

"Jesus, On Rock I Stand"

Text: Matthew 21:33-43

³³ [Jesus said] “Listen to another story. A man who owned some land planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it. He dug a pit for a winepress in it. He also built a lookout tower. He rented the vineyard out to some farmers. Then he went away on a journey. ³⁴ When harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the renters. He told the servants to collect his share of the fruit.

³⁵ “But the renters grabbed his servants. They beat one of them. They killed another. They threw stones at the third to kill him. ³⁶ Then the man sent other servants to the renters. He sent more than he did the first time. The renters treated them the same way.

³⁷ “Last of all, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said.

³⁸ “But the renters saw the son coming. They said to each other, ‘This is the one who will receive all the owner’s property someday. Come, let’s kill him. Then everything will be ours.’ ³⁹ So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard. Then they killed him.

⁴⁰ “When the owner of the vineyard comes back, what will he do to those renters?”

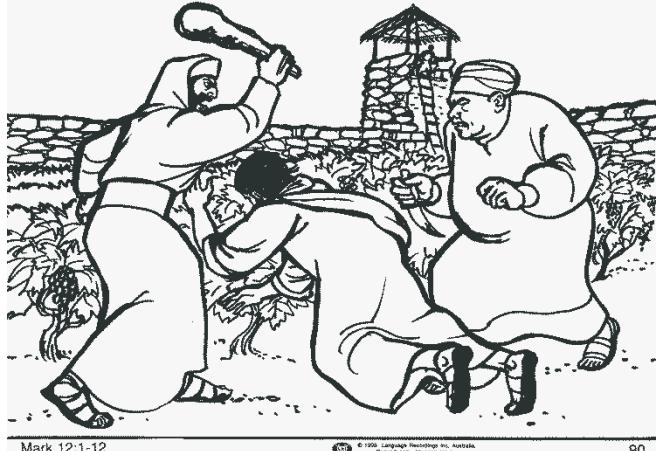
⁴¹ “He will destroy those evil people,” they replied. “Then he will rent the vineyard out to other renters. They will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.”

⁴² Jesus said to them, “Haven’t you ever read what the Scriptures say,

***“The stone the builders didn’t accept
has become the most important stone of all.
The Lord has done it.***

It is wonderful in our eyes’? (Psalm 118:22,23)

⁴³ “So here is what I tell you. The kingdom of God will be taken away from you. It will be given to people who will produce its fruit.



Mark 12:1-12

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In our reading, Jesus' story is a picture of the world in the past and also a clear picture today. The first comparison is to God. The landowner, himself, is a beautiful picture or comparison to God. The landowner builds everything. He digs and plants a vineyard. He builds a wall around the vineyard to protect the vineyard. The landowner builds a wall and a guard tower to keep unwanted people and animals from destroying the grapes. This is like God who builds the Universe with His Word. God calls the earth, the Sun, Moon, and stars into existence. God sets gravity into place. God makes sure there is plenty of water to drink and air to breath. He does this all by himself without any help. Yes! Like the landowner who digs and builds without any help, God is clearly the Creator and Owner of the Universe. This is like the landowner in the story. The landowner is responsible for and owner of everything.

God owns the world. The world and the fullness belongs to Him!

The tower provides (gives) extra protection from weather. The tower is easy to defend from enemies. The tower is a good storage place for the ripened (ready) grapes. The tower is comparison to God's Word, God's people, or the church. The church is a place of safety and peace. The church has the Word and Sacraments. Like the tower, the church is set up by God [landowner] to take care of His grapes. The tower provides shade and storage. The church is a place where a person can come rest and receive blessing. The tower is a place to defend from enemies strange people, wild animals. The church is a place to receive comfort from the dangerous outside world, also from Satan and his evil angels. The grapes are a comparison to the people of the world. God loves the

people of the world and those people are very valuable to Him. Grapes are very valuable to the Farmer. All farmers love grapes and use grapes for different purposes. Farmers make wine, jelly, juice, and other good things from grapes. God uses different people in different ways to make a good earth. Some people are peacemakers; others are warriors, teachers, doctors, pastors, etc. God is the one who put people on the earth to fit God's purpose. Grapes come in different colors and sizes, the same as people. All grapes are valuable and have purpose. All people are valuable and have purpose.

The landowner takes a journey to a far away place. Before the landowner leaves, he decides to rent his land and buildings to other farmers. These new farmers have no land or no tower of their own. How could there be any landowners or farmers like God?

Who else is the same as God? No one! God builds and keeps all things together. No other person could accomplish such a task (work). These farmers are not called landowners. The name, landowner, is reserved for only one person. These farmers are only people. They are grapes, themselves. These farmers are people like you and me. These farmers are only renters. These farmers are a comparison to the leaders and powerful people in the world. These farmers are clearly not the same as the landowner [God]. The new farmers are to take care of the place and send the rent money when the time is due. The due time is at harvest when the grapes are ripe (ready).

The landowner decides to go far away and doesn't say where, or for how long. This is like God who seems to have gone far away to heaven. God doesn't tell us the time of His return. God doesn't tell exactly where

He is going only to heaven...a far away land. God tells us to take care of the people [grapes]. We are to be ready for His return. There is a judgment day coming soon! Be ready [ripe]! This is like the landowner and the harvest coming due. The time comes for the harvest. The landowner sends his servants to collects the bounty (much-pile). The servants are a picture of the prophets. The prophets like Moses, Samuel, Nathan, Isaiah, John the Baptist, etc. The farmers grab the servants kick, beat, and are thrown out to die. The farmers think they own the vineyard, the wall, and the tower. The farmers want to forget the landowner. This is the same as rich and powerful people want nothing to do with God. These farmers, who are nothing more than grapes themselves, want nothing to do with the landowner. Many leaders and powerful people have forgotten God. They think their life is their own to do

as they please. For shame! Almost every prophet was put to a horrible death. John the Baptist had his head cut off. Isaiah was believed to be sawed in half. Peter was crucified upside down. This is how we treat God's servants? We pay football players millions of dollars a year. We gripe, moan, and say "not fair" when we have to pay our pastor or religious teachers a modest (good) sum. For shame! We treat God's servants in such a way. We should listen carefully to God's servant. The farmers should have listened carefully to the servants the landowner sent to them. The servants were not speaking for themselves. The servants were speaking for the landowner...for God. The prophets of God are; His Sunday School teachers, His Pastors, all His ministers speak for God, not themselves. Yet how many times we ignore the warnings from our pastors, how

many times we ignore the Sunday School lessons we learned. For shame!

Now the landowner decides to send his only born son to the farmers. The son will become the landowner in future. The landowner sends his son. The son is loved by the landowner very much. The most important person, place, or thing in the landowner's life is his dear son. The son goes to collect for his father. The landowner says, "They will respect my son." However, they do worse to the son than to the servants. The farmers conspire (plan) to kill the son and take all the landowner's property. This is a comparison to the world and the powerful leaders of the world. These people have conspired to destroy all that belongs to God and take everything for themselves. God sent His beloved Son on that good Christmas morning. God sent His son to bring in the good harvest. "To bring peace on earth

and good will toward men [people]." The good people [grapes] the shepherds and wise men recognized Him. Good farmers always recognize Christ. The good people of the past worshipped Jesus and good people still worship Him today. Other people; the Jewish religious leaders, the politicians, the military of Jesus' time conspired to put Jesus to death on the cross. They were happy to murder Jesus. They rejoiced and thought Jesus death was a good thing. Those leaders were right! Jesus's death was the best thing for people! Jesus' death took away the sins of the world! Jesus's death and resurrection has allowed God the Holy Spirit to come. Jesus coming and the sending of the Holy Spirit signals the time for harvest. Everyday more and more people are coming to the knowledge of Christ. Everyday more people are learning of His mercy and forgiveness. Everyday people are being baptized

and made followers. Everyday people are hearing the Word preached, are reading their Bibles, are learning Sunday School lessons. Yes! Jesus is harvesting new souls. The best grapes are being picked. God is letting down his hand to pick those people with faith. Wow! Great is the son's coming to those who love the son! But for those wicked people who hate the son, who have killed the son, and want nothing to do with God, death cannot come soon enough. There is no escape from God. Death cannot hide from His terrible wrath. Better not to be born than to throw Jesus out of your life. Better to be drown in the deepest ocean than to continue adding to your sin debt. Terrible not to see the beauty of Jesus' death and resurrection! Jesus says, "Therefore happens the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" Those very leaders of past time answered Jesus, "He will surely

kill those evil men. Then he will lease the field to some other farmers. He will lease it to farmers that will give him his share of the crop at harvest time." Now the gentile [non-Jewish] people have been given God's Word. We hold the tower, the church and sacraments. Now we are responsible for the grapes. We are responsible for God's people. We know we cannot fail because God has promised. "The gates of hell will not win against His church." God has given us His Holy Spirit to make, keep, and comfort us in His forgiveness, in His Son's death. We are the valuable grapes God has harvested in Jesus. We rejoice being made into new wine, juice, and jelly. We rejoice to serve our Great God in whatever way He deems good. We are in a hurry for the final harvest of all souls! "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" Praise be to the

landowner, our Great and Merciful God, Jesus His Son,
and the Holy Spirit. Amen!