

Discussion Questions – Mark 12:1–12

Introductory question

1. As you heard the parable of the tenants read and explained, what part of the story or sermon stood out to you most?

1. The good guys turn out to be the bad guys

2. In the parable, the tenants represent Israel's religious leaders. Why do you think Jesus tells the story in a way that exposes the failure of the very people who were meant to lead God's people?
3. The Old Testament often describes Israel as God's vineyard (e.g. Isaiah 5). What does that image reveal about God's care for his people and what he was looking for from them?

2. The tenants act like owners

4. In the story the tenants behave as if the vineyard belongs to them. Why is that such a serious problem?
5. The sermon suggested that many people today live as "owners" rather than "tenants." What might that look like in everyday life?

3. The owner sends his beloved son

6. After the servants are beaten and killed, the owner still sends his son. What does this part of the story reveal about God's character?
7. In what ways does this moment in the parable help us understand what God was doing in sending Jesus?

4. The rejected stone becomes the cornerstone

8. Jesus quotes Psalm 118: "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." What does this teach us about how God works through rejection?
9. How does Jesus' death and resurrection become the foundation of God's plan to save and gather a people for himself?

5. They hear, but they don't want to know

10. Verse 12 says the leaders realised Jesus had spoken the parable against them. Why do you think they responded by rejecting him rather than repenting?
11. People today can also hear Jesus' words and yet walk away. What are some reasons people might respond that way?

Final question – authority

12. The parable answers the question raised earlier in the temple: "By what authority are you doing these things?" After hearing this passage, what does it mean for us personally to recognise Jesus' authority as the beloved Son?

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...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 15 March 2026
Services: 9am, St John's Wishart.
Series: Jesus unfiltered
Reading: Mark 12:1-12
Title: The parable of the vineyard

1. The good guys are the bad guys
2. The tenants act like owners
3. The owner sends his beloved son
4. The rejected stone becomes the capstone
5. They hear, but they don't want to know

- Mark's gospel is full of surprises.
- I'm sure you've seen plenty along the way in the last few weeks.
- Like **last** week – that the Son of Man – the eternal son – came not to be **served** but to **serve**
- Now of course that is all very familiar to us, but if you can imagine reading it for the first time, it is opposite to what we expect from anyone in authority!
- From the president of **China** – to the president of the **USA**.... Or Russia....
- They all think they run the **world!** ///
- Although our late **Queen** saw her role in terms of **service**, I'm not sure any modern day political leader understands leadership in those terms.
- But when the **Son of God** turns up – /// he came to **serve!** //
- ...and in fact – serve in the most **surprising – disturbing way possible** – by giving his **life** as a **ransom** for **many**....
- As a **ransom** – for **YOU!** ///
- Now in Mark 11 which we're **not** dealing with in this series... Jesus has made his way into **Jerusalem**
- And there are **more surprises**.... Jesus...rides on a **donkey** and not a **war horse**...
crowds crying out – 'hosanna'... 'blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord...'
Jesus cursing a fig tree – as a sign of **fruitless Israel** being under curse
Jesus overturning **money tables**...
and Jesus telling the religious leaders very **bluntly** that they had turned the house of **prayer** into a den of **robbers!** //
- so left-field are all these incidents – so radical – so surprising – that at the end of Ch 11 – the question is – **WHO IS THIS GUY!?!??** - and who gave **him authority** to throw around **tables** in the **temple courts**... and curse fig trees! ///
- Jesus doesn't give a **straight answer**, but he tells the parable – the story - just read for us...

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- A parable which in fact answers very **clearly** both **WHO** Jesus is and **what authority he has!** ///
- So I have 5 more surprises for you this morning.. and the first is this:

1. THE GOOD GUYS TURN OUT TO BE THE BAD GUYS.

- Now – what on earth am I talking about?
- Some background...
- Many of you will recall that the nation of Israel was **often** referred to as a **vineyard tended by God**.
- It's a picture of God's **loving nurture and care**
- If you know **anything** about **vineyards**, they require a **lot of attention**... it's one of the more **labour intensive** types of farming there is...
getting the **soil right**,
ensuring the **vines** have **sufficient** water,
cutting **back** when you need to
- not to mention the actual **harvesting** when it's **time**
- So the image speaks of God's **tender love** for his **vine / Israel /**
- It speaks of his **generous provision**... - a **fertile hillside, stones cleared, choicest of vines, a wall, a winepress, a watchtower for protection**...
- He gave his vine Israel the **very best shot** at producing a **brilliant crop**... Isaiah 5:4 – *What **more** could have been done for my vineyard than I have **done** for it?*
- But then – the **sobering assessment** – *when I looked for **good grapes**, why did it yield only **bad**?* //
- Now – **what** is he talking **about**? ///
- Israel didn't show any **evidence** (fruit) of being in real **relationship** with **God**...
- They **mixed** their religion with surrounding **nations** – a little bit of **this** – a little bit of **that** – **whatever suits** – whatever **works**... //
- They made **idols** out of **wood** and **gold** and worshipped **them**...!! // their own **made-up gods** – very **convenient**...
- **When** they engaged in **worship** – it was only with their **lips** and not their **hearts**... ///
- **Their leaders failed to teach God's word**
- ...or to **shepherd God's people**.... ///
- and Jesus picks **up** on this Old Testament imagery as he speaks to the **religious** leaders of his **own day**...
- So – let's be clear: the **vine** in **Jesus'** parable here is **Israel**...
- The **tenants** are the **very people** Jesus is **speaking** with – the **religious leaders**... **charged** with **tending** God's vine **under** him and **for** him...

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- Over **years** and **years** – God had sent his **servants** the **prophets** to **teach**, to **rebuke**, to **cajole**... to **woo**, // and they were treated **badly**... ///
- ...yes... **beaten, struck... killed!**
- So – the religious leaders – the presumed ‘**good** guys’, turn out to be the ‘**bad** guys!’ ////
- That’s the first surprise... //
- the **second** surprise is...

2. THE TENANTS ACT LIKE OWNERS...

- They had **completely** lost the **plot** – these **religious leaders**
- Instead of tending the vineyard on **God’s** behalf – according to **his** will and for his **benefit**...
- ...they had been tending it on their **own** behalf, for their **own** benefit. /
- They act like **owners**...
- ...so when the owner (that is... God), sends a servant to claim the fruit which was rightly **his**... they act as if the owner has **no rights whatsoever**... and seize the **servant** he sends –
Have a look with me at v3 – *And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed.*
- Let’s continue – vv 4-5 *Again he sent to them **another** servant, and they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully. ⁵ And he sent **another**, and **him** they **killed**. And so with **many others**: some they **beat**, and some they **killed**.*
- “We **own** this **joint**.”
- “We’re in **charge**.”
- “This is all **ours** – and it’s all for **us**.” //
- The **tenants** act like **owners**! ///
- ...not just true of **Jewish religious leaders** over the **centuries** of Israel’s **history**.
- It’s also how most **Australians** live //
- how the **world** lives.
- We’re **tenants**, but we live as **owners**.
- So I’ll use my **mind**, my **body**, my **money**, my **time**, my **opportunities**, my **internet**, even my **spouse** – however I want.
- I’m in **charge**. I **call** the **shots**. ///
- We **suppress** the notion there’s some **other** owner, because that would make us **accountable** – **answerable!**
- We **hate** the idea of a God who is **actually** in **charge**.
- We **suppress** that **truth** ////
- You see even the **religious** people – were so busy being **religious** – so puffed up with **pride** and **arrogance** – so **busy** following religious **rules** and **regulations** – that they **cut God out**... //

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- Same **today** – **religious** people can be so busy being religious – same rituals **again** and **again** – so **busy** attending to **rules** and **regulations**... that God is not on the **scene**. They're **firmly** in **charge**! //
- You want to know what's **wrong** with the world today?
- people living as if they own and run the place... //
- ... living as **owners**, not as **tenants**... //
- Does that explain the bombs and **air strikes** of these past **few weeks**?? /////
- OK – back to the story and the **third** surprise...

3. THE OWNER SENDS HIS SON

- **What** owner would do **that**? /
- ...after the **appalling** way the servants have been treated **100%** of the time he has sent them!!
- **What** owner would not just send in the **police** – or set their **lawyer** on to the case to **evict** these **bad tenants**? //
- Did he really think that sending his **son** would be the answer? ////
- Well - God is not a **businessman** who's mainly concerned about his **property**.
- He wants **relationship**...
- “maybe my **son** – when I show my **vulnerability** – when they see the **respect** I'm giving them – **maybe** they'll **respond**...”
- He's a father seeking a **relationship with the tenants**... ///
- Friends - this is God's **incomprehensible concern** for us
- Do you see what's **being pictured here**..?
- God has been rejected **time and again** with respect to the **prophets** he sent over **centuries**.
- What does he **do**? //
- Gives *more* **grace** – in the person of his **Son**...!! ///
- “I am willing”, says God, “to empty my **heart** of its greatest **treasure** to **reach** you.”
- “Will you **trust** me **now**?? **Come to me? Turn to me?**
- Or will you **STILL** reject my **grace**?”
- It's not their religious **achievements** he's interested in...
- He wants their **broken heart**...
- He wants them to **admit** they've been acting as the **owner**
- ...and start **acting** – **living** like a **tenant**... ////
- But we read v7 “*But those tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’⁸ And they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.*”

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- The Son was **completely rejected**.
- They did to the **Son** what they had done to the **servants**.
- In killing the owner's **son**, their **claim** to be the **owners** was **absolute!** ///
- But did you notice **that** even then, God the **owner**, was **still at work!**
- And so we see our fourth surprise:

4. THE REJECTED STONE BECOMES THE CAPSTONE

- V10 – *Have you not read this Scripture:*
- *“The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;^[b]
¹¹ this was the Lord's doing,
and it is marvellous in our eyes’?”*
- So the stone the builders rejected – **Jesus** – has by his **death and resurrection** – become the whole **platform** for God's **reconciling work** and his **building a new people... living stones...** into his **spiritual house** – to be a **priesthood** to mediate his **reconciling work** to the **world...** that's how the Apostle Peter enlarges on this! //
- Friends; - there is a great **amnesty** on at the moment...
- Anyone who **admits** they've been living as **owners** and not as **tenants...** can come be connected to the **capstone** – Jesus - and be connected to **God through him... accepted** by his **grace** and **welcomed...** ///
- It's a massive invitation!
- It's a **brilliant demonstration** of the **riches** of God's **grace!**
- But – but!! – anyone who still insists they **own** the **place** – and continues living as **owners** – well – have a look at v9 – *He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.* //
- **Tough?** –
Well – yes!!!
But **also**..... entirely **reasonable!**
Either you'll **turn your life around to live as a tenant not the owner; and receive God's amazing welcome and forgiveness; OR**
Keep pushing God out... and he will destroy you! ///
- So I **plead** with anyone here this morning who's been living way too long as if **they** were **owners...**// **come** and **admit** it...
- While we were **enemies** – still claiming to be **owners**, the Owner sent his **Son** who **died** for us.
- Look at the **cross** – THERE we see his **love** and **grace...** grace and **more grace...**
- Jesus' death **reconciles** us to God – so he can run to **embrace** us

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- Come – **back** to the **owner**, and lay your **life before** him... ///
- One last surprise

5. THEY HEAR, BUT THEY DON'T WANT TO KNOW

- V12b – “...*they perceived that he had told the parable against them.*
So they left him and went away....”
 - They understood the parable....
 - and knowing they were **Jesus’ target**... // they made **Jesus THEIR target**... v12.... they were seeking to **arrest** him...
 - “we’ve got to get **rid** of this guy”
 - “we don’t like what he’s saying...”
 - “so we’ll kill him...!”
 - ...thereby **fulfilling** the **parable** Jesus had just **told**...!! –
 - that the owner sent his **Son** whom they **killed** – v8!!!!
 - Now although they were not **immediately** successful – because they **feared** the **people**....
 - They would **succeed** – it would only be a matter of **time**... they have him **arrested** and **tried** and **crucified**....
 - **Fulfilling** the **parable** and revealing the **full extent** of their **evil**... !!
 - but – **secondly**...
 - ...although they **knew** they were in the **firing line** of Jesus’ **teaching**...
 - Do you see what they **did**??? ////
 - they **left him** and went **away**.
 - They **walked away!** ///
 - The way **many** do **today**...
 - People today **hear** about **Jesus**... come to **some** understanding they are accountable to God... **some comprehension** of who Jesus is... // but they **walk away**. //
 - Again - If God has spoken to **YOU** today by his word... **DON’T** walk **away!** //
 - If you realise you’ve living as if you **own** the **place**... then come and speak to **me afterwards**....
/// I’d love to show you how simply by saying “*I’m so sorry*” you can recognise God as **rightful owner**... and find **forgiveness** and **reconciliation**...
-
- Let me close. ///
 - You’ve been exploring in this series from **Mark’s gospel**... who **Jesus is**...
 - In **this** parable... we see the **third** reference in the gospel to Jesus as the **beloved Son**...
 - Do you **remember?** //

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- At Jesus' **baptism**... *a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'*
- A couple of weeks back when you looked at the **transfiguration**... *a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"*
- and right here from Jesus' **own lips** as he places himself **into** his **story**... he says v6 *He had still one other, a beloved Son... Finally... he sent him to them...*
- we can therefore, be in **NO doubt** about **who Jesus is!!!**
- The **Father** sent the **Son**.... Knowing how the **prophets** before him had been **treated**...
- And yet through the **most evil act of doing away with the Son of God**... // he makes **possible** our **forgiveness**...
- bringing the **greatest good** from the **greatest** of all **evil**... //
- And the **stone** the builders **rejected**... has **become** the **cornerstone** of God's great **spiritual temple**... the people of God **across** the **ages**... built on **Jesus' self-giving sacrifice** as a **ransom** for **many**... ///
- Just look at what **God** has **done**...!!!
- And that answers the question that started all of this — the question the **religious leaders** asked in the **temple**:
*By what **authority** are you doing these things?*
Jesus declared in his parable... //// he was not just **another prophet**. /
But the **beloved Son** —
the **heir** —
the one who alone has the **rightful authority** over **God's temple**... **God's fig tree**.... **God's vineyard**. //
- And so we say with **Jesus** and the **prophet**...
- This was the **Lord's doing**... and it is **marvellous** in our **eyes**!