



DIVE DEEPER

READ Mark 12:1-12 (NIV)

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. 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.

9 "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.

PARABLE OF THE TENANTS:

› **1,2 Tenant farmers** - Galilee had many tenant farmers. They worked the land for its owners, often absentee landlords, and paid them as much as half the resulting produce.

› **2 He sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard** - "There were three modes of dealing with land. According to one of these, the laborers employed received a certain portion of the fruits, say a third or a fourth of the produce. The other two modes were, either that the tenant paid a money-rent to the proprietor, or else that he agreed to give the owner a definite amount of the produce, whether the harvest had been good or bad." (Edersheim, "Life and Times of Jesus").

› **3-5 Beat one, struck another on the head, and killed one** - The beating, striking, and killing of the three messengers represented Israel's rejection of God's messengers (and God himself) over the centuries. One of the most recent examples of this rejection was their treatment of John the Baptist (Matt. 17:12-13).

• Why do you think that the religious leaders had such a difficult time recognizing God's prophets?

› **5 He sent many others** - God is incomprehensibly kind to his enemies. The landowner here is too nice; no one would recognize in this figure the benevolence of any patron they knew. No one would

YES • NO • MAYBE

1. I don't like it when someone else takes credit for my work.

2. I know some people who rent a home and are really disrespectful to their landlord.

3. I take offense when people treat me disrespectfully.

4. God does not treat bad people as harshly as He should.

5. I produce a lot of spiritual fruit.



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DIVE DEEPER (CONTINUED...)

expect the benevolent landowner to remain benevolent indefinitely; indeed, the worse landlords sometimes even had their own hit squads to take out troublesome tenant farmers. Everyone also knew that the state would always side with the landlord (even if he was a bad one); in a case of obvious wrong like this one, the murderers of his servants would be executed or enslaved. By continuing to appeal to their sense of honor, the landowner has made himself appear a fool; to maintain any vestige of honor, he must retaliate against their repeating shaming of him (B. Scott 1989:250).

› **6 He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved** - Quite in contrast to expectations, however, the landowner acts with such benevolence that ancient hearers could have regarded his action merely as utter folly: he believes that the murderous tenants will at least respect his son as his own representative.

- What does it say about God that he responds with more patience than we would expect? How is this different from the picture of God that you grew up with?

› **7 Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours** - The tenants were so conceited that they fooled themselves into believing they could obtain the son's inheritance by killing him.

- In what ways do religious people try to rob God of His own vineyard?

› **9 What then will the owner of the vineyard do?** - In their answer, the critics pronounced their own sentence—execution and replacement. Jesus' opponents were guilty of the worst kind of sin—leading God's flock astray and abusing them for personal gain and then killing God's messengers, his prophets, including his Son.

- What does it say about God that He will not respond in the same way that we think?

› **10 Haven't you read?** - Jesus pointed out to the Jewish leaders that they had just pronounced judgment on themselves. Have you never read in the Scriptures was Jesus' way of telling the teachers of Israel that they should have known better. Jesus quoted Psalm 118:22–23, which makes a surprising statement. The stone that the experts considered unusable ended up as the most important stone in the whole building plan: the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

- How frustrating do you think it must have been for Jesus to be rejected by the foolish religious leaders?

NOTES

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MY PRAYER

1. How possessive am I regarding how willing I am to allow God to bring new things to my church?
2. How much am I producing fruit in God's vineyard
3. What new aspect of God's character does He want me to know?