

STONE⁺HARBOR

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Date: July 26, 2009
Series: Who Jesus Is & Why He Matters
Section: Jesus on Mission in Jerusalem
Text: Mark 12:1-12
Topic: Jesus' Authority
Message Title: How Jesus Sets Our Thinking Right-Side Up

Mark 12 -- Parable of the Vine-growersⁱ

- 1 And He began to speak to **them** in parables: ["them" = Jewish authorities introduced in Mk 11:27; see also 12:12]
"A man PLANTED A VINEYARD [The Is 5:1,2 passage speaking of unproductive vineyard of Israel may have...]ⁱⁱ
AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT, []
AND DUG A VAT UNDER THE WINE PRESS []
AND BUILT A TOWER, []
and rentedⁱⁱⁱ it out to **vine-growers** [New material to familiar story may also have caught the attention of listeners.]
and went on a journey. [speaks of temporary distance = estrangement]
- 2 "At the harvest time **he sent** a slave to the vine-growers, []
in order to receive some of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers. [rent?]
- 3 "They took him, and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. [disrespect and non-payment of rent due]
- 4 "Again **he sent** them another slave, []
and they wounded him in the head, []
and treated him shamefully. []
- 5 "And **he sent** another, and that one they killed; []
and so with many others, beating some and killing others. []
- 6 "He had one more to send, a beloved son; []
he sent him last of all to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' []
- 7 "But those vine-growers said to one another, []
'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!' [Faulty logic of foolish tenants.]
- 8 "They took him, and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. []
- 9 "What will the owner of the vineyard^{iv} do? [Parallel account has Jewish authorities answering this.]
He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others. [Jesus' answers.]
- 10^v "Have you not even read^{vi} this Scripture: [Psalm 118:22, 23 -- How did the Jewish authorities understand Ps 118?]
"THE STONE^{vii} WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, []
THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone; [of what building?]
- 11 THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, ["this" = rejection of Jesus redeemed by the Lord as corner...]
AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES?" [Who is marveling and what are they marveling at?]
- 12 And they were seeking to seize Him, []

and yet they feared the people, [The fear of man. May this not influence me nor other Christian leaders!]
for they understood that He spoke the parable against **them** [They understood Jesus' challenge]
And so they left Him and went away. []

Note: With NASB right-adjusted notes from Johnny Potter.

Transformation Card

This page provides an overview of the message and resources for individual and group study.

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Message Outline

How Jesus Sets Our Thinking Right-Side Up

- I. By Telling a Story
- II. By Asking a Question
- III. By Calling Attention to Scripture

Related Scripture

1. Mark 11
2. Mark 12
3. Mark 12:1-12
4. Isaiah 5 esp. vv. 1-2;
5. Psalm 118 esp. vv. 22-23;
6. Acts 4:1-12

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. Who was Jesus addressing in 12:1 and how do you know?
2. What topic was Jesus speaking to (see 11:27-33)?
3. Based on the parable in 12:1-8:
 - Who do the main characters portray (owner, vine-growers, owner's slaves and son)?
 - What real events in history did the vine-growers actions against the owner's slaves and son implicate?
4. If Jesus were asking you His question of verse 9a, what right would you say the owner has?
5. What truth was Jesus drawing attention to in verses 10 and 11 by quoting Psalm 118:22-23?
6. Verse 12 records the sad response of the Jewish authorities to Jesus correction to their misunderstanding, how would you hope you would have responded?
7. What can you do to make sure you are in the lifestyle habit of rightly responding to truth Jesus presents you?

Memory and Meditation Verse

**“Have you not even read this Scripture:
‘THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED,
THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER STONE;
THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD
AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES.’?”**

Jesus from Mark 12:10-11 NASB

Introduction

New Hampshire's state motto is, "Live Free or Die." We live in a land of fierce independence, it is the "land of the free" where nobody tells me what to do. I think it could be said correctly of a large majority of Americans that we have a problem submitting to authority. We don't like anyone else telling us what to do – not as a nation, and not as individuals. We have private property and we enforce "No Trespassing" laws. I'm a product of this independent spirit and you won't find me arguing against personal freedoms and private property.

But where we get in trouble is when we wrongly try to exercise a perceived right that really belongs to someone else -- and that someone else calls us on it.

It is sort of like the man who lived next to an army general. They were friends. When the general was deployed overseas for an extended period of time he told his neighbor friend that if he needed to he could borrow his truck. The general had a nice four wheel drive rig with off road suspension – it was a man's truck. Well, the first time the neighbor borrowed the general's truck, he went over to the house, used the hide-a-key to let himself in, got the keys to the truck out of the drawer, used the truck, then put the truck back in the garage, and the truck key back in the drawer, locked the house up and put the house key back in the hide-a-key box where the general had hidden it for him. The next time he needed the truck he repeated that same process but figured all that key swapping was an unnecessary hassle, so he just made himself a couple of keys at the local hardware store. And the next time he used the general's truck he didn't see the point in taking the car back to the general's house, so he decided he'd just to keep it at his house. As time went on he stopped referring to the truck as "the general's truck" and started calling it, "my truck." A couple years came and went and the general remained overseas. The neighbor's son had an idea of starting a hauling business and asked his dad if he could use his truck, to which his dad agreed, happy to see his son exhibiting some entrepreneurial spirit. Well all was well until the general told his son he could have the truck. When the general's son came to get his truck out his dad's garage, lo and behold, the truck was missing. So he called his dad's neighbor friend to see if he happened to be borrowing his dad's truck. Well, as it turns out, with one thing leading to another and all, the general's friend's son had by this time developed quite a successful hauling business using the general's truck as THE truck that did all the hauling. The neighbor's son had paid quite a sum in repairs and maintenance on the truck to make sure it stayed in good working order. In fact he had just washed and waxed it again and was feeling quite fond of what he now called his truck. And complicating the matter even further, he had scheduled "his truck" for use all that week with several hauling jobs that would bring him several thousand dollars. Now we have a problem.

This is the case we encounter in Mark 11 when Jesus, the son of the owner of the temple, comes into town and find's unauthorized people using the temple for uses His Father had never intended. We had seen in 11:15 that Jesus had created quite a stir and disrupted all the merchandising that was going on that had prevented the temple from being used as a house of prayer -- which was God's intention for the temple. The Jewish authorities who found themselves with "the keys to the truck" and who considered the temple under their authority took issue with Jesus and had basically confronted Him in 11:28 saying, who do you think you are?!

This would be like the neighbor's son challenging the general's son, "Who do you think you are asking for the truck? I've got a business going on here and this is my truck." Well it is easy for us to see in both

cases that the general's son and God's Son could respectively say, "No, this is my father's truck and he has given it to me," and "No, this is My Father's temple and He has given it and all things to Me."

Of course the Jewish authorities of the day did not have the same clarity on the issue and they set out to defend their position by challenging Jesus authority.

If you remember from two weeks ago we saw that Jesus was not willing to directly answer their question as to where He got His authority because they were not honestly trying to discern if He had legitimate authority, but rather they were challenging Him in whatever way they could in order to best secure their position of power. The Jewish authorities of Jesus day, like the general's friend's son, felt entitled to calling the shots in the temple of God. And when the Son of the God of the Temple came to that temple, they had so much riding on their positions as leaders that they were unwilling to "give back the keys" they had made for themselves.

Today we get to pick up where we left off with that growing conflict between Jesus and the Jewish authorities of His day. We will see that where Jesus was not willing to answer the Jewish authorities directly (Mark 11:27-33), He did answer them indirectly in the passage before us today, Mark 12:1-12.

He answered in a way that would effectively force them to carry a memorable story with them that would remain in their minds as a testimony of who Jesus was. In His answer, at least for those who have ears, He does answer the question of His authority and offers a corrective on their errant thinking.

He takes their upside-down thinking and sets it right-side up.

Our passage this morning is Mark 12:1-12.

Outline of Passage

- Context: 11:27-33 -- Jewish Authorities Question Jesus' Authority
- 1a – Jesus Begins Speaking to the Jewish Authorities in Parable
- 1b-8 -- The Parable of Murderous Tenants of an Owner's Vineyard
- 9a – Jesus' Question of What the Wronged Owner will Justly Do
- 9b – The Answer: He Will Come, Destroy Vine-Growers, Give Vineyard to Others
- 10 -- What The Jewish Authorities Should Have Understood from the Scriptures
- 12 – The Response of the Jewish Authorities to Jesus' Words

How does Jesus help us think rightly about Him and His authority? How does Jesus set our thinking right-side up?

Outline of the Message

How Jesus Sets Our Thinking Right-Side Up

- I. By Telling a Story
- II. By Asking a Question
- III. By Calling Attention to Scripture

Conclusion: Jesus' Effect on the Jewish Authorities and more importantly, Jesus Effect on Us

Please join me in prayer and then let's read the story Jesus told. Heavenly Father, please give us, through the power of Your Holy Spirit, the ears we need to understand what You want us to know about Yourself and Your Son Jesus in this passage of Scripture. Please help us to see ourselves rightly, especially how we are living and how we should live in relation to You. Wash us with Your word, transform us by the renewing of our minds. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

How Jesus Sets Our Thinking Right-Side Up

Here He does so...

I. By Telling a Story

A. *The Story Told*

Let's read Mark 12:1-8.

B. *The Story Explained*

1. What Jesus' Quote from Isaiah 5 Brought to Mind

a) **God's Righteous Judgment on Failing Israel**

Isaiah 5 begins with a parable of a vineyard. In Isaiah's parable the vineyard is the people of Israel whom God has planted and cultivated such that it should produce good fruit -- but such is not forthcoming.

2b -- "Then He expected it to produce good grapes,
But it produced only worthless ones."

This lack of fruit when God had exercised such great care in providing all the vineyard needed in order to produce, caused God to pronounce judgment on the people of Israel.

5 -- "So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard:
I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed;
I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground.

6 -- I will lay it waste;
It will not be pruned or hoed,
But briars and thorns will come up.

I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it." (5-6)

Isaiah 5 continues with painful language that describes God's righteous judgment on the people He had called His own, but who would not be true sons to Him. In a series of "Woes" and other condemnations God spells out their sorrowful failures to be His people:

20 -- Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil...
21 -- Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes...
22 -- Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine...

And He speaks of His recourse against them:

13 -- Therefore My people go into exile...

It is a sad prophetic pronouncement of what would and did come upon the people of Israel. The Jewish community alive at the time of Jesus could not escape that their ancestors, although they were like a vineyard God Himself had planted and provided all it needed to flourish, had failed at being the people of God, and God had rightly judged them for their failure.

Isaiah 5 spoke of a sad chapter in Jewish history. Now Jesus was drawing on the same imagery awakening the thought of failure and just judgment.

Lane p. 417: Say that Jesus "... deliberately appealed to Isa. 5:1f. in order to force his hearers to draw the conclusion that the parable concerns their abuse of the position they have assumed."

2. Who's Who & What's What in the Parable

a) Owner of the Vineyard = God

God built the vineyard with great care and attention to the details of His design.

b) Vine-growers = People of Israel

Especially its leaders.

c) Owner's Slaves = OT Prophets

Lane points us to: Jer 7:25f; 25:4; Amos 3:7; Zech 1:6

Clark lists the mistreatment of the prophets

- Israel preferred a King to Samuel... 1 Sam 8:6-8, 12:12-13
- Elijah was persecuted by Ahab ... 1 Kings 18:10-12
- Isaiah was sawn in half by King Manasseh according to Jewish tradition
- Zechariah was stoned to death ... 2 Chron 24:20-22
- Jeremiah was imprisoned ... Jer 37:15
- ...

To which we can certainly add

- John the Baptist, the last of the OT prophets, who was beheaded ... Mark 6:25 and context.

d) Owner's "Beloved" Son = Jesus

- Mark 1:11 You are My beloved Son, in You I am well pleased."
- Mark 9:7 "...This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!"
- Heb 1:1-2 -- God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

You may want to read Heb 1:1-9 and celebrate the greatness of this humble man Jesus who is God the Son.

e) Vineyard = The Privilege of Leadership in the KOG

3. What the Vine-growers injustice was

a) Unwarranted mistreatment of the owner's slaves and son

- (1) Aggravated Assault
- (2) Murder

b) Attempted theft of the vineyard from the owner

When seen not as a story but for what Jesus intended the story to represent, this is an attempt by the Jewish authorities to take for themselves by force and cost of life what belonged to God.

Such an attempted theft is easily seen by everyone's assessment as wrong. It is not right to take what belongs to someone else and call it yours. And the crime seems all the more arrogant and grievous when what is wrongly taken belongs to God.

So Jesus began to set upside-down thinking right-side up by telling us a story we could easily think rightly about. Then He continues...

II. By Asking a Question

A. The Value of a Asking Good Questions

Personal discovery is typically a more effective method of learning than having a someone else tells you a piece of information. I certainly learn best when I'm most interested myself in finding something out and when I set my mind to learning about it.

B. Jesus' Good Question

Look at verse 9a – “What will the owner of the vineyard do?” Literally it reads, “What will the Lord of the vineyard do?”

Having heard the story and now having a related question put to them, the Jewish authorities are compelled to consider the question and offer their answer.

C. The Jewish Authorities Answer

Mat 21:41 -- They said to Him, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons."

Like David,

who's righteous indignation was incited when Nathan (2 Sam 12) the prophet described the unjust action of a man abusing his authority, the Jewish authorities Jesus was telling His story to also called it like it was: the vine growers are “wretches” who deserve to be brought to a “wretched end” and the vineyard should rightly go to others who will pay the owner his due.

But, unlike David

who repented (2 Sam 12:13) when he discovered Nathan was describing him these men hardened their hearts and dug in, not repenting and discovering the truth of Jesus, but holding on tight to their misunderstanding of Jesus and their illegitimate positions of power.

D. Jesus' Answer

1. Sidebar on Apparent Contradictions

a) In general

b) This apparent contradiction

Jesus allowed the Jewish authorities to answer as recorded in Matthew and then offered His own agreeing summary as recorded in Mark.

2. Jesus' Answer (9b)

What will the owner of the vineyard do? **“He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others.”**

The telling of the easy to grasp story helps us begin to think rightly about a similar situation that is more difficult to understand. And having a question put to us engages us in the process of discovery of truth all the more effectively. To this, Jesus adds another crucial missing piece. He helps us see things right-side up ...

III. By Calling Attention to Scripture

A. First He Asked A Set-Up Question

1. Mark 12:10a – “Have you not even read this Scripture...”

William Lane (p. 420) calls this, “the language of debate.”

2. The Tone & Effect of His Question

See endnotes. This would be like asking a pastor today, Have you never read the Scripture, “For God so loved the world...”? It would have put the Jewish authorities on the defensive feeling attacked in their own area of expertise.

B. Then He Quoted a Scripture

1. Mark 12:10b - 11 = Psalm 118:22-23

2. Jesus' Purpose in Quoting the Scripture

William Lane p. 420: “...the citation is intended to sharpen the application of the parable to Jesus and his immediate listeners. It confirms the identification of Jesus as the son in the parable and contrasts his despised and rejected status with the glorious exaltation to which God has appointed him.”

3. How the Jewish Authorities Would Have Understood Psalm 118:22-23

Lane, p. 420: “In rabbinic literature the rejected stone of Ps. 118:22 was understood with reference to Abraham, David or the Messiah, while the expression “the builders” was sometimes used of the doctors of the Law.”

It is clear that Psalm 118 was familiar to the people of Israel and all the more so to it's religious leaders.

It was the Psalm that the people of Israel had shouted out when they were welcoming Jesus as king just a few days earlier as He entered Jerusalem. In fact, Luke's gospel records the religious authorities telling Jesus not to allow the people to use those words in reference to Him since they understood them to be the appropriate announcement only for the Messiah.

- Psalm 118:26 “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord”
- Mark 11:9-10 “Those who went in front and those who followed were shouting: “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David; Hosanna in the highest.””
- Luke 19:38 “...Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord;...”
- Luke 19:39-40 “Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.” But Jesus answered, “I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out.””

So the people and even more so the Jewish authorities understood Psalm 118 to have Messianic implications – the stone that the builders would reject would be the ultimate Davidic king, the Messiah.

David was rejected by men (Jesse, Saul) but anointed by God as king of Israel. His sin, most notably with Bathsheba, had demonstrated that he was not the ultimate king of Israel, but only a type. Clearly there would be another, a descendent of his^{viii}, who would be the ultimate king. And it would be through Him that God's promise to restore (Gen 3:15) and bless all families of the earth (Gen 12:3) would ultimately be realized.

The Jewish Authorities of Jesus day would have seen easily that the stone of Psalm 118 was David first rejected by the builders – their ancestral people -- but then used by God as the chief corner stone; they should have seen that this was also prophetic of the Messiah who would be the ultimate stone.

The truth Jesus was leading them to that they had not yet discovered was that they were the ultimate builders and Jesus was the ultimate chief corner stone; they were rejecting the very Messiah who God was causing to become the chief corner stone in the ultimate temple. Jesus Himself was the ultimate dwelling place of God with man.

But all this was washing over them in a blur. Their blindness to the truth of Jesus identity -- whether self inflicted by selfishly holding on to their positions of earthly power or simply by ignorance -- caused them to respond in a very sad way...

IV. Conclusion

A. Jesus' Effect on the Jewish Authorities

- Because they did not embrace Him as the beloved son of the vineyard owner, as God's anointed Messiah, they either missed the truth of Jesus or they set it aside.

- Let's read Mark 12:12.
- "They understood..."! At the very least, they understood that Jesus was speaking the parable against them, that He was saying they were the renters and He was the son of the owner.
- They understood, but they did not receive the truth. They pushed it aside!
- They could see the error and sin in the lives of the characters in Jesus' **story**, but they could not or did not apply that to **themselves**.
- I have remarked before that this is the supreme tragedy. They were having a conversation with the Son of God and yet they pushed Him aside. Intoxicated with the cheap wine of their position, they could not see the door to the kingdom of God in front of them.

But enough of them, let's talk about ourselves. Here is where we can turn the sad situation of the unrepentant authorities' costly mistake into hope for our future and those God would have us reach. Yes, we have to avoid making their mistake, but we are certainly not condemned to repeat it. First thing we have to do is not read this passage and see it as only applicable to that sad lot of Jewish authorities of Jesus' day. We must not even see it as applicable to some other person. We must, we **must** see if Jesus is telling the story to **us**, asking **us** if we have not read Psalm 118, if we do not understand that Jesus is God's beloved Son and chief corner stone of the kingdom of God.

B. Jesus Effect on Us

Beloved, let us not miss the truth of Jesus ourselves, and by all means let us not set Jesus aside ignoring Him and the authority He has as the Son of God.

- Some here may need to take the very initial step of establishing diplomatic relations with Jesus – you need to simply recognize Him.
- Some may have already done that and may need to submit to His authority. This is not a bad thing. You would be submitting to the One who created you, who is in the process of restoring all of creation and who hold close, intimate and eternal communion with you as His purpose. This is the beginning of faith.
- Some may have recognized and submitted in word and may now need to accept His authority in deed. This is the completion of faith.
- Some may simply need to continue in their walk of faith – you need to persevere. This is continuing in faith.

Last week in our Bible study we were reminded that the nation of Israel repeated as the drumbeat of its history the cycle of: rest, complacency, rebellion, subjugation, repentance, deliverance and restoration.^{ix} Brothers and sisters, with the coming of Jesus we are not condemned to repeat this cycle. Instead God has, for all those who are joined by faith to Him in Christ, a rest that continues. But take careful note of what is next in line in that unfortunate cycle, complacency.

Complacency therefore is our enemy. It lurks around every corner in our culture. It hides in ease, in media, religious activity... We live in the midst of such an active noisy sparkling world that Jesus can seem irrelevant. HE IS NOT!

He is the only thing that is truly relevant. And it is only when we recognize Him as God's Son and submit ourselves to Him and His authority that we can truly live as He has designed us to live. All else misses God's design. Don't miss it.

Let's pray!

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Endnotes

ⁱ This parable was told in response to the Jewish authorities' challenge of Jesus authority in Mark 11:27-33.

ⁱⁱ The Is 5:1,2 passage speaking of God's coming judgment of the unproductive vineyard of Israel may have been brought to the minds of the chief priest, scribes and elders by Jesus' telling of this parable.

ⁱⁱⁱ rented – Note the temporary status of any renter.

^{iv} Who is the "owner of the vineyard"? God the Father!

^v Verses 10-11 quote Psalm 118:22-23. Significantly, Peter, in Acts 4:1-12, clearly identifies Jesus as the stone and the Jewish authorities as the builders who rejected Him. Read Acts 4:1-12 and marvel at Peter's clarity and boldness.

^{vi} "even read" – Jesus does not ask if they understood a confusing passage, but asks if they haven't even read it. The tone I hear is of an employer who gave an employee a written task description but the employee never even read it, but instead went off and did a completely different task.

^{vii} NASB cross ref. list: Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Mark 12:11; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:7

^{viii} Pastor Kit Culver in his Sacred Space manuscript on p. 85 offers this helpful list of references regarding the Davidic descent of the coming king of the ultimate kingdom of God: 2 Sam 7:1ff; Psalm 89; Isaiah 9:1-7, 11:1-16, 55:1-5; Jeremiah 23:1-6, 33:14-26; Ezekiel 34:1-31, 37:15-28, Hosea 3:1-5; Amos 9:11-15

