous in our eyes."

The leaders of the Jews rejected Jesus because he is the stone who did not fit into what they were building. He did not fit into their ideas about work righteousness. He did not fit into their ideas about a kingdom of God on this earth, a paradise built on political aspirations.

This stone has become the foundation of God's church, and that is a marvelous thing. David says in the same Psalm, "**This was the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes.**" and again, "**This is the day that the Lord has made I will rejoice and be glad in it.**" And again, in the same Psalm, "**Let Israel now say . . . Let the house of Aaron now say . . . Let all who fear the Lord now say 'His mercy endures forever.'**"

Christ is not a supporting rock. You cannot add him to your life where you see fit. He doesn't fit in to your plans for your life, any more than he fit into the plans of the leaders of the Jews.

He doesn't fit into our ideas of ourselves as pretty good people, who maybe just need a little help here and there. There is no room for Jesus in such an attitude. Jesus says confess your sins and humble yourself under the almighty hand of God.

He doesn't fit into an attitude of "I'm the victim." God's word says "you are chief of sinners, not your neighbor, not your spouse. You are the cause of grief and sin in your life." "Seek the Lord while he may be found." Repent and receive the Lord's forgiveness.

Jesus doesn't fit into our plans for our lives, where we seek wealth and the pursuit of happiness. What does scripture say, "You cannot serve God and mammon."

Jesus doesn't fit into the modern ideas of inclusivity. People want Jesus to be like the interchangeable parts produced by modern machines. Jesus is not interchangeable. You cannot take him out of here and stick him into there. You cannot remove him and put Buddha or Mohammad in his place.

What does the scriptures say, "The Lord he is God, he is our maker and not we ourselves."

This is the grace of God in Christ Jesus. He sent his son to die. He is the cornerstone. He is the foundation. Your life can be built on him, or you can toss away. Those who toss him away have no hope left. Those who are built on him stand in the grace of God.

Psalm 118:19-20 Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go through them, And I will praise the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD, Through which the righteous shall enter.