

Mark 12:1-12

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[0 : 00] It's going to be to the gospel according to Mark. Mark chapter 12. Mark chapter 12 is where we'll be at this morning. Mark chapter 12 will be in verses 1 through 12 as we just make our way through the gospel of Mark. We are now up to the 12th chapter. I told you last week we condensed it just a little bit last week because of our times and strengths that the events that follow here in the 12th chapter verses 1 through 12 are directly connected to the last events in the 11th chapter.

So I'll try to put it in context for you in just a moment. But our text this morning will be Mark chapter 12 verses 1 through 12. So if you're physically able and desire to do so would you join with me as we stand together we read the word of God and then we will pray.

The word of God says, 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. He 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 cornerstone. 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.

[2 : 01] And so they left him and went away. Let's pray. Father we thank you for this day. We stand now in your presence and Lord we ask that you would speak to our hearts and minds. As we have taken the time to read, we pray that it would not be hindered by any distraction, any encumbrance, any feelings or restraint that we may have, any cares or concerns.

But Father we come before you saying speak to your people. Lord give us ears to hear, a mind to understand, a heart to receive and lives to live it out for your glory and honor.

We ask it all in Jesus name. Amen. You may be seated. Within context, we know that Christ is now in what we would refer to as the Passion Week.

The triumphal entry has already taken place. He has come to be witnessed and to be tested, if you will, during that last week of his physical life before his betrayal and crucifixion.

We know that this is essential according to the Old Testament event of the Exodus. We've said that you cannot rightfully understand your salvation event until you understand the Exodus event.

[3 : 16] We know that the Passover that took place during Exodus, in which the lamb was brought in, this spotless lamb, was brought into the home and you lived with this lamb and you observed this lamb and you beheld this lamb and you made sure for a number of days that this lamb was indeed perfect in every way.

That there was no blemish, there was no fault, there was nothing hidden from you, but you knew full well this was a perfect lamb. And then after knowing this was a perfect lamb, you would take that perfect lamb and you would shed its blood.

And the blood of that perfect lamb would be spread over the lentils and the doorposts of your house. And it would be so that the angel would pass over your home. But you would first watch this lamb.

It is during this time where the lamb slain before the foundation of the world has come into Jerusalem and has presented himself for open inspection. For so many days he would go back and forth from Bethany into Jerusalem, from Bethany into Jerusalem, each and every day making a public display of himself, being questioned, being challenged, being observed.

And at the end of it we will find that when they put him on trial, they can bring no accusation against him. They can find no fault other than they would find two people that would correlate with the lies and there would be two lies spread.

[4 : 35] And he would be crucified. But he has presented him for open inspection. We know that when he goes into the temple the first time that he goes into it and he cleanses the temple.

He overturns the money changers table. He casts out those who are carrying and bearing burdens. And he declares his authority over the temple. He goes back.

And on the second day, re-entering Jerusalem again, the Sadducees and the Pharisees and the scribes, what we would refer to as the Sanhedrin, were waiting on him to get there. And they ask him at the end of the 11th chapter, by what authority do you do these things?

You may remember, he said, well, I'll ask you one question. Two, and it regarded the baptism of John. We're not going to go back and look at that. But he is speaking now to the religious leaders. And they are asking concerning his authority and the right he has.

And after declaring to them that he will not tell them because they would not answer or they refuse to answer, was the baptism of John from God or from man because of their fear of the people around them?

[5 : 43] For they all regarded John as being a true prophet of the Lord. And so they refused to answer. Jesus said, then I will not answer you either. And we looked at that at the end of the 11th chapter, that pride will hinder us from further revelation.

When we refuse to humbly admit the reality what God has clearly displayed, then we can expect no further revelation. And now he is speaking to this same group of people as we go into the 12th chapter.

It tells us in Mark, and he spoke to them in parables. If you were to read Matthew and Luke, the other two synoptic gospels, you will find that he declares multitude of parables to them here. But Mark only records one.

But it is one that is fitting for the crowd in which he is addressing. Namely, he is addressing the religious leaders. And he gives them a parable that would speak very heartily to them.

And they would not fail to understand the meaning of it. We see the connection of this teaching with what happened before in a couple of things. We see the mentioning of, and they considered among themselves, or they spoke among themselves.

[6 : 49] And we see the fear of the people. All the same things that are connected to what just went before it at the end of the 11th chapter. But I want you to see this morning what it looks like to be in the field of the vineyard.

To be in the field of the vineyard of the Lord. For when Christ speaks this parable, he speaks to them a truth which they cannot miss. And he tells us here that he was speaking of, he began to speak to them a parable.

A man planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a vat under the winepress and built a tower. Now, you need to understand that what Christ is doing is he is opening up a portion of the Old Testament to them.

And he is doing one that they would not miss. Now, when he came in riding on the coat of a donkey, we said, well, that's Zechariah 9. And when he said that if everyone was to be silent, that the stones would cry out, that's Zechariah 9 as well.

For it says that they would praise him as he came in shouting, Hosanna, blesses he who comes in the name of the Lord. But now, in case they've missed all these subtle images, Jesus goes to the major one.

[7 : 57] He goes to the book of Isaiah. And you will find this same account recorded for you in Isaiah chapter 5. It is actually the account that Isaiah says, let me sing to you the song of my beloved. And he is speaking of the love of the Father.

And it is right before Isaiah 6. You say, well, pastor, that makes sense because 5 comes before 6. But if you remember Isaiah 6, that would be the commissioning and the appointing of Isaiah to be the prophet of warning to the people of the Lord, where he is called into the presence of the king. So it is in Isaiah 5 that God declares to him the woes of Israel before he can call him to minister to Israel. And so in the book of Isaiah, we have this image of the owner planting a vineyard and doing everything that needs to be done.

And a little bit of back story in it. We see that the owner not only purchases the land, he prepares the land. He removes the stones from the land. It's a fertile land. He chooses good grape vines. And he plants good, healthy vines. He tends the vines. He puts the wall around the vineyard. He digs the vats for when the wines are pressed or the grapes are pressed, the wine would run out. [9 : 04] And then he hires it out. And he expects there to be good fruits. But it tells us in Isaiah 5 that when he came to look for the fruit, the fruit was bad.

That it was not good fruit, but rather that it was bad fruit. So then he tears it down. So the imagery in Isaiah is all about the vineyard. Jesus here now is shifting to those who are actually laboring in the vineyard.

So there's a difference. See, he is bringing the fulfillment of the word. We believe in progressive revelation. That is, the further we read in scripture, the more we have our eyes opened up to seeing what God is actually doing.

So in Isaiah 5, we find that there is an owner of a vineyard who was expecting good fruit. And he didn't get good fruit. And he was upset because he didn't get good fruit. So judgment was cast upon this vineyard.

Without a doubt in Isaiah 5. Now stay with me. The vineyard is the nation of Israel. And the nation of Israel throughout the Old Testament is referred to as the vineyard of the Lord. As a matter of fact, when Christ is walking away from the temple, going across the Kidron Valley, going to the Garden of Gethsemane, he is speaking to his disciples and disciples are saying, look at all these ornate drawings and all these carvings on the wall of the temple.

[10 : 20] It is the carvings that he is referring to. And these carvings are vines and grapes and clusters. And it was an imagery of the supposed fruitfulness of Israel found in Isaiah 5.

But in Isaiah, what we find is that Israel indeed wasn't fruitful. Now we know the answer to that because of what we have recorded here in Mark 12. So now we shift from the fruitlessness of the nation to the cause of why they were fruitless.

Why the fruit was not good. And he begins to speak to the individuals. He begins to speak to those laboring in the vineyard. Now by the way, just in case you want to dismiss this and say, well, this is a nation of Israel thing.

Well, it is, but stay with me. Because the application bears upon us as well. And the first thing that we notice through all of this is the provision of the owner.

The owner provided everything that was necessary. He bought the land. He prepared the land. He built the walls. He built the towers. He planted the vines.

[11 : 27] He built the wine vat. He built the wine press. He did everything that was needed for fruitfulness to exist. And everything was within his power and his control.

And the one thing that we are struck with is that the keepers or the vine growers, as they are called here in the passage, had no responsibility of production.

They had responsibility of maintenance. And the weight of the responsibility fell upon the owner of the vineyard.

It was his responsibility to purchase the land. It was his responsibility to plant the vines. It was his responsibility to build the walls. He did all of the work necessary. And everything that he did was indeed done well.

And we noticed this. Stay with me. That the work of the owner ensured the production of the vineyard. It should have been fruitful.

[12 : 28] That the work, all of the effort, all of the risk, all of the labor, was done by the owner of the vineyard.

He carried the responsibility. He carried all of the risk. He carried all of the necessary means. And he provided everything into the hands of those he was entrusted it to.

And now we notice the responsibility that he gave these vine growers because it says that after he had done all of the work, he hired these vine growers to come and tend what he had already done. To come and to labor in the work that he had already provided. And the expectation was that when the fruit would come in, that he would receive the fruitfulness of his own efforts.

That he would receive fruitfulness from what he had put into it. All of the work, all of the effort, all of the expense was done by the owner. And the expectation was that the laborers in the vineyard would simply just do that.

[13 : 30] They would labor in the work he had already prepared. Friend, I don't know if you realize it or not, but the moment Christ calls you, the word of God says that you enter into the labor which he has prepared beforehand before you were formed in your mother's womb.

There are good works and deeds that he's called you to walk into. Things he has prepared for you and you alone to do. And he has called you to himself.

He has called you to his side. And he has placed you to be the keeper of the vineyard he's already established. And the responsibility you have is to tend to the work he's already ensured exists. He's done all the work. He has already planted it. He's already gathered it. He's already made it where it may be fruitful. He's already made it where it would be productive. He's already made it where it would produce all that is required of it.

And all he asks of his people is to enter into the labor. And the expectation is that we would tend to the work he has given us to do. It is not ours to come up with the work.

[14 : 36] It is not ours to come up with how we're going to be fruitful. It's not ours to come up with what needs to be done. No, that is the owner's responsibility. We are not the owner of it.

We are the keepers of it. And indeed, the expectation of these vine growers would be that they would tend to what he had given them. And it says in verse 2, And at the harvest time, he sent a slave to the vine growers in order to receive some of the produce of the vineyard.

Now, is that a wrong expectation? That when the owner of the vineyard, at the right time, it says at harvest time, went to those he had put in the vineyard and said, I would like to have some of my fruit.

The expectation would be that he would receive what was rightfully his. And we need to be mindful of that because we notice very quickly their failure.

And in their failure, it says, And when they came, the slave, we know if we read into it, the slaves are referred to here throughout this parable. And they bring reference to the Old Testament prophets, the Old Testament teachers, all of these realities that were calling the nation of Israel back to account.

[15 : 50] But stay with me. That when this slave came, in verse 3, they took him and they beat him and they sent him away empty-handed. Some Bible scholars will tell you the reason they sent him away empty-handed would be to imply that there had been no fruit indeed in the vineyard.

I don't find that here, and I'll show you why in just a moment. Because to imply that no fruit had become of the vineyard is to imply that what the work of the owner had done had failed.

But I don't think that's what's being implied here. Because we'll read a little bit further. They sent him away empty-handed, not giving what was theirs to give. And he says, and they would send another, and then another, and then another.

Some they would beat. Some they would treat shamefully. Some they would kill. They would do this over and over and over again until we see their ultimate failure. It says in 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. Now, here's where we see their ultimate failure. Look in verse 7. But those vine growers said to one another, notice the said to one another as we get in the end of chapter 11.

[17 : 01] They said to one another, this is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours. You know, here's the great failure. Now, stay with me on this.

They wanted to take ownership rather than to be stewards. They wanted to own what was not theirs to own. They were called to be tenders in the vineyard, but they weren't content to labor in the field. They wanted to own the field. They said, here's the son. Let us kill him. Let us cast him out. Then the vineyard will be ours. We'll be able to call it after our own name. We'll change the false name, so to say.

We'll put our placard across the top of it. We didn't plant it. We didn't build it. We didn't establish it. We didn't do it, but we want to own it. We didn't do everything that was necessary to make it productive, but we want to reap the rewards, and we alone want to reap the rewards.

We want to stock it into our bank accounts. We want to take ownership of that very thing. You know, in our own day and time, we're not true owners of anything. Some of you say, oh, well, I own a piece of land or own that.

[18 : 08] Well, yeah, you own it for a second. It's lent to you until the end of your life, and then you hand it to someone else, or they take it and they soak it off. Carrie and I, just yesterday evening,

some of you have been to our house, and some of you have seen our backyard, and you know that our backyard's got a slope in it, and along our backyard, there's just, we call it our boulder wall.

There's all these rocks. There's hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of rocks, and we've stacked them up there. We've moved them, and we've moved them. It's astounding, really, that we've grown so many rocks in our yard. There's big rocks and small rocks, and we've been moving rocks for three years now, I think, and we're just building all these rocks, and she looked at me yesterday evening as we were still moving rocks.

That's what we do in our spare time, and she said, what do you think someone's going to do years from now when we're dead and gone? Do you think they're just going to bring up equipment in and move these rocks out of the way? I said, they might, but there's going to be so many of them by that time, they may say, just forget it.

I said, well, I'll tell you what I think's going to happen. They're going to say, back in the early 1900s, somebody built this rock wall. They're not going to know we did it in 2025 and 2026, because they're going to think nobody in their right mind would do it but us, okay?

But the reality is, is we're just tenders for a season. We don't own it. I have no control over what's going to happen to it when I'm gone. Listen, we've told our kids, we can't leave you much, but if we're dead and gone, sell the farm and keep the money or do the work on it.

[19 : 32] I don't care. It doesn't matter. It's just stuff. We don't own it. But the grand danger in the people of the Lord is when they want to displace the son and take ownership of what is theirs and what is his that should have never been theirs.

We've done it over and over again where we say, well, if we get rid of him, we can have it all. Friend, if you think I'm mistaken, walk into a number of churches throughout our own land where they kicked Jesus out so they could take ownership of that which was never theirs to begin with. And they say, we want to dictate what happens. We want to dictate how it works. We want to decide what we sing. We want to decide what we do. It's all about us. And he says, that's my church. I laid the foundation.

I built the walls. I planted the vineyard. I ensured that it would be fruitful. Not you. You are just laborers in the field. The grand failure is when mankind decides to take ownership of that which they were just called to tend.

Friend, we don't own a thing. We don't. I understand and I'm fully well, fully aware that pastoring is one of the jobs that you never retire from but that you also don't take with you when you go home.

[20 : 48] You're always preaching your way out of a job. You were temporarily there. I've had the joy and the benefit of being a pastor of this church for 10 years.

Prior to this church, I was a pastor of a church for 10 years. That church is still going. It didn't stop because I'm not there anymore. It's still going. This one won't stop when the Lord calls me home. I'm not planning anywhere if he does. But if he calls me home or you vote me out, guess what? It will continue going on because it's not your church. It's his church. But the moment we make it about us, we enter into this grand season of failure which brings us to the next thing.

Look at the judgment. So what will the owner do? The question is asked. What then will the owner do? For the keepers in the vineyard thought, well, if we get rid of the son, we'll take ownership.

They forgot. There was one that had hired them. There was one that had appointed them. There was one that was greater than them. There was still the owner. He will come, it says.

[21 : 56] He will come. How does Jesus introduce this parable? He says that he hired vineyard keepers, vine dressers, and he put them in there for he went on a journey. That ought to tell you something because so many parables, Christ speaks of the owner going on a journey.

But the owner always comes back from the journey. Remember the man who had the talents and he entrusted them to his servants and he went on a journey. And then he came back from his journey. And you remember over and over again, there's the owner or the master who goes on the journey.

But there's always a day where the owner comes back from his journey and that is the day of judgment and the day of reckoning. There is a day where these vine keepers would stand face to face with the owner and give an account.

And it says that he would bring, it tells us in the Gospel of Luke, he would bring these wretches to a wretched inn and he would displace them and get them out of his vineyard for he is the owner. And judgment will fall because these people began to believe that it was theirs and they could do with it

what they wanted.

And now we notice here that when the judgment comes, it is certain, it is true, and it is everlasting. He will take them out of the vineyard and he will give them to others.

[23 : 08] Now let me just answer one of the most glaring questions here. Some believe in church history that this is teaching replacement theology that the church took the place of Israel and since the leaders of Israel did not keep Israel and the leaders of Israel did not teach Israel and when the Lord showed up, Israel was fruitless that he gave them to another.

We see that because it says in the Gospel of Matthew that he will take you from that nation and give you to another nation. So some would teach that it is the Gentiles that are welcomed in and the Gentiles take over the vineyard of the Lord.

That is a false teaching, by the way. We can't have time to get into all that, but we will get into it in the last of the eight essentials. What about Israel? We'll answer it then. This is not replacement theology.

We understand that the care and the concern of the nation of Israel did leave the Sanhedrin because Jerusalem fell and it fell upon the Jewish church, okay, that was residing around Jerusalem much longer than the Sanhedrin ever was.

But the church did not replace Israel. The church is grafted into Israel and we'll see that later. But notice the judgment that comes because of the failure. And finally, my friend, we notice the importance of the cornerstone because now here Christ says, have you not even read this scripture?

[24 : 28] This scripture is Psalm 118. Psalm 118, verses 22 and following, I believe, that he is citing verbatim this verse, these verses.

The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief crown. This came about from the Lord and it is marvelous in our eyes. Again, Psalm 118 is about the nation of Israel and the rejection of the nation of Israel by the people around them, but how God would establish the nation of Israel. Jesus brings it to its final fulfillment. It is not the nation of Israel. He is the seed that is traced from the book of Genesis. He is the fulfillment. He alone is the cornerstone.

The Messiah come out of the nation of Israel, but notice the importance of the cornerstone. Friend, whatever we do, whatever labor we put ourselves in must be rooted and rested in Christ and in Christ alone.

He is the one who holds it together. He may be rejected and denied by a multitude, but by those who labor in the vineyard of the Father, they must find their labors in Christ and in Christ alone.

[25 : 38] It is marvelous in our eyes for all fruitfulness is found in Christ. All of our efforts find their reward in Christ. All of our labors find their rest in Christ.

And all of our work must be rooted in Christ. For if we try to connect to any other stone, then we are in grand danger. For this is the only one that we must build upon.

He is the chief cornerstone. He is the one who holds it all together. He's the one that establishes it. And he's the one who owns it. And the moment we get away from that stone is the moment we get in trouble.

I've told you this before, that if you were to go to this back corner of the church, you will find that there's a stone and it has a date on it. That date is 1887. The cornerstone of this building, that's not the stone, but the cornerstone is inside that encasing.

And it is there. Supposedly, according to the history of this church, there were mementos put into that cornerstone when they laid it there. There's supposedly a Bible, some coins, some other things that are there inside that cornerstone.

[26 : 44] Several years ago, when we celebrated the 150th anniversary, everybody asked me, was I going to break open the cornerstone? I said no. I'm not going to do it. They said, why? I said, because it's the cornerstone.

Whatever's there is going to stay there. I said, if you can, you can't, but it's all built on that stone. And it's important. And it needs to be there.

And if you change it, you change the building. Christ is the one who holds it all together. He has it. It must be rooted. And we can't knock him out.

Notice the importance of the cornerstone. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this day. We pray that we may be laborers in the field of your vineyard.

