

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Sermons title: The Parable of the Tenants, Mark 11:27-12:12

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INTRODUCTION: Today, I want you to make note of three points:

1. God's Goodness
2. God's Grace
3. God's Choice

SCRIPTURE: Mark 11:27-33 ²⁷*They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. ²⁸“By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you authority to do this?”*

²⁹*Jesus replied, “I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. ³⁰John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!”*

³¹*They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ ³²But if we say, ‘Of human origin’ ...”*
(They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.)

³³*So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.”*

Jesus said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”

EXPLANATION: Our Scripture passage takes place on the Tuesday before Jesus is crucified. The day before, Jesus had cleansed the Temple— casting out those who were profaning it by making a profit selling the sacrificial animals. Jesus had upset the complex Temple system, and those involved were looking for a way to destroy him (vs. 11:15-18).

Now, in today’s passage Jesus is back in the Temple, and the Pharisees, perhaps having regained their composure, come at him again. In verses 27-33 they demand to know why he is doing these things. They are literally asking, “Who do you think you are? Who has given you the authority to do what you are doing?” Jesus knows

they are trying to trap him, and he steps out of the trap by asking a question in return. He asks them under what authority John the Baptist operated. John had been very popular with the people. If they would answer his question, then Jesus would answer theirs.

If they had answered by saying John operated under the authority of God, they would be exposed as hypocrites, because they had rejected John the Baptist's message. If they answered that John only came under his own authority, they risked the wrath of the people because most of the Israelites believed John was a true prophet sent from God.

They chose simply not to answer, so Jesus refused to answer them. Instead, he turned it into a teachable moment with a parable.

First, in this parable we see GOD'S GOODNESS (Verse 1)

SCRIPTURE: Mark 12:1 *Jesus then began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place.*

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

- The Lord of the vineyard is God.
- The vineyard is Israel.
- The husbandmen are the Jewish religious leaders.
- The servants are the prophets God sent to Israel.

Here, we see the goodness of the landowner in the provision that he has made for the vineyard.

- In this day and time, wealthy absentee landowners would hire local peasants to take care of the land as tenant farmers. This particular landowner had built everything needed to take care of the vineyard: a hedge around it to keep the animals out, a depression to collect the juice from the harvested grapes, and a tower for a watchman to keep a diligent eye on the vineyard. Then he placed it in the hands of local men to farm it and left it in their care.

- The nation of Israel was often pictured as a vine (Isaiah 5:1-4a).

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 5:1-4a *I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside.*

² *He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well.*

Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit.

³ *“Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. ⁴ What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it?”*

EXPLANATION: Jesus shared this parable while standing in the Court of the Gentiles. Over one shoulder was the Mount of Olives—literally covered with grapevines. Over the other shoulder was Herod’s Temple; embellished with grape leaves of pure silver and gold. Those listening to Jesus had no doubt he was talking about the nation of Israel. God had done everything he could have done to ensure the success of the vine called Israel.

In spite of God’s goodness to Israel, she produced a bad harvest. *Isaiah 5:4b: When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad?*

Still God continued to bless Israel and care for his vineyard in spite of her apostasy. And they had times when they acknowledged: *Truly God is good to Israel (Psalm 73:1).*

APPLICATION:

And wouldn’t we have to admit, the Lord of the vineyard has been good to us as well? He has rescued us from darkness and moved us into the light; all the prayers he has answered; he is always with us; he loves us eternally; he provides for us; he sustains us; he gives us families; he gives us the very air we breathe! He says he will never leave us. He told us he is preparing a place with him for eternity. He orders our steps. On and on we could go.

Romans 2:4 tells us: *God’s goodness leads us to repentance.* What a good, good Father!

Second, we see **GOD’S GRACE** (Verses 2-8)

SCRIPTURE: Mark 12:2-8 ² *At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard.* ³ *But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed.* ⁴ *Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully.* ⁵ *He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed.* ⁶ *“He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’”* ⁷ *“But the tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’”* ⁸ *So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.*

EXPLANATION: Having planted the vineyard and done everything necessary for the vineyard to flourish, the landowner sent his servants to gather his portion of the profits. In those days, the landowners hired farmers to care for the crops in exchange for a percentage of the harvest. The landowner usually took between one-third and one-half. The farmers shared the rest.

In verses 3-5, when the landowner’s slaves asked for the profits, they were cruelly treated by the farmers. The first one was beaten (v 3). The second one was stoned (v. 4). The third one was killed (v.5a). All the trusted servants he sent were either beaten or murdered by the farmers the landowner to which he entrusted the vineyard (v. 5b).

In verses 6-8, finally the landowner sent his only son to take care of the matter. He hoped they would receive the son as if he were the landowner himself (v. 6), but they destroyed the son also, just as they had the servants (v. 8). They believed they now could claim the vineyard for themselves (v.7).

The religious leaders of Israel had been entrusted with the spiritual well being of the nation. But time and again, they led the nation astray. God, in his infinite grace, sent judges, prophets, and other holy men to lead them back to the right path. Israel refused to heed his message. Some were beaten, some were killed, but Israel rejected prophet after prophet culminating in the murder of John the Baptist. Then God sent his son. But they killed him too.

APPLICATION: The same is true today. God has given us witness after witness in an effort to call men to himself:

- Psalm 19:1-4 – All around us
- Romans 1:20 – We are without excuse.
- Romans 2:14 – His law is in our hearts.
- John 16:13-16 – He sent the Holy Spirit.

How many sermons have we heard? How many revivals have we been to? How many Bible classes? How many chances has God given you?

God's grace has provided all of this so we don't miss him!

All of these things are the products of God's grace. If we had gotten what we deserved, we would be dead and in hell today. But due to his grace, we are not. We are saved, blood-bought sons and daughters of the king because of his grace!

Third, we see GOD'S CHOICE (Verses 9-12)

SCRIPTURE: Mark 12:9-12⁹ *“What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.”*¹⁰ Haven't you read this passage of Scripture:

*“The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;”*¹¹ *the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes?”*¹² *Then the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.*

EXPLANATION: The landowner is left with no choice. He'd tried to be fair and work with the farmers, but they refused to listen. They even killed his son, so he will come in wrath and destroy those who have taken what is his.

Jesus had demonstrated his deity and identity to the Jews on many occasions, yet these men wanted to retain their religious system (the vineyard) for themselves, so they killed him. They were willing to kill the Messiah to get what they wanted. They had him—the Son of God—crucified.

Jesus was God's final messenger. When they rejected him, they were saying no to God for the last time. There was nothing left but judgment, which came a few short years later when Jerusalem was destroyed and the Temple torn down. Obviously the Jews have suffered through the years, but some day the Scripture tells us they will recognize Jesus as the Messiah.

Because of their rejection of Jesus, God chose to graft the Gentiles into the vine. That's us. We have been grafted into the vine because of Israel's stumbling. It's all his grace. Your assignment for the week is to read Romans 11.

They wanted to arrest Jesus after he finished the parable, but they were afraid to do anything because the people respected Jesus as a rabbi. However, the leaders hated him and wanted him dead. They made their decision, and they would live with the consequences. As do we.

CONCLUSION: It's easy to see God's goodness and grace all around us, which leads us to our choice today. He has given us opportunity after opportunity to repent and come to Jesus. If you've never done that, today is the day of salvation. It's God's goodness which leads us to repentance. If you need prayer or ministry of any kind, the altar is open. Let's celebrate his goodness and his grace toward us today and choose to serve him.

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Thanks to Golden Parsons for her research on this sermon.
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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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