

The Memoirs of Peter
God Will Vindicate His Son (Part 2)
Mark 12:1-12
October 9, 2011

Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher
Countryside Bible Church, Southlake, Texas

I want to begin our study tonight by taking you to the Old Testament. Turn back with me to the book of Isaiah, and specifically Isaiah 50. Isaiah 50 is one of those passages in the book of Isaiah that are about the servant, the servant of Yahweh, which is, as we learn as it unfolds, about the Messiah. And so, in Isaiah's prophecy, God has this to say about the Messiah. Obviously, we are all familiar with Isaiah 53 and what transpires there, but not so familiar with Isaiah 50. Look at it with me, beginning in Verse 6, "I gave My back to those who strike Me, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; [now remember this is written some 700 years before Jesus Christ] I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting. For the Lord GOD helps Me, therefore, I am not disgraced; therefore, I have set My face like flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed." Here is the Messiah, here is the mind of Christ, 700 years before He appeared on earth, saying "I'm going to endure all of this humiliation, all of this suffering, but I know through it," notice in Verse 7, "I will not be disgraced, I will not be ashamed." Now if you're a thinking person, immediately your response is, how could that be? Who was more disgraced, who was more shamed than Christ? Well, read on.

Verse 8, here's why He's not disgraced, here's why He's not ashamed, doesn't mean at the moment He isn't. "He who vindicates Me is near; [That's a reference to God the Father. Jesus is saying through the prophet Isaiah, "even though I will be shamed, I will be disgraced, it won't ultimately be so, because the Father will vindicate my name.]" "Who will contend with Me? Let us stand up to each other; who has a case against Me? Let him draw near to Me. Behold, the

Lord GOD helps Me; Who is he who condemns Me?” Amazing. Jesus says “I’m going to suffer humiliation, I’m going to suffer shame, but it won’t stick, because ultimately God the Father will vindicate Me.”

That’s what the passage that we turn to in the Gospel of Mark says tonight. Turn with me to Mark 12. Jesus says really exactly the same thing, but now, rather than through the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, He says it in person to His enemies on the Temple Mount with a huge crowd surrounding Him. Let me read it for you. Mark 12, beginning in Verse 1:

And [Jesus] began to speak to them in parables: “A man PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT AND DUG A VAT UNDER THE WINE PRESS AND BUILT A TOWER and he rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. 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. They took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again, he sent them another slave, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully. And he sent another, and that one they killed; and so, with many others, beating some and killing others. He had one more to send, a beloved son; he sent him last of all to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But those vine-growers said to one another, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!’ They took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vine-growers and will give the vineyard to others. 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?’ And they were seeking to seize Him, and yet they feared the people, for they understood that He spoke the parable against them. And so, they left Him and went away.

The message of this parable is really crystal clear. God will ultimately vindicate His Son with all of those who reject Him. According to the Oxford Shorter English dictionary, the word *vindicate* means to avenge; to revenge; to clear of blame, criticism or doubt by demonstration; to justify a person by evidence and/or by argument. That’s what God plans to do with His Son. God will vindicate His Son with all of those in every time and in every place who have rejected Him. Now in the context of this parable, obviously, Jesus is specifically talking about the nation of Israel and its leaders, especially. Israel and her leaders had consistently rejected God’s messengers, had rejected God’s truth. And in the first century, they added to all of that the greatest of sins, and that is the rejection of God’s own beloved Son. But whatever Israel and her leaders might try to do to silence the Son, God ultimately would not allow them to have the last word. In this parable, Jesus makes the point that God will vindicate Him and His claims.

Now just to remind you of the context, this happens on Tuesday of the Passion Week. On Sunday, of course, Jesus’s rode into the city of Jerusalem and the triumphal entry occurred. He went into the temple; He cased the temple we’re told. And then He came back on Monday of the Passion Week and cleaned house. That’s when He cleansed the temple, that’s when He threw out the moneychangers, and all of those who were buying and selling. And He said, “This is to be a house of prayer and look at what you’ve made it.” And for two days, Monday and Tuesday of the Passion Week, Jesus essentially took control of that huge, I think it was some 35 acres of Temple Mount. And no one came or went with stuff except by His permission.

It's Tuesday, early Tuesday, the gospels tell us that Jesus and the twelve return to the city of Jerusalem very early in the morning. And there on the Temple Mount, Jesus began to teach those who had come to the Feast of Passover and had come early that morning in order to see His miracles and to hear Him teach. That great Temple Mount holds somewhere between 3 and 400,000 people, and Josephus tells us that there would have been close to that many there for the Feast of Passover.

So somewhere in a corner, maybe over in Solomon's portico, Jesus is holding court. He's teaching. And as He was teaching in the temple courts, and we studied this a couple of weeks ago, an official group of the leaders of the nation, some members of the Sanhedrin show up, and they question Jesus' authority. In response, Jesus asked them about John the Baptist. And they leave their questioning of Him, but they don't leave His presence. Because immediately following that exchange, there on the temple courts, crowded with thousands of worshipers there for the Feast of Passover, Mark says that Jesus began to speak to them in parables, notice, plural, but we only have one here in Mark.

That's because Jesus, that morning, told three parables to the crowds that were gathered around Him. Matthew records the first one, The Parable of the Two Sons. In this parable, Jesus confronts them for not believing John the Baptist. The second parable, the one that I've just read to you here in Mark 12, also occurs in both Matthew and Luke; we'll come back to tonight. This is what we intend to study. But in this parable, Jesus indicts Israel, and particularly Israel's leaders, those who have just come and confronted Him and are still standing there in His presence as He shares this parable, for rejecting Him, God's Son. The third parable comes later, and Matthew records it. It's the parable of the Wedding Feast. In this parable, Jesus confronts Israel for rejecting God's invitation to the wedding feast for His Son. And He predicts Israel's

complete destruction and explains that the absolutely undeserving will be invited to come instead.

So, Jesus then, picture the context. It's Tuesday morning of the Passion Week. The Temple Mount has begun to crowd with those worshippers who've come from all over not only Israel, but all over the Mediterranean world for the Feast of Passover. Maybe already, more than 50 to 100,000 people on that Temple Mount, and Jesus has a corner and He's speaking. There in His presence are His disciples, the Twelve, there are others who've come to listen to Him and hear Him. But standing near Him, are those leaders from the Sanhedrin who have just come and confronted Him, questioned His authority - that official delegation made up of chief priests, scribes, and elders. So, in that context, we're studying the second of these parables, The Parable of the Vineyard and the Tenant Farmers.

Now, as Jesus tells this parable, there really are four primary points He makes. We've already seen one of them, let me just remind you of it. In the first two verses, Jesus tells us about God's plan for Israel and her leaders. God had a plan, and He describes it as a vineyard. You'll notice Verses 1 and 2 there are all capitals in our English Bible, that's because this is pulled from Isaiah 5:1-7. This passage about the vineyard, quoted from Isaiah 5, was such an accepted symbol of the nation of Israel that if you had walked up in that day, up to Herod's temple, and there seen the main door leading into the Holy Place, around that main door there would have been a great grapevine.

Here's an artist's rendering of what it would have looked like, and you see the person, you see how large it was, there's a person pictured there at the top of the stairs. It was a huge facility. The first area, you can see, is largely empty except for the lampstand, the table of showbread,

and then you go through that into the Holy of Holies that was behind it, which is where the Ark of the Covenant sat. But you can get some idea of the scope of it and of that huge vine that was made of gold and punctuated with jewels contributed by people in memory of their families and loved ones. It was the symbol of the nation.

And so, what Jesus is saying here is very clear. Here is a wealthy landowner who decides that rather than developing the land for himself and farming it himself, he will instead plant a vineyard and then he will lease out the land to tenant farmers, and those tenant farmers will, at harvest time, be responsible to return a portion, an agreed upon portion, of the produce to him. When the grapes are harvested in the fall, the owner of the vineyard sent a slave to the tenant farmer. The reason was obvious, to receive from the tenant farmers his percentage of the harvest that the vineyard had produced that year. So, this is God's plan for Israel and for its leaders.

Let me reduce it for you, as we learned last time. What did Jesus mean that Israel was like a vineyard planted by God and rented out to tenant farmers? What's the meaning here? Well, again just to refresh your memory from last time, if you weren't here you can catch up by going back and listening online, but this is the big picture. God owned Israel by redemption and had planted her in her land in order to produce fruit. She was to be God's witness nation to the world; she's planted at a strategic place. In the ancient world there was no more strategic place because it was the crossroads of the three great continents of the ancient world. If you wanted to move from Europe to Asia, or from Asia to Africa, or anywhere between, you had to cross that land bridge that is the little, tiny nation of Israel. God planted her there to be His witness nation. Secondly, God had entrusted the care of His vineyard Israel to her spiritual leaders. Those are the tenant farmers. Thirdly, God expected Israel, under the care of her leaders, to produce an abundant harvest. That's the point of the first two verses.

Now, that brings us up to speed and to the second point Jesus wants to make in this parable. Not only God's plan for Israel and her leaders, but secondly, Israel and her leaders' rejection of God's messengers. Israel and her leaders' consistent rejection of God's personal messengers. You see this in Verses 3 through 5. Now just to get us back in the flow of the context, look at Verse 2 before we get to Verse 3. "At the harvest time [this landowner, this wealthy landowner who had leased out this land to these tenant farmers] sent a slave to [them] in order to receive some of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers." God, as the owner of the vineyard, sent a slave at harvest time to receive the contracted amount of the grape harvest. In the context of a wealthy landowner like this, this would not be some lowly, foot-washing slave. This slave would have been like Joseph was in Potiphar's house; His house-manager, his steward, like his personal accountant. It would have been a man of dignity, nobility and probably of education as well. So, he sends this man to collect the agreed upon, the contracted amount.

But notice how they responded, Verse 3. "They took him, and they beat him, and sent him away empty-handed." The Greek word for beat originally meant literally to flay someone's skin. It eventually came to refer to a severe beating, a beating so severe that the skin began to leave the body. This was a breach of contract. This was a denial of the landowner's rightful ownership of the property. And above all it was a personal insult, because the slave came representing the landowner. And so, to treat him that way was ultimately to insult the one who sent him.

Now, if you had never read this parable before, there's so many times when I'm teaching the scripture that in some senses, I wish you'd never heard this story before. I wish it were catching you off guard, you were hearing it the way Jesus told it. But if you had never read this parable before, what kind of a response would you expect from the landowner at this point? Swift and terrible retribution. How dare you treat the one I sent that way? And the Jews listening to this

story there on the Temple Mount would have been just as shocked at the response of this landowner because look at what he does in Verse 4: “Again he sent them another slave, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully.”

Rather than dealing out retribution, he sends another slave. And with this slave the physical abuse and the violence increases. This time, they wound him in the head. Jesus probably means that rather than merely causing physical pain as they did with the first slave, this time they inflicted a serious, life-threatening wound. They nearly killed him. And they literally added insult to injury because it says they shamefully treated him. They dishonored him, they shamed him, and the Jewish culture in the first century was a culture, a shame-based culture. They just shamed him.

Again, shockingly, look at Verse 5: “And he sent another, and that one they killed.” Their violent response to the landowner’s efforts to collect his agreed upon, contracted portion of the harvest just continues to escalate. And finally, their anger gets out of hand, and they end up actually killing this wealthy landowner’s slave. At this point, again we keep thinking, O.K. surely that’s it. They have crossed the line, now they’re going to get it. But that’s not what happens. Look at the rest of Verse 5, “and so with many others, beating some and killing others.” Now, what’s going on here?

Well, by now Jesus’ meaning is clear, even to His enemies. What you have going on here is the vineyard is Israel, the landowner is God, the tenant farmers are Israel’s leaders, and the slaves of the landowner, as they’re often called in the Old Testament, the servants of God, are the prophets. Wow! How did Israel respond to God’s servants the prophets? If you know anything about the Scripture, you know some of how this unfolded. With Elijah, they threatened to kill

him. With Isaiah, tradition says he was sawn in two. With Jeremiah, he was thrown in a pit. Zechariah was stoned near the altar, according to 2 Chronicles 24. John the Baptist, the most recent example, had been imprisoned and then eventually beheaded.

No wonder in Matthew 23:37 Jesus said, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.” Or look at Hebrews 11. You know we love the first part of Hebrews 11, don’t we? That wonderful hall of faith, boy, they defeated so many things, they accomplished so many amazing feats.

And notice Verse 32.

And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith [and we love this] conquered kingdoms, performed *acts of righteousness*, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, [by faith] from weakness they were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received *back* their dead by resurrection; [but he doesn’t stop there] others [by faith] were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy) wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

That’s how Israel treated God’s slaves, His messengers.

But go back to Matthew, to Mark 12 rather. Go back to Mark 12, because what I want you to see is that in the end, these verses are not solely about the tenant farmers and their defiance of the rightful produce of the landowner. It's not merely about Israel's rejection and abuse of the prophets. But it's also about the incredible patience of the landowner. Jesus intends for you and for me to be blown away by the patience of God, because we wouldn't have responded like that. No ordinary person would have ever allowed such violence against his servants. But thank God He's not ordinary; He's extraordinary, in every way, including His patience. It wasn't that He lacked power. The very first time one of His slaves, one of His prophets was abused, God had the power to wish Israel off the map. But He didn't. He sent another, and another, and another, and another.

I love what Martin Luther says, "If I were God [and we can all be thankful he wasn't; and that you aren't] If I were God, and the world had treated me as it treated Him, I would kick the wretched thing to pieces." Is that not true? What we have here is an incredible illustration of the patience of our God. The same thing that is true on a national level is also true on a personal level. Perhaps in your own life, God has been incredibly patient. He has sent messenger after messenger into your life to tell you the truth. And again and again, you have treated those messengers with contempt. You've argued with them, you've gotten mad at them, you've criticized them, you've ridiculed them behind their backs, or perhaps to their faces. Please understand that God takes that very personally. And the only reason you're still here and breathing is because God is incredibly patient.

Don't ever mistake God's patience however, with indifference or injustice. As you will see as this parable unfolds. He is a God of perfect, unwavering justice. I remember one time I heard a sermon by R. G. Lee, a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, many, many years ago. The sermon was about God's vindication on Ahab and Jezebel. And he called it *Payday*

Someday. God promised they would get it, but it was 20 years before they got it. And I remember this line that he uses in that sermon, he says, “The judgments of God often have leaden heels and travel very slowly, but they always have iron hands and crush completely.” Don’t mistake God’s patience with indifference. Somebody is going to get exactly what you deserve. It will either be you, or if you repent, it will be Christ in your place.

There’s a third point that Jesus makes in this parable and it’s Israel and her leaders’ rejection of God’s beloved Son. Not just the personal messengers, but the ultimate Messenger, His own Son. Look at Verse 6: “He had one more to *send*, a beloved son; he sent him last of *all* to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’” Literally, the Greek text reads, “Still one He was having a beloved son.” There’s one left, but it’s His Son. Now this is fascinating to me because Jesus is not only indicting Israel’s leaders, what is He also claiming about Himself here? In their presence on the full Temple Mount, what is He saying about Himself? That’s Me, I’m the Son.

Mark is crystal clear about this in so many places. Let me just briefly remind you. Go back to Mark 1:1. This is how he begins: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Mark, you know, don’t hold back, make sure you’re clear, say what you think. It’s clear. Go over to Chapter 3:11. “Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him [Jesus], they would fall down before Him and shout, ‘You are the Son of God!’” So, Mark, representing Peter, says He’s the Son of God. Even the demons acknowledge that He’s the Son of God.

Go over to Chapter 5:6. Here’s the demoniac of Gadara and notice, “Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; [and verse 7] and shouting with a loud voice, he said, ‘What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?’” Now turn over to Chapter 14. We’ll get here, but just in case you think that it was everybody else that

thought that about Jesus, but that really wasn't Jesus' claim, look at Mark 14:61. Look at Verse 60, "The high priest stood up and came forward [this is at Jesus' official trial] and questioned Jesus, saying, 'Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?' [These are false witnesses that have been trumped up] But He kept silent and did not answer: [So] Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, 'Are You the [Messiah, that's Christ, the Greek word for Messiah. Are you the Messiah] the Son of the Blessed *One*?' [Are you the Messiah, the Son of God? That's what he's asking] And Jesus said, [what?] 'I am and you shall see... [And He quotes from Daniel 7 a passage that clearly is about God's Son. You shall see] THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.' Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, 'What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy'" No question about what Jesus claimed.

Look over in Chapter 15:39. The last testimony to who He is comes from a centurion, a Roman centurion, who was responsible to oversee the crucifixion. And when Jesus died, and "When [he] saw the way He breathed His last, he said, 'Truly this man was the Son of God!'" By the way, this is what God Himself had already precisely proclaimed. You remember back in Chapter 1:11 at Jesus' baptism? A voice came out of the heavens saying, "'You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.'" At the transfiguration in Chapter 9, "a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, [saying] 'This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!'" There really was no doubt whatsoever.

So, God says, "listen I've seen only slaves to this point, but I still have one to send." Verse 6 says and "he sent him last of all" That implies that Jesus was God's last word, isn't that what Hebrews 1:1 and 2 says? He used to speak in all these different ways, but now He has spoken in and through His Son. And, that He is superior to all of those prophets who came before Him.

Notice, Verse 6 goes on to say, if I send him, “They will respect my son.” That doesn’t mean, by the way, that God actually expected Jesus to be respected, the rest of the parable makes that very clear. The point is, He should have been respected in light of who He is. But notice what happens, Verse 7: “But those vine-growers said to one another, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!’”

Now it’s possible these tenant farmers in the story concluded that the father, the landowner, had already died and that’s why he sent the son, it’s possible. Or it may have been they decided that if they went ahead and killed the son, the only son, when the father eventually died, then the estate would belong to them. They could claim the property. Regardless, there are two biting indictments of Israel’s leaders in Verse 7, because Jesus accuses them of collusion and murder. They said to one another, as they see the [king] coming, they consulted together, come let us kill him. The leaders’ murder of Jesus, remember now this is Tuesday morning of the Passion Week, this happens on Friday morning. The leaders’ murder of Jesus was not a crime of passion, committed in the heat of the moment. It was planned, it was calculated, it was premeditated. And folks, that is not theoretical. If I had time, I’d take you back to John 11, after the raising of Lazarus, at the end of John 11, the Sanhedrin meets in official council, and they decide then. That’s six weeks before this account. This would have been back in February, before the April of His death. They decided He’s got to die. This was completely premeditated. Jesus also accuses them in Verse 7 of rejecting Him solely to protect their own power and position.

Notice verse 7: ““This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!’” They wanted the vineyard for themselves. It was all about protecting their power, and their position, their prestige, their financial prosperity. Remember Jesus had just cleared the temple the day before, and they’re the ones who leased out those franchises, so that money was coming to them.

That's why when they finally take Jesus to Pilate at the end of the week, you know what Mark 15:10 says? Pilate "was aware that the chief priests had handed [Jesus] over because of envy." It wasn't about righteousness, it was about what they were losing, their position, their power, their prestige.

So, look at Verse 8: "They took him, and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard." They seized the landowner's son; they followed through on their murderous, premeditated, cold-blooded plan, they killed him. And Jesus adds, they threw him out of the vineyard. That could refer to Jesus being crucified outside the city of Jerusalem, and therefore symbolically outside of the true people of God. Or it could mean, and I lean in this direction, that Jesus was excommunicated from Israel, cut off from the people of God, at His trial when they accused Him of blasphemy, and then executed Him.

Now this is where Jesus has been taking the parable. And in it, He indicts the leaders of Israel for rejecting Him, God's beloved Son. These tenant farmers assume that the father who hasn't done anything yet, is either too old, or too senile, or too cowardly to act against them. I love what William Hendriksen, the great Presbyterian commentator writes, "How blatantly foolish is sin. How absurd. He who dwells in the heavens laughs."

But you know what this shows? It shows the damning power of false religion. It's always the same. Whether it's the false religion of first century Judaism, that Jesus condemned again and again and again, or whether it's Mormonism, or Jehovah's Witnesses, or Christian Science, or Roman Catholicism, false religions always produce the same results, the same effects, that the false religion of first century Judaism did. It turns people against God's legitimate messengers. It turns people against the truth of God. It turns them to the Pearl of Great Price, or the writings of

someone else. And ultimately, it causes people to reject the priority and Lordship of God's Son. Here's the reason people reject Jesus. At its heart, it's always a rejection of His Lordship. They want their vineyard. They want their life untouched to do what they want. What's your response to Jesus? The Puritans used to say, and the Reformers, "You put your finger in the eye of God when you slight His Son."

There's a fourth point that Jesus makes in this text and that is God's ultimate vindication of His Son. Jesus hasn't yet applied the parable, but he asks the people who are gathered all around them a question in response. Look at Verse 9: "What will the owner of the vineyard do?" What would we expect him to do? Matthew tells us that there were some in the crowd who responded to Jesus' question. This is what they said, Matthew 21:41: They said to Jesus, "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." They got it. Jesus affirmed that their verdict is right. Look at Verse 9: "He will come and destroy the vine-growers and will give the vineyard to others." When some of those in the crowd heard this, Luke says, they said, may it never be!

And then Jesus responds in Verse 10: "Have you not even read this Scripture?" Now, Jesus isn't saying they had never read it. They were Jewish people; they'd heard this Scripture read many times in the synagogues and in the temple. Instead, Jesus is indicting them for having read a passage of Scripture without comprehending its true meaning. By the way, there's a great reminder of how important true Bible study is. Because Jesus is saying, if you didn't read it with a proper meaning, you really haven't read it at all.

Jesus then quotes verbatim from the Septuagint translation of Psalm 118. Look at what He says in Verse 10: "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?” Now notice what Jesus does here. He changes metaphors from a vineyard to a building. He quotes from Psalm 118:22-23. Throughout the New Testament, this psalm is treated as a Messianic psalm. It was probably written at the time of Moses to celebrate the actual Passover. And it was one of what are called the Hallel Psalms, the Psalms of praise that were recited during Passover week. They may have already recited this psalm and Jesus quotes from it here. But this psalm didn't merely look back at the Passover in Egypt; it pointed ahead to the perfect fulfillment of Passover, Jesus Christ.

And the quotation fits beautifully with the parable Jesus just told, because in the quotation, just as the tenant farmers had rejected the son, the builders of the temple, those who were responsible for worship in Israel, carefully inspected the stone and decided it didn't pass their test, that it was worthless to include in the building of the temple, but then God absolutely reverses that verdict. He decides to make the rejected stone the chief cornerstone. It is going to be the most important stone in the whole building. It's the stone that goes at the base of the foundation that is carefully trued, and then every wall, every stone in the rest of the building is trued and squared to that one stone. And He says this came about from the Lord, it's His doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. It's shocking, it's amazing.

Notice the paragraph ends with the tragic response on the part of the leaders of the nation. Look at Verse 12: “And they were seeking to seize Him, and yet they feared the people, for they understood that He spoke the parable against them.” They, that is the members of the Sanhedrin who had come to question Him, were seriously on the spot, and they try to come up with a way to have Jesus arrested. Why? “For they understood that He spoke the parable against them.” He's saying, “You are the tenant farmers, and you're the builders who rejected the stone God says was

the most important stone.” Why didn’t they have Him arrested? Notice, because they feared the people. Matthew tells us the leaders knew the people believed Jesus was a prophet. And so, Verse 12 ends, “they left Him and went away.” Isn’t that ironic? The Sanhedrin, whom He’s just indicted with this parable, are still living out the parable that He’s just taught against them.

So, what do we do with this parable today? What’s the point? Well, there really are two points. First of all, this is another gracious warning and invitation from Jesus to anyone who will hear it. Specifically, of course, it was to Israel’s leaders. Here’s a personal expression of the love and patience of God to them. Jesus was warning them about the seriousness of what they were planning to do. He knew what they were doing, and He’s warning them. He’s telling them, “I’m God’s Son, don’t do this.” It was a gracious warning, a gracious invitation. Jesus even disclosed to them in this parable the secret of exactly who He was. He wasn’t one of the prophets in a long line of prophets. He was God’s beloved Son. But they were so blinded by their rage, and by their greed, and by their pride that they didn’t respond.

Folks, this is also a gracious warning to all of us. God’s patience is truly amazing. You’ve seen it in this parable. But God’s patience will someday run out for you just as it did for the Jews of the first century. The message of this parable could really be summed up by the words at the very end of Psalm 2. Listen to them, Psalm 2:12: “Do homage to the Son [literally kiss the Son, acknowledge who He is] that He may not become angry, and you perish *in* the way. For His wrath may soon be kindled. [But] How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!”

This parable, secondly, shows that God will vindicate His Son. He will, just like He promised in Isaiah 50. How will He do that? How will God vindicate His Son? He’ll do so by destroying the tenant farmers, that is, Israel’s leaders. Verse 9 says He will destroy those tenant farmers. He’ll

also do it by destroying Jerusalem and its temple. Listen to Matthew, in fact, turn over to Matthew 22, real quickly. Matthew 22 is the next parable Jesus tells. That same morning, right after He finishes this one, He, we've studied in Mark 12, He gives this parable. It's about a wedding feast for a king's son, Verse 2 says, Matthew 22. And the people are invited, but they're unwilling to come, Verse 3 says.

Verse 5: “they paid no attention [they] went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them.” Some were absolutely indifferent, distracted, didn't care, others were belligerent and angry and antagonistic. So, what does the king do? Verse 7: “the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire.” What do you think that's a prophecy of? The Roman general Titus, in 70 A.D., when the whole city of Jerusalem and its temple was destroyed, and all of its leaders killed. God will vindicate His Son. And He did, in A.D. 70.

He'll also vindicate His Son by giving the vineyard to others, Verse 9 says. What does that mean? Well, in Matthew it's a little clearer. Matthew says, “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it.” That's to the church and its leaders. That doesn't mean God doesn't have promises yet to fulfill to ethnic Israel, He does. But this is what happened.

He'll vindicate His Son, fourthly, by personally exalting Him to the chief place, just like that stone, the rejected one, God makes the chief cornerstone. He will vindicate His Son by then extending an invitation to the wedding feast of His Son to the most unlikely and undeserving. Read that parable in Matthew 22, when everybody who was invited doesn't show up, the king says, “alright, I've destroyed their city, I've destroyed everything else, go out and invite whoever

will to come. The blind and the lame and all of those that really don't deserve to come at all."

That's us.

And He will ultimately vindicate His Son by raising Him from the dead. You see the Parable of the Vineyard, did you notice, ends with the death of the son. But the story doesn't end there. The rejected stone, the one hated, rejected and murdered, becomes the chief cornerstone. You tell me what does that imply? That implies the resurrection. The son from the parable comes back to life. That's because God's greatest vindication of His Son was His resurrection and exaltation. You remember these two passages: Romans 1:4, Jesus "was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." God vindicated His Son on that Sunday morning when the tombstone rolled away, and Jesus Christ came out alive.

The apostles made much of this. Peter in his sermon in Acts 4 says, "let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this *name* this man [whom he just healed] stands before you in good health." And notice what he says, "He [that is, Jesus Christ, raised by God] is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, *but* WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER *stone*."

Folks, understand that we live in a world in which Jesus Christ is constantly ridiculed, in which His Name is taken in vain, again and again and again. God is incredibly patient. But there's coming a day when God will vindicate His Son and every knee will bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord. God will not tolerate His Son to be so rejected. Let's pray together.

Father, we bless You and thank You for this amazing reminder - that you are patient, and we live in the time of Your patience. But Father help us to remember that Your Day is coming, when

You will vindicate Your Son, and not one intelligent being in the universe will fail to see it, will fail to acknowledge it. Father, help us to acknowledge it today. I pray for all of us who know Christ, Lord may we live in the awareness of this, may during this time of Your patience we spread the message of the good news of Jesus Christ. Father, I pray for the people here tonight who don't know You, who have in a very real sense responded to Your truth and to Your messengers just like the people Jesus was talking to that morning. Father, I pray that before their head hits the pillow tonight, they would bow their knee to You and to Your Son. They would confess their sin, repent of their sin, and confess Jesus Christ as Lord. Lord, may they do it now, in this life, before Your patience runs out, and may the first time they do it not be when they are compelled to in the future. We pray in Jesus' Name. Amen.