

Saved by the Rejected King

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[0 : 00] Okay, well, if you could keep your Bibles open to that parable, that's what we'll be looking at tonight. And hopefully you've picked up a little handout on the way in, although there's only four points.

So just in case you need to keep track of where I'm at. Let me pray for us.

Father, we thank you for your word, and we thank you that in it what is revealed is your Son. And we pray that as we look upon the Son and look on you tonight in this parable, that we will come to trust you more and accept your authority in our lives.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, everyone knows that authority has to be obeyed, or at the very least respected.

Yeah? Is that right? A traffic cop pulls out from the side street, and whether you're speeding or not, I know I do this, you immediately take your foot off the accelerator and start looking at the rearview mirror.

[1 : 18] You're daydreaming in class, slouching, but when you see the principal walking past in the corridor, what do you do? You sit up straight, don't you?

And you pretend to take copious amounts of notes, whether you understand anything the teacher is saying or not. And when the archbishop comes to Holy Trinity, he hasn't done so for a while, but if he does, we'll make sure the church is tidy, right?

I mean, make sure none of those newsletters are lying around. Make sure the pews are neatly arranged. Make sure the Bible's opened up there. It's instinctive, isn't it?

Because even when we want to rebel, when we want to not obey, we often feel the need to justify our rebellion. We find reasons to excuse ourselves. So we say things like, he's only the acting CEO, not the CEO, and it's just the relief teacher.

We don't really need to do exactly what she says. Or we say, why should I respect that leader because of the way she behaves or he behaves because of the way she treats me?

[2 : 29] We find that we need to come up with a reason not to respect authority. Well, in our chapter today, that's exactly what we find the chief priests doing. Together with the teachers of the law and the elders, they try to find a reason not to respect Jesus' authority.

That was in the passage just earlier, which we didn't read. But we've been sort of troubling, those of us who have been coming, we've been troubling with Jesus for a month or so now, listening to his parables. And Jesus has now arrived in Jerusalem.

And in verse 1, we find him teaching the people in the temple courts and preaching the gospel. But this doesn't go down well with the chief priests. They feel that their authority has been threatened.

And because they couldn't refute what Jesus was teaching, they resort to questioning his authority. They ask, what gives Jesus the right to say these things? And perhaps they thought they could undermine his authority somehow by getting him to answer that question.

And that's the flip side of authority, isn't it? That when those in power are threatened, their natural instinct is to exert their authority. They throw their weight around in order to show who's boss.

[3 : 38] I'll sack you if you don't do what I say. Do that again and I'll ground you for a week. And in general, that's what we expect of authority.

If someone has clearly done the wrong thing, then we want them to be punished. Just think of all the heinous crimes that have just happened in Australia or in Melbourne even. We want justice to be done.

And so we have paid a lot of money to have law enforcement agencies like the police force, like the courts, like the judges, to enforce that authority.

Of course, the big question here is this. Who has the authority over whom in this passage? Is it the chief priest over Jesus? Or is it Jesus over the chief priest?

Well, we don't have time to look at the first nine verses, but Jesus' answer sort of results in a bit of a standoff for the time being. But then what he goes on to do is tell this parable where he turns the whole question of authority on its head.

[4 : 40] For in this parable, he tells the story of an owner of a vineyard who doesn't enforce his rightful authority, even from those who owe it to him and who defy him.

So in verse 9, Jesus begins with this. 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 tenant so that they would give him some fruit of the vineyard.

But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. And so here, immediately, we see the intentions of the tenants, that even though they're just renters, they act like they own the place, and they refuse to recognize the authority of the owner.

The owner leaves them for a while, because if you know anything about vines, I think it takes about three years before you get fruit. But when it came time for him to come back to collect his due, they beat up the servant that he sends.

And so the owner sends another servant. But he too is beaten up and treated shamefully. And when a third servant is sent, they wound him and throw him out.

[5 : 51] Now each servant, I think we're meant to read, gets treated worse than the previous. But to the surprise of Jesus' hearers, this owner doesn't exert his authority, his rightful authority.

So he could have sent a larger group of servants, not just one, but you know, reinforcements, but he didn't. Or he himself could have come back with law and forces to enforce what was his.

But he doesn't. Instead, he's long-suffering, he's patient, hoping that with each servant, maybe the response of the tenants might change.

Now clearly, this is a picture of God himself. We've heard enough of Jesus' parables over the last few weeks to know that. And in fact, if you read the Old Testament, there are images of God as the vine dresser.

And the vineyard is his people, Israel. And in this parable, the tenants are the leaders of Israel. And actually, if we read in verse 19, they knew that as well.

[6 : 55] For Luke tells us that they knew that Jesus was talking about them. But more generally, the tenants are also God's people themselves. And the parable is actually a picture of Israel's own history, of their relationship with God.

And by and large, what we see in this history is a long-suffering king, God, contending with a rebellious nation. So from the very start, even from the time that they were called out of Egypt, and before they even entered the Promised Land, Israel grumbled and complained.

They were disobedient and even wishing that they would go back to slavery in Egypt. And then when God did finally plant them in the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey, their hearts turned away from God to worship idols and the other gods in the land.

Not long after, when everyone else around them had one, they asked for a king because they wanted one of their own. And in doing that, effectively, we're rejecting God's own kingship.

But God, just like this owner, would send his servants, prophets, to warn them, time and time again, saying, turn back to me, come back, repent.

[8 : 07] But what did they do? They would reject them, they would beat the prophets, they would wound them, all the way until John the Baptist, just before Jesus, whom Herod beheaded.

Now anyone else, even us, I don't know what we would do, but I would have come down hard on them a long time ago, don't you think? Exert my authority.

But not this owner, and not God, who keeps sending servant after servant, patiently pleading with his people. But when that wasn't enough, the owner finally sends his son.

And not just any son, mind you, but his beloved son. And he thinks to himself, perhaps they will respect him. I wonder whether you can pick up the forbearance in those words.

Because even after knowing what the tenants have done to the servants, the owner still dared to send his beloved son. He was willing to give them the benefit of doubt.

[9 : 11] Perhaps he thinks, perhaps if I send someone important enough, someone who represents my authority, best represents my authority, perhaps they might respect him. Just one more chance, he thinks, for them to change their ways and repent from error.

Well, we read in the parable that this doesn't happen, of course. Instead, they talked the matter over. That is, they actually schemed over it. It wasn't an impulse decision. But they said, this is the heir.

Let's kill him and the inheritance will be ours. Now, you may wonder how killing the son gives them ownership of the vineyard. Perhaps they think that the owner has died and so this is the son coming back to claim his inheritance.

And so if you kill him, they think, the vineyard will be theirs. But even if that's not the case, what they may have thought was that killing the son would leave the owner without an heir so when the owner finally dies, the vineyard will revert to them.

But whatever the reason is, this chance of autonomy was just too good for them to pass up. And so they do the unimaginable. They do what is worse, they do what they did worse than to the servants.

[10 : 23] They threw him out of the vineyard and they killed him. Now, I don't know whether the people hearing this would have understood all this. It's hard to tell.

But for us, as we read it in one sense after the fact, it's pretty clear, isn't it? If you read what Luke has written, Jesus has just entered Jerusalem and so we know that Jesus is about to die at the hands of the chief priests, not more than a week away.

And so Jesus, in this parable, is self-identifying himself with the son. He's the beloved suffering son sent by the long-suffering king. Even the words of the owner just earlier, I will send my son whom I love.

That echoes God's own words, does it not? From Jesus' baptism in chapter 3 and even at the transfiguration, this is my son whom I love. And these words in turn actually come from Isaiah where God speaks of his servant, that mysterious messianic figure in that book.

So if you look up Isaiah 42, I've just got it up there, God says of this servant, here is my son whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight. I will put my spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.

[11 : 40] He will not shout or cry out or raise his voice in the streets. And then if we turn to Isaiah 53, we see how this servant will suffer. I'm actually going to ask Jeff to turn to that for me and to read just from verses 3 to 11.

But as he does, listens to some of the words as they come up on the screen about the suffering of the servant. So thank you, Jeff. He was despised and rejected by mankind.

A man of suffering and familiar with pain like one from whom people hide their faces. He was despised and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering.

Yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him and afflicted. But he was pished for our transgressions. He was crushed for our injuries.

The punishment that brought us peace was upon him. And by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray.

[12 : 47] Each of us has turned to our own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted yet he did not open his mouth.

He was led by the lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before a shearer is his son so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away.

Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living. For the transgression of my people he was punished.

He was assigned a grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death. Though he had done no violence nor was any sick in his mouth. Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and to cause him to suffer.

And though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin he will see his offspring and prolong his days. And the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.

[13 : 55] After he has suffered he will see the light of life and be satisfied. By his knowledge my righteous servant will justify me. thank you Jeff.

Can you see what Jesus is doing here? By identifying this parable with the suffering servant he's actually giving all of them a glimpse of what is about to occur. As he goes to the cross to die to die for his people he does it to take the punishment for them to bear their sin or their iniquities.

We've seen over the last few weeks as we looked at the parables how sinners are welcomed into God's kingdom seemingly freely without cost no punishment for their wrongdoing.

well this isn't because justice isn't upheld in God's kingdom but it's because somebody else has already paid the price the suffering servant the beloved son and he comes not to enforce God's authority against sinners but to take the punishment for them instead.

He was pierced for our transgressions he was crushed for our iniquities the punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed. And so God does welcome the humble into his kingdom but a key part of our humility is to realize who's taken the punishment for us.

[15 : 29] Peace with God doesn't come unless we do. And for those of us who don't do that then Jesus goes on to say that punishment awaits. For that's how he ends the parable in verse 16.

He asks the question what then will the owner of the vineyard do to them he will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. Now as a side point many people have wondered what these others are and some say it's a reference to the Gentiles.

I actually think it should still include the Jews as well like the disciples. I think the others are anyone who doesn't reject the authority of Jesus. Now when the people heard this they were outraged because what they say is God forbid or may this never happen.

Those of you who are Greek students the exact phrase is actually meganoito. It's that phrase that Paul uses in his letters. It's like a no never this can never happen.

That's what it conveys. This is how the people were reacting to Jesus' story. Now the question then is what are they expressing surprise over? Is it that the tenants are killed or that the vineyard is given to others?

[16 : 38] Some people say that but I actually think in light of Jesus' answer what they're really surprised about what they really can't imagine is that the tenants would kill the son. Surely that will never happen.

For if the tenants are the chief priests then what we're talking about are the most respected people in society. These are the God-fearing people, the law-abiding people. The people are thinking surely they would not stoop to murder.

Surely not. But Jesus looks at them in verse 17 directly and then he reminds them of Psalm 118. Now this is a psalm of salvation if you read it.

It's actually a psalm of praise which they sing regularly saying God has saved us, God has rescued us. But Jesus reminds them of one particular verse in the midst of it.

When he says then what is the meaning of that which is written the stone the builders rejected has become the capstone. He's saying if this will never happen then why in the midst of this psalm which you keep singing praising God for rescuing Israel do we find these very words that the stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.

[17 : 50] The Lord has done this and it is marvelous in our eyes. So Jesus is saying no don't say make a noito. It will happen. It can happen. The capstone or corner stone is the foundation stone. It's the vital stone without which the building cannot stand.

And it is the builder's job to choose the right stone in order to ensure that the foundation is the from a rejected Messiah.

You will reject him Jesus says but God will make him the Messiah. He will turn the person the very person you reject into the savior of the world. And I guess as we head into Good Friday and Easter that is exactly what we're going to remember isn't it?

The great salvation. And that's what this whole week is going to be about. Jesus the rejected Messiah dies but God raises him from the dead crowns him as king over all creation and offers salvation to all humanity.

And so I guess here's the challenge to us. As Jesus looks directly at us as well right into each of our hearts what will we do with God's chosen Messiah his beloved son the capstone.

[19 : 30] I mean in one sense just the fact that he has died for us taken our punishment should cause us to embrace him shouldn't it? submit to his authority and yet we have to be warned that judgment and destruction will come one way or another if we don't for Jesus leaves us with this warning in verse 18 for everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces but he on whom it falls will be crushed.

Now I've thought about this verse a bit and I'm not quite sure what the distinction here is between the falling on the stone and having the stone fall on us. I think both of it indicates judgment and destruction and perhaps the difference is an active or passive rejection of Jesus.

But whatever it is the outcome is still the same. If we reject the son we will suffer the consequence that of judgment and destruction of being crushed or broken.

Now I know there may be some of you here today who have actually got genuine questions about Jesus. You're not trying to just reject Jesus offhand. And if you do then I want to encourage you to keep asking them and keep seeking real answers to them.

We're here to help. We'd love to speak with you. Come and talk to me afterwards. And we even run discussions for that. Don't just leave it because as Jesus says these are very serious consequences aren't they for wrongly rejecting Jesus.

[20 : 59] But I guess it's also possible to reject Jesus passively. not by outright rejection but simply just by ignoring him. Treating him as irrelevant.

Putting off seriously thinking about his claims. Or we downplay the importance he has in our lives. Relegating him to just one small area of our lives.

Say between seven, six and seven o'clock each Sunday. friends we need to understand this about God that he's gracious, he's long suffering.

And that means that even though he has the right while there is still time he will actually not force his authority upon us. Not just yet anyway. It's the same with his son.

God is not one to come in here like the principal and exert his authority on us. Because for him to do that would actually destroy the very kind of relationship he wants from us.

[21 : 57] One built on grace, on faith, on mutual love. None of these things arise from compulsion. Those of us who are parents would know this, that the kind of relationship we love with our children is one where there is willing obedience and respect.

I hate it when I have to shout at my kids and tell them to listen to me. When I have to put my foot down and say nothing is enough. Sometimes we have to do that. But there is nothing that gives us greater joy when our children gladly accept our authority.

Because as Andre says, they know it is the best thing for them. And that is exactly how God wants it to be with us. A day will come when he will enforce his authority.

But it will be too late by that time to have a relationship with him. Now is the time to actually willingly accept God's authority. Not just in one small area, but in everything that Jesus says.

putting our trust in him and obeying his words. So can I encourage you to do that? Search our hearts and see if God is saying to us that there is an area in our lives that we need to submit to him, or maybe all of our lives.

[23 : 04] let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.