

**Luke 20:9-19**  
**Fifth Sunday in Lent**  
**Sermon Series: Seriously.**  
**Get Serious about God's Son**

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**Winchester, VA**  
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<sup>9</sup> He went on to tell the people this parable: “A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time. <sup>10</sup> At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. <sup>11</sup> He sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed. <sup>12</sup> He sent still a third, and they wounded him and threw him out.

<sup>13</sup> “Then the owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.’

<sup>14</sup> “But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over. ‘This is the heir,’ they said. ‘Let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ <sup>15</sup> So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

“What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? <sup>16</sup> He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.”

When the people heard this, they said, “God forbid!”

<sup>17</sup> Jesus looked directly at them and asked, “Then what is the meaning of that which is written:

“ ‘The stone the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone’?”

<sup>18</sup> Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.”

<sup>19</sup> The teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately, because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people.

I'd like to start out today by setting the scene for our Gospel lesson. It takes place on the Tuesday of holy week, the Tuesday after Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Jerusalem was filled not only with its usual residents but with pilgrims from all throughout Israel and the surrounding countries who had come to celebrate the Passover. Jesus' time was running short; He knew He only had a few days left to minister to these people. The Jewish leaders had hardened their hearts against Him, they had decided that they were going to murder Him, and now they were merely waiting for the opportunity to present itself.

Jesus knew what they were thinking in their hearts and now as the drama of that week continued to ramp up, He takes this opportunity in front of the whole crowd of people to tell a parable that would expose those chief priests and teachers of the law and call them out for who they were. So the big question is, is this parable a prophecy or a warning? Is Jesus saying, “these are the unavoidable consequences of your actions” or is He saying, “watch out that you don't make the same mistake”? I think, depending on who was listening, the answer could be either one. For those members of the Jewish Sanhedrin who were plotting His downfall, this parable was a pronouncement of judgment. For the rest of the crowd, for you, and for me, it stands as a warning: *Get Serious about God's Son.*

Jesus began, **“A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time. At harvest time, he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed.** God had actually used a parable of a vineyard once before as He spoke through the prophet Isaiah. So this was already a familiar picture for the people. That time though, it was the vineyard itself which failed to produce fruit. Now, in a slightly different twist, it's the vinedressers, the tenants, who are failing to produce. They gave the owner's servant a good thrashing and sent him off empty handed.

So then—the plot thickens—**He sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed.** And then—the tension's mounting—**He sent still a third, and they wounded him and threw him out.** If they hadn't figured it out already, by now the people knew for sure that Jesus was speaking figuratively. This couldn't be an actual story about an actual vineyard owner because no man in the history of the world would have kept on sending servant after servant when they kept returning beaten up and empty handed. It was unheard of! But that was exactly the point that Jesus was trying to make. The amount of patience that God had shown His chosen people Israel who had so often failed to produce the fruits God was looking for, fruits of faith and repentance—the amount of patience He showed even as they repeatedly rejected and mistreated the prophets that He sent them was absolutely unheard of.

Finally, Jesus gets to the climax of the story. As appalling as it was that the owner had been sending servant after servant despite how they were being treated, what he does next is preposterous. **‘What shall I do?’ the owner of the vineyard said, ‘I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him’** perhaps they will take Him seriously. As ludicrous as it may have seemed that this owner of the vineyard would place his son into the hands of those wicked and rebellious men, that was exactly what God had done. He had sent His own Son, whom He loved, to that same, rebellious nation that had rejected, beaten, and killed His servants the prophets.

And just as those tenant farmers plotted to kill the owner's son, so now, the Sanhedrists were plotting to kill the Son of God. It's as though Jesus, looking those same men dead in the eyes is asking them, what did they think they were going to accomplish? Were they going to steal God's kingdom out of His hands by killing His chosen Messiah? No. Jesus tells them that God's response to their crimes would be to destroy them and give what had been allotted to them to others. What He's talking about is the establishment of the New Testament Covenant. A covenant that was given not to these wicked and rebellious men, but to the Gentiles and the remnant of Jews who would place their trust in Jesus. When Jesus says that the owner would **kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others**, the others He is talking about are you. You have been given a portion in God's kingdom.

So I had to ask myself, how does a parable preached against people who were plotting to kill Jesus apply to my congregation? They don't want to kill Jesus; they love Him and adore Him! But there's a warning here for us as well to *Get Serious about God's Son*. I mean, if it could happen to the spiritual leaders of God's chosen people then it can very well happen to us. We may not have persecuted or killed any of God's prophets, but what have we done with the

messages God speaks to us through His servants, the messages He gives us in His Word? Is it possible that we haven't always taken them as seriously as we ought?

Just think back to the messages we've heard these past four weeks. God showed us through Jesus' battle with Satan in the wilderness how serious He is about temptation and He demonstrated for us that He has given us the very tool we need to fight it off. But do we take the same, serious attitude toward temptation that Jesus did? Or do we sometimes fight that battle half-heartedly if we even fight it at all?

We took a look at God's prophet, Jeremiah, and heard the message that, yes, as we live our lives for Christ, we're going to face some serious opposition. But we also heard God's promise, that He is with us and will protect us; that despite whatever opposition we face now in this world, our inheritance in heaven is secure. Do we take that promise seriously or do we weasel our way out those situations and avoid opportunities to witness our faith out of concern for our personal comfort and convenience?

We heard how God opened up the earth and swallowed up Korah and those rebellious Israelites in the wilderness—a warning to us that God is serious when it comes to sin and He desires serious repentance. Do we always heed that warning? Or do we sometimes dive deeper and deeper into some sin as it gets a little bit easier each time until, finally, we start looking forward to the next time we can indulge in it, and we start closing our ears to God's warnings to repent and sending back His messengers.

Last week, we looked at the parable of the lost Son. We learned about God's incredible grace and mercy, His deep desire to welcome us home regardless of that fact that we do not deserve it. Do we take that gospel message seriously? Do we take time to meditate on it, to read it and study it so it fills us with peace? Do we take time to share it with our spouses, our children, or our parents? Or have we convinced ourselves we know those truths well enough and now we can focus on spending our time in what ways we see fit?

If you're anything like me, then you have to confess along with me that I have not always received God's messages warmly. I have, so often, returned them to Him empty. I am as guilty as those wicked tenants. I have not taken His Son seriously. So finally, yes, I deserve to have God's kingdom taken away from me and given to somebody else.

But my God's love is relentless. My God will not give up on me. His love for me—His love for you—is relentless. Just like the owner of the vineyard in the parable, God keeps sending messengers not only with a call to repentance but with tidings of His boundless love. Even when I have trampled all over that love with my sin, even when have I taken that love for granted, and acted as if that love meant nothing to me at all, God still sent His love. Even when it meant sending His own Son.

It is in that gift of God's own, beloved Son, that we see the full measure of His persistent, unrelenting love. He is so committed to winning us to Him, so invested in our eternal well-being, so dedicated to having us be a part of His vineyard, that He sent His Son Jesus to make a payment for all the times we did not take Him seriously. Jesus' blood has won forgiveness for our carelessness in heeding the call to repent. His sacrifice has paid the debt we owed for our disregard toward the promises of His gospel. His death on the cross means we will not be punished for the temptations we failed to overcome.

So what would God have us do as we see in this parable today this warning against spiritual apathy and this testament of His unyielding love? He wants nothing more than for us to *Get Serious about His Son*, to receive that relentless love through faith, and to look to Jesus as the cornerstone upon whom we can build our lives. And so, we sing of love unknown, my

Savior's love to me, love to the loveless shown that we might lovely be. Oh, who am I that for my sake my Lord should take frail flesh and die? But oh, our friend, our friend indeed, who at our need His life did spend.

Amen.

Now, to Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve His God and Father—to Him be glory and power for ever and ever.

Amen.