

# **“BAD TENANTS”**

**Matthew 21:33-46**

**Holiday Island Presbyterian Church**

**October 8, 2017**

## **INTRODUCTION:**

**Although this parable is “original”**

**in the sense that it is the first time it has been told,**

**the basis for the parable comes from other sources –**

**- Isaiah 5 and Psalm 80.**

**Like most of Jesus’ parables,**

**This one takes an old and possibly familiar theme**

**And adds to it a new variation.**

**The allegory is pretty straight forward –**

**The parable is focused on scolding the religious authorities.**

**Land owner is God**

**The vineyard is Israel**

**The tenants are the national leaders**

**The servants are the prophets**

**And the son, of course, is Jesus**

**Indeed, many scholars would argue that is exactly the meaning.**

**Most likely, Jesus told this parable to a group gathered at Temple –**

- Religious rulers and authorities**
- Pharisees and Sadducees**
- Common folks, as well**

**The first thing to notice is the great care the landowner takes of the land.**

**A vineyard was a significant investment of time and money.**

**For that reason, a watchtower would be an asset**

**It would provide security for the vineyard;**

**Protecting against thieves and wildfires.**

**A wall around the vineyard would protect it from animals**

**And clearly mark its boundaries.**

**The landowner digs a winepress in anticipation of a harvest**

**And he locates it conveniently on the property.**

**All this preparation,**

**points to how much the landowner values the land.**

**It also points to his positive expectation**

**To celebrate a good harvest.**

**Having finished the preparations for the vineyard,**

**The landowner then rents it out to farmers.**

**As is the custom in such circumstances,  
The landlord is entitled to a percentage of the harvest  
As payment for the use of the land.**

**It is a common arrangement for absentee landlords.  
It is still in practice today.**

**I keep my bees on property that belongs to Norm and Roxanne –  
In return, I supply them with a percentage of the honey  
That is produced by the bees.**

**As harvest time rolls around,  
the owner sends his agents to collect his rent**

**It is at this point in the story that everything falls apart.**

**Instead of paying their rent, as agreed in advance,  
the tenants beat, stoned and killed the agents.**

**The landowner, still hoping for a favorable outcome  
And willing to give the tenants a second chance,  
sends another batch of agents to collect the rent.**

**Unfortunately, they suffer the same fate.**

**So, in a final attempt to settle the matter,  
the landowner sends his son.**

**Surely the tenants would recognize  
the authority of the son to collect what is due  
and they would settle the matter promptly and peacefully.**

**Instead, the tenants kill the son.**

**Jesus then turns to those listening to Him and asks:**

**“What do you think will happen when the landowner comes?”**

**One thing for sure,**

**The landowner surely must have been pushed to the limits  
Of his patience.**

**And these evil tenants have killed his son.**

**And the crowd replies, with a vast understatement:**

**“It will not go well with the tenants.**

**They will be evicted at the very least.**

**The landowner will find others to replace them.”**

**It is important to the understanding of this parable  
To note that for at least six months,  
Jesus has been telling His followers  
that the rulers at Jerusalem are going to kill Him.**

**Either Jesus knew by divine knowledge what His fate would be  
Or by sheer logic he reasoned  
that He could not keep opposing the authorities  
without dire consequences.**

**However, He persisted – like the landowner –  
In hopes they would repent and change their ways.**

**So, at this point in the parable,  
Jesus is confronting the rulers directly.  
There is a warning here for them to heed,  
if they will only listen.**

**Then Jesus pushes the rulers too far.**

**Jesus indicates that the rulers are like the evil tenants.  
God has called them to take care of God's people.  
They have failed to do so.**

**And Jesus predicts they will inevitably reject the Son,  
for which they will be crushed.**

**The Pharisees and Sadducees are astute enough  
to grasp the meaning of the parable  
and that it is pointed directly at them.**

**They see the vineyard as an allegory for Israel  
with themselves cast in the role of the evil tenants.  
They see God as the owner of the vineyard.**

**They see the groups of agents sent by the owner  
as the prophets who were sent to call the tenants to repentance.**

**They see themselves as being accused of rejecting the prophets.**

**Finally, they see Jesus casting Himself as the Son.  
And that . . . that's too much for them.**

**Here's the irony.**

**The Pharisees and Sadducees hear the message  
loudly and clearly.**

**They know that Jesus is talking about them.**

**But instead of heeding the warning and changing their ways,  
they actually move towards fulfilling the prophecy  
imbedded in the parable.**

**CONCLUSION:**

**At this point, you are probably thinking:**

**“Nice story. What has it got to do with me?”**

**Well, for one thing,**

**There doesn't seem to be religious authorities  
Against which we should rebel.**

**So maybe the application is more personal.**

**What if Jesus told us this parable today –**

**Right here in this worship service?**

**What conclusion would we draw from it?**

**Here's what I think.**

**Indeed, God is the sovereign landowner.**

**And God has appointed us as stewards over all that is His.**

**Now, I don't think anyone in here has a vineyard –**

**If you do, you've kept that secret well hidden.**

**But each of us has been called to be stewards over *something*.**

**Whether that is the education we have received,**

**The life experience we have accumulated,**

**The wealth we control,**

**The faith God has given us through the Holy Spirit.**

**What is it that God has asked of us in return?**

**We're not the first ones to ask that question, by the way.**

**The prophet Micah answered that question years and years ago.**

**He said:**

**He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the  
LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness,  
And to walk humbly with your God?**

**In other words, God expects us to be just in all our dealings,**

**To exercise kindness to those who cross our paths**

**To be quick to share the gospel with those who will listen**

**To manage our finances in a Godly manner.**

**We are to take all that God has given to us**

**And we are to use it in productive ways.**

**And most of all,**

**We are to recognize Who it is that has made all this possible**

**And we are to worship Him**

**with all our heart and minds.**

**With God's help, may it be so.**

**PRAYER:**

**We are grateful, O God, for all that You have given us. You have set us as stewards over so very much. And You have asked little of us in return. Grant us the strength and courage to worship You as You deserve with our time, our talents, and our treasure. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.**