

The Tenants

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Date: 17 July 2022

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[0 : 00] Good evening everyone, it's great to see you. Thank you for coming out on this warm summer night that we're having. So yeah, we're in Luke chapter 20. Thanks for reading that, Cato, that was great.

If you could have it open, that would be very handy as we work our way through it. Let me just add a word of prayer before we begin. God and Father, we thank you for your word and we just pray that you'll speak to each one of us tonight as we hear from it.

Amen. So I don't know all of you that well. I know some of you very well. You'll know me fairly well. And some of you probably don't even know your name.

But it's pretty safe to say that at some point you've faced rejection. I know I have, I'm sure you have to some degree. This might be in varying forms and varying severities.

Maybe it was when you were at school. Maybe you wanted to go to college or university. Maybe you wanted a particular degree. You applied, but then that letter came in.

[1 : 01] Unfortunately, you're not accepted this time. Or maybe in the world that we're in today, maybe you put an offer in for a house that you thought was pretty reasonable.

And it turns out someone paid double what you did. It wouldn't be unheard of. Or maybe, you know, maybe, and this could be really hurtful, maybe it's to do with our relationships. Maybe it's to do with our friendships.

Maybe we have faced rejection in that regard. But we have a passage tonight which is full of rejection. And you know, all these things, these examples I mentioned, all these things have consequences for us.

And likewise, the rejection that we see in this parable tonight has consequences. And we're going to look a wee bit into that this evening. We see rejection of the servants.

We see rejection of the son. And we see rejection of the tenants. Now, I'm in the NIV and it sort of says tenants and farmers.

[2 : 06] But to try and keep it clear, I'm going to try and stick to saying tenants. Okay. But tenants or farmers, it's the same thing. And we see as part of the rejection of the tenants that is mentioned about the rejection of the cornerstone.

And we'll look into that a little bit as well. So, we're doing a parable series. So, we're doing parables. So, parables are stories that Jesus told.

That was a way that he taught. And it uses everyday things that people could understand in order to teach a spiritual lesson. And because we're not working the way through a book like we are in the morning, we need a bit of context to where we are tonight.

We're in Luke chapter 20. We are in Jerusalem. In chapter 19, Jesus enters Jerusalem. And the people treat him as a king. It's his triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

And he goes straight to the temple. And he starts to teach. So, he starts to teach the people there. So, that's where we're at. And just at the start of chapter 20 in the first eight verses, his authority is challenged.

[3 : 18] The chief priests and the scribes, they challenge Jesus' authority to be there, to be teaching, to be saying the things that he is saying. So, in response, Jesus addresses the people.

And he does so in order to inform them of their leader's wickedness. And when are we at in Jesus' life? Well, this is the final week of his life. He is in Jerusalem.

He is just a couple of days before he will be killed. So, that's a bit of background to where we're at. And we're going to look, as I've mentioned already, in three sections.

It splits itself up quite nicely. We're going to look at 9 to 12. And we're going to look at the rejection of the servants. In 13 to the first half of 15, we're going to look at the rejection of the son.

And finally, from the second half of 15 through to the end of 19, we're going to look at the rejection of the tenants. And these sections actually split themselves up a little bit.

[4 : 22] So, the first one looks into the past from the point of view where Jesus is speaking. The middle section, when it talks about the son, is actually the present. And from when Jesus is speaking, the rejection of the tenants is actually looking to the future.

So, I'm going to, hopefully that will make sense as we work our way through. But it's something to keep in mind. So, our first section, the rejection of the servants in verse 9 to 12.

So, Jesus, just to summarise a little bit, Jesus goes on to tell the people a parable. This man, he plants a vineyard. He puts it in the trust of these tenants.

And he goes away for a long time. To give you a wee bit of, maybe a bit of a timeline, I looked it up. And apparently a vineyard, if you were to go and plant it, you shouldn't expect any grapes for three years.

And even then, you'd be waiting maybe five years to get anything that's worth eating. So, that's maybe not common knowledge to us. But to the people Jesus was speaking of, they would have been aware of these things.

[5 : 26] This would have been their culture. So, he does that. And then harvest time comes. And he sends servants back to get some fruit. The first one comes back.

But the tenants, they beat him. And they send him away empty-handed. And we see an escalation of violence here. The second one, they beat him.

The second one, treated him shamefully. And sent them away. And the third one was wounded and thrown out. Now, this here is actually looking into the past.

From when Jesus is speaking here in AD 33, he's looking into the past. Now, it's not particularly obvious to us. But we need a little bit of a translation here.

So, the man who planted the vineyard, well, that is speaking of God. We know that because the vineyard represents Israel. It may not be obvious on first look to us.

[6 : 26] But to the Jews here, they would have known this. Because in the Old Testament, there's many times when Israel is referred to as the vineyard. In Isaiah 5, verse 7, it says, The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the nation of Israel.

And the people of Judah are the vines he delighted in. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed. For righteousness, but heard cries of distress. And this means that the tenants here, well, they are the religious leaders.

They are in charge of the nation. So, Israel was God's chosen people. And they incurred the benefits that came with this.

They were led by God. They were fed by God. We can think of the wilderness where they were fed. They were also saved. Saved out of Egypt.

Many other occasions in battles, in wars. But, you know, Israel was also chosen to bear fruit. Why in the story does a man plant a vineyard?

[7 : 32] Well, it's to get fruit. You know, if you're a Christian here tonight, if you would call yourself a follower of God, well, you have been chosen to be part of God's church.

And we are to enjoy the benefits of this. We have that peace. We have that forgiveness that comes with being of God. And we have that assured hope in our future and where we will end up.

But, you know, God also expects fruit from us. It's not a one-way thing. We are to respond in love to this privileged position that we find ourselves in. Speaking and acting for God in everything that we do.

In the story here, the servants, they were sent to get the fruit. The servants, that was their job, to go and do that. And in Old Testament times, we see that God's prophets were sent to call the people to repentance and faith.

They often challenged the religious leaders of the time while they were doing so. But they were all treated with contempt. They were rejected or beaten, killed and imprisoned.

[8 : 44] There's many examples we could look to, but if you read the story of Jeremiah, read the book of Jeremiah, you can see that this happened to him. He was sent to declare judgment, but he was cursed, beaten and thrown in jail.

And this isn't right. They were sent doing God's work, and yet they were rejected. You know, if we're living out our Christian lives today, then we aren't to expect any different.

If we're doing something that God has asked us to, then we aren't to expect it all to go as we wish. We can expect rejection.

We can expect persecution and bad treatment. And we see in the story that the tenants, well, they act despicably, don't they?

They act terribly. And the religious leaders of the nation of Israel, well, they were entrusted with God's people, God's nation. But they fell well short more often than not.

[9 : 49] There's many leaders throughout that we can read about. There's Moses, David, Samson, Hezekiah, the list goes on. And you know, sometimes they were good, godly stewards of God's people.

But other times they were godless and they failed. And when Jesus is speaking here, the religious leaders of the times, well, they were corrupt.

They were greedy. And they fell well short. You know, this is a challenge to anyone that's maybe in a position of leadership.

Anyone that's in charge of God's people in a small way or a big way. People today, they can look the part. They can wear the right clothes, turn up to the right things, but are empty or false inside.

That's a real danger that we need to watch out for with one another, but also in those in leadership. I don't want to get into politics here, but we've seen that this week.

[10 : 48] We've seen our failed leaders. Our leader has fallen in the UK government, hasn't he? And you know, the word that I've heard more and more this week has been integrity.

That's what people want. The opposition politicians are calling for it. The leaders that are all now squabbling to become the new leader. Well, they're all saying we need integrity.

And that means to be honest. Basically, to do something and say something for it to match. It should be no different with leaders in the church.

So we've seen here that there was this escalation of violence. There was a growing boldness, a growing diminishing of God-fearing behavior. And the lessons were not learned.

The warning wasn't heeded. So we move into our second section, which is the rejection of the son. In verse 13 through to the second half of 15.

[11 : 48] So the owner, he sent his servants. That's failed. He says, what shall I do? Well, I'll send my son, whom I love. Surely they will respect him and give him fruit.

But the tenants, they were wicked. They saw him. They got together. They said, this is the heir. Let's kill him. And we will get the inheritance.

So that's what they did. They killed him and threw him out. This here is from when Jesus is speaking. This is the present day. He is on earth. The son has been sent.

God sent his son. They call him. No, no. Maybe next time. You know, Jesus here, he's answering the question of his authority.

Just before he's been asked, where does your authority come from? Well, he's saying, look, I came from the father. The father sent me. I came from God. God's beloved son lays aside his glory and comes to earth.

[12 : 53] There should have been this respect and the awe. This is the father's ambassador. This is the father's representative. You see the pomp and the fanfare that happens when an ambassador from a different country arrives.

The queen comes out and, yes, nice to meet you and all that. You know, this didn't happen. When Jesus came, there was rejection. The religious leaders of Israel wanted nothing to do with Jesus.

The power hungry and jealous leaders, they planned to kill Jesus instead. And, you know, we can read elsewhere and look that at one point the demons stood in awe of Jesus.

Pilate respected who he was, but not the religious leaders, not those that should have done so. The religious leaders, they wanted the benefits of being part of God's people.

And yet they wanted to shun Jesus. They didn't want anything to do with him. And we all come across people like that. Maybe that's you. Maybe you want that forgiveness, that peace that comes from being part of God's family.

[14 : 03] Maybe you want to go to heaven one day. But, oh no, not Jesus. He's not for me. People want to do things their own way, don't they? Do it on their own.

You know, Jesus here was challenging their stranglehold that they had over the people. They were powerful. They had money. They wore fancy clothes.

And they didn't want to give that up. This made them blind to the truth that Jesus was saying. So the rejection of the Son.

What a God to send his Son, knowing what would happen. It wasn't a surprise. It didn't all go pear-shaped. It was planned from the beginning. What love. You know, equally, what a terrible thing to reject the Son.

And we're going to see the consequences of that in our last section, the rejection of the tenants. So the second half of 15 onwards to the end of 19, we see this rejection of the tenants.

[15:04] What then, Jesus asks this rhetorical question, what then will the owner of the vineyard do? Well, he answers it. He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.

This here is the future from where Jesus is speaking. He's looking forward. So in the story, the owner is going to kill the tenants and give it away.

You know, in judgment for this rejection, God will take away the blessings and the responsibility that these religious leaders have. And will give it to others.

This is a two-fold prophecy. It's partly fulfilled in AD 70, where Jerusalem is destroyed. But it will also be finally fulfilled in the future to us as well.

In the final judgment when Jesus returns. The Jesus rejecting Jews, they will be thrown out and others are going to be put in their place. That's what Jesus is saying here.

[16:13] And we know that to be true. The non-Jews, the Gentiles, become God's followers. Become the church. The church which now holds that place of spiritual and religious privilege that Israel once held.

So if we are a follower of Jesus, we are Christian, then we are to cherish the church. Not this building, not Brunnsfield, but the global body of believers that makes up the church.

There's responsibilities as well as blessings of being part of that church, just like it was being a part of the nation of Israel. It's a demanding and yet it's a rewarding calling for each one of us.

And it is a privileged position. But you know, the people that Jesus were addressing here at the end of 16, when they heard this, they said, God forbid, or let it not be so.

They refused to believe this was going to happen. Didn't want it to happen, despite the clear, to me anyway, justice of it. That these people, the leaders, they were not fit.

[17:25] So quite right that it should be taken from them. But you know, this is recognizable. People scream for justice. They want justice. And quite right. As Christians, we should more than anyone.

But you know, there's consequences of this justice. And often people don't want that. Often the question is asked. And often, you know, when I was at university, we had events on this.

How can a loving God also bring judgment? And it's, you know, it's a fair question. But you know, God is just. And if God is just, then he can't just let us all get away with it.

There is judgment because God is just. You know, we need to be ready for that fact. Each one of us individually. We need to be ready for the fact that God, as well as being loving, is also judge.

In 17, Jesus looks at them and he says, well, what does this mean? And he quotes Psalm 118.

[18:32] It might be in inverted commas in your Bible. But Psalm 118 here is quoted. The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces.

Anyone on whom it falls will be crushed. This is quoted to show that Jesus is the Messiah. This was a messianic prophecy in Isaiah.

So the people listening to this, they would know that Jesus is saying, this is me. They had this in their religious texts. Quite probably they would all know this passage off by heart.

And you know, the cornerstone is the key to the whole building. It is laid first.

It is placed with care. It is cut most accurately. The most time is taken over it. It is built around and it is built upon. And make sure your walls are straight, basically.

[19:32] If you've got wonky walls, what hope do you have of building anything? And I laugh because it would be crazy to be like, don't need the cornerstone. What do you need that for?

Let's just start on the walls. But you know, that's what it's saying here. The stone the builders rejected. It would be foolish to reject this stone. That's exactly what we see.

The religious leaders here have rejected that cornerstone. The Lord Jesus. We're going to sing it after I've finished. And you know, do we build our lives on him?

Or do we build our lives on other things? Do we build our lives on our careers? On our families? On money? On wealth? You know, my daughter, she's just turned two.

And her favourite song at the moment, and you can't get her to sleep at night without doing it, is Man on Rock. Man on Rock. But you know, there's such truth to these songs. The wise man, he built his house on the rock.

[20 : 34] The foolish man is on the sand. And Ian was talking this morning, and Paul was in these storms and acts, and he was on the shipwreck.

And when the storms of life come, the man on the rock, well, he stood firm. He'd built his life on that rock. And you know, this is Sarah's favourite bit, but it's serious as well, that the foolish man, well, his house fell flat.

We see in 18 that those who reject Jesus, they will be broken to pieces and crushed. Once again, this is a two-fold prophecy, and it's fairly complex, but the basicness of it is that the stone on the ground, the stone that people fall on and broke into pieces, well, this is Jesus' first coming, which is he's there now, as he is speaking in this passage.

And you know, Jesus was a stumbling block. He was a stumbling block to the religious way, the religious order that had been in place for so long.

Romans 9 says, Why not?

[21 : 57] Because they pursued it not by faith, but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. As it is written, See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble, and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame.

Jesus was a stumbling block. Secondly, anyone on whom it falls will be crushed. Well, this looks to Jesus' second coming. Total destruction when the Lord returns for those that have rejected him in final judgment.

We've already seen that judgment will come one day, and that we need to be ready for it. So we see that with the finish, with the last verse that Jesus is finished speaking, the Jewish leaders, well, they want Jesus arrested.

These populist leaders, they are challenged, they are scared, but they are equally powerless. At the end of chapter 19, they wanted to kill Jesus there and then, but the people stopped them because they hung on his every word.

And you know, the reaction here that they have, it shows their guilt. Why else would they react in the way that they did? If Jesus was speaking nonsense, they would just laugh and walk off.

[23 : 25] Let's not waste our time, guys. But they knew that Jesus was right in what he was saying. They knew the consequences, but they didn't respond in repentance.

They responded in rejection. And everyone has guilt. I have guilt. You might be sitting there tonight raked with guilt.

But you know, we have a choice. How do we react when we are faced with the truths of Jesus? Do we accept who Jesus is?

His act of the cross, which can take that guilt away and give us forgiveness? Or do we reject Jesus like the religious leaders? Try and do it on our own. We don't need the air.

It's worth considering as well that that is how people will react when we try and present the truths of Jesus to them. Some will accept, but equally, we should be prepared that some will reject.

[24 : 26] You know, the religious leaders, to a degree, you know, they did succeed. They killed Jesus just probably two days later.

But they didn't stop him. That wasn't the end. Of course, Jesus could not be stopped. He was killed, and yet he rose again, the feet in the grave, ascending to heaven.

And he is now our living Savior. So just to conclude, to sum up, we should be well aware of the consequences of rejecting Jesus.

We have seen that in this passage. Warnings were given in the Old Testament through the prophets. Jesus came, and he taught, and yet was rejected.

And us now, well, we need to be made right before God by accepting Jesus, his death, in our place. And he can take that guilt that we have away. And it allows us to come into the blessings and also take up the responsibilities of being part of God's church.

[25 : 34] It's a challenge to live our lives according to that calling that we have received. You know, we've also seen that justice will be done, that God is judge.

So that should spur us on to tell those that we know, that don't know Jesus, the truth of what he said and did. Let me pray, and then the band can come up while I'm praying, and we're going to have our last hymn before Peter comes up to open the time of prayer.

God and Father, we just thank you so much for your word. We thank you for having it in our own language, that it is open to us, and that we are free to read it and to discuss it.

We thank you for the Lord Jesus and all that he has done, that he has made that way, that we can not have the guilt that the religious leaders here had.

that we can have that peace and that forgiveness, the blessings of being part of God's family. So we just ask your blessing, and we pray that you'll continue these things in our head as we leave tonight.

[26 : 46] We pray all these things in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.