

## Lordship and You

### *The Parable of the Tenants (Matt 21:33-46)*

<sup>33</sup>*"Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. <sup>34</sup>When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.*

<sup>35</sup>*"The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. <sup>36</sup>Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. <sup>37</sup>Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said.*

<sup>38</sup>*"But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' <sup>39</sup>So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.*

<sup>40</sup>*"Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?"*

<sup>41</sup>*"He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time."*

<sup>42</sup>*Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures:*

*"The stone the builders rejected  
has become the capstone;  
the Lord has done this,  
and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"*

<sup>43</sup>*"Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. <sup>44</sup>He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."*

<sup>45</sup>*When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them. <sup>46</sup>They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.*

Sometimes, we have these readings at Worship that can make us scratch our heads a little as to what is going on, or wonder how or why these readings are connected together today. Or even more importantly for you, what does this have to do with my life? What is the relevance of these readings to me? I believe in God, I know who Jesus is, but... I have some real issues with my job, some real life problems with some people that I know. I have some real concerns about paying heating bills, and whether or not I will have to bring a wheelbarrow full of money with me next time I try to fill my car up with gas. What do these readings have to do with me?

I think that it is far too easy to remain distant sometimes as we look at parables and accounts of people in scripture and say "What does that have to do with me?". Let's focus on Jesus' parable and see if His words, and Paul's words, and Ezekiel's words do have meaning for your life.

The parable that Jesus tells here ...what prompts him to tell it? Who is he telling it to? Where is he?

This is one of a number of parables that Jesus told in the Temple area in the early part of Holy Week. So picture that. He is right in the middle of a religious setting. And who is it that is around him listening? There are a lot of people who are very involved in their religious life. They aren't out at the country club or working around the yard. These are people involved with this "church" stuff right from an early age on up to their adult day to day life. A young Jew was very familiar with Scripture and early on was taught to memorize key Bible verses. Any good Jew would be very familiar with this verse in Deuteronomy: **"Hear O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."** In Jesus' ministry we know that one day, when he was challenged about what the greatest commandment was, that he himself gave this as the greatest commandment to focus on. So this is the "people" that you can picture Jesus is talking to.

But what prompts these parables to these people? The local religious leaders are questioning Jesus' authority and "*who said*" that he can say these things about God and the "Kingdom of Heaven". Jesus' answer to them is in the line of firing right back and questioning their basic relationship with God.

In the story we have two sons. It is clear that they are not the owner of the vineyard, but the father is the owner. They have been asked to go and work in the vineyard. It is also clear that we have two groups we can identify. A representation of a group of people who are quick to profess their obedience but don't actually follow through with it. Compared to a second group that talk about going their "own way" but actually come to be moved inside and follow the father's will.

First, let's look at this from a bit of a safe distance for us. Jesus is pointing out some people that have obvious identifiable sin in their lifestyle (not gossipers or talking behind someone's back), something that is easily recognized in Jesus' day, the tax collectors and prostitutes. By their commitment to one way of life they are saying "No, we are going to do our own thing". Then, they are moved to believe and come into line with the "way of righteousness". Then we have this other group, the religious leaders and religious people who are depicted as professing their obedience but not really have their actions match their words.

While we are still talking about them... (safely) what is at the base root of their problem with going into the vineyard? I would say that it has to do with the nature of what they feel towards, and their attitude towards the one that is requesting that they go. Does this personal really have authority over me? Really? Meaning... does this one have real and true powers they can yield? That is someone in authority, right? The response to a request from a person like this shows what you think of the genuineness of their authority and where they stand with you.

Now, in still thinking about a problem over why these groups respond differently, let's look at this "way of righteousness" that some come to see and some don't. It seems to be the spark behind why one group is doing the will and some aren't. The sinners repent and believe! That is the core behind the whole idea of authority. **They recognize sin... recognize that it is a problem... and believe, in the Lord... the solver of the problem!** *The way of righteousness* that John came to show was pointing out that Jesus **is** the Lord. He **is** the long awaited Messiah! He **is** the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. So, repentance or lack of repentance seem to be the core behind the responses that Jesus is emphasizing in the story.

Now, turn your attention away from THOSE people and bring it a little closer to heart. The people in the story had to resolve the challenge that is inherently posed in that Deuteronomy verse. And that is a challenge that **you** are posed as well. "Is the Lord really Lord of YOUR life???" Do you really place Him as number one and recognize His supreme authority over you and... knowing Him... do you love Him with all your heart, and all your soul, and with all your strength???

That is the question of Lordship! Is God somewhere there in the background in your life? Like a distant relative, he has a spot in your life, or **is He your Lord?** And everything you have, and do, is centered on Him?

The answer to that question is settled and answered not by our lip service, not by our ability to sing hymns, and to know when to kneel and sit and stand at church. The answer to that question comes from our approach to this idea of repentance. And in understanding the enormity of the problem that being imperfect, and having sin, really is. Do you really need to repent? Or are you in control of your future and your eternal destiny?

Jesus came to earth and lived here among us because not being perfect and having sin is a real and true problem for all people. Thankfully, He came and lived sinless and died on the cross and rose to new life so that anyone with sin could be forgiven. Not that people could have some process to avoid sin, but that through faith in HIM... there is a "way of righteousness", a way to be "in right with God", even though we don't deserve it.

Jesus is Lord. He is Yahweh. He is God. And yet He came and humbled himself to face death on the cross for our sins. In order to make a "way of righteousness"... for YOU personally!

The question of His Lordship in **your** life is settled...

- By your response to His request to go into his vineyard and spread the good news that THERE IS A WAY to eternal life. Do you take that request seriously... or does He mean somebody else?

The question of His Lordship in **your** life is settled...

- By your response to the things that you have come your way in life. Are they really yours? Or are they the Lord's? Have you been asked to manage some of the Lord's resources? Or did you get these things yourself with your hard work, and they don't have anything to do with the Lord? If you tithe and give back 10% of all that He has given you, do you trust that he can still supply and care for you?

LORDSHIP... that is what jumps out to us in these readings today. And it IS about YOUR life. It is a question for you to reflect on. Have you allowed Jesus to be LORD in ALL your life?

Know that Jesus IS LORD! He is the Messiah! He came to make this "way of righteousness" through faith... out of love for you. He loves you and constantly cares for you. You CAN trust him with your whole life, these days, and into all the days of eternity!

AMEN!