

# Reflection



- Showing love
- Giving hope
- Bringing peace

The Church of St John & St Leonard

**Mark 12 vv 1-12**

**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2020, 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent**

*<sup>1</sup>Then he began to speak to them in parables. 'A man planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a pit for the wine press, and built a watch-tower; then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. <sup>2</sup>When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants to collect from them his share of the produce of the vineyard. <sup>3</sup>But they seized him, and beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. <sup>4</sup>And again he sent another slave to them; this one they beat over the head and insulted. <sup>5</sup>Then he sent another, and that one they killed. And so it was with many others; some they beat, and others they killed. <sup>6</sup>He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, "They will respect my son." <sup>7</sup>But those tenants said to one another, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours." <sup>8</sup>So they seized him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. <sup>9</sup>What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. <sup>10</sup>Have you not read this scripture:*

*"The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone;<sup>[a]</sup>  
<sup>11</sup> this was the Lord's doing,  
and it is amazing in our eyes"?"*

*<sup>12</sup>When they realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowd. So they left him and went away*  
[New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised (NRSVA)]

Today's passage moves us closer to Calvary, as we now find ourselves in Jerusalem. Mark and Luke set this encounter with the Pharisees between Palm Sunday and the last supper. Jesus has already had a run-in with the Pharisees who, as is their role, question His authority. However it is clear that their minds were closed, and they were not interested in the facts, but saw Him as a dangerous revolutionary who was challenging their own authority and ways of doing things. Despite the evidence of Jesus' teaching and actions, His miracles and healing touch, they were looking for reasons to condemn Him and wanted Him out of the way so that they could continue as things were.

So Jesus uses a parable to draw out the facts, and to draw in His listeners. The picture of the vineyard is well known in the Old Testament (eg in Isaiah 5) as representing Israel, and it is worth noting that the farmer needed to receive some fruit each year to maintain his claim to the land. The tenants had withheld the due fruit, a move designed to seize the land for themselves. They knew what they were doing.

The Pharisees were probably sitting there proudly assuring themselves that they recognised the prophets sent by God, so this must be about people other than them. But who is this "beloved (only) son" who is sent as a last resort? Do we hear an echo of Jesus' baptism and God's proclamation "Here is my beloved Son"?

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We see that this is the last chance for the tenants, to deliver the due fruit and put behind their wrongdoing, re-establishing a proper relationship with the farmer.

But the tenants killed the son, and I'm sure that it was the listening crowd who passed the judgement on those tenants: *He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.* At which point Jesus quotes a well-known Passover Psalm (118) – the very psalm which the crowd had greeted Him with on Palm Sunday – “*Hosanna (save now)*”. The stone is another Old Testament picture, for the Messiah and so Jesus identifies Himself with the “Beloved Son”.

The Pharisees thought that they were going to be able to use Jesus' words against Him, but did they now realise that they were the condemned tenants? That Jesus' was claiming authority as the promised Messiah?

- So what does this mean to us and to our world today, are people ignorant or distracted by the things that this world values? Are we?
- Do we recognise Jesus for who He really is, the hope He brings and the claims He makes on our lives? Maybe we could spend time reading a faith based book, or listen to hymns and worship songs as we give thanks for the hope we have in Jesus
- How can we bear witness to the reality of Jesus in this current situation? How can we display the fruit of the Spirit in our communities at this time?

Thankyou, Lord, for your promises and for the hope you offer. We pray for the guidance and wisdom we need, by the power of the Spirit to expose our communities to the reality of their own need and to the central part Jesus is willing to play in all our lives.

David Lambert

**Rector: The Revd Vicki Bryson**



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