

The Last Week: The Gracious Vineyard Owner

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Date: 03 November 2013

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[0 : 00] The scripture reading today comes from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 20. Please follow along in your bulletin. On one of the days while he was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders confronted him, and they spoke, saying to him, Tell us by what authority you're doing these things, and who is the one who gave you this authority?

Jesus answered and said to them, I will also ask you a question, and you tell me. Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men? They reasoned among themselves, saying, If we say from heaven, he will say, Why did you not believe him?

But if we say from men, all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet. So they answered that they did not know where it came from.

And Jesus said to them, Nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things. And he began to tell the people a parable. A man planted a vineyard and rented it out to vine growers, and went on a journey for a long time.

At the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine growers, so that they would give him some of the produce of the vineyard. But the vine growers beat him and sent him away empty-handed. And he proceeded to send another slave.

[1 : 17] And they beat him also and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. And he proceeded to send a third. And this one also they wounded and cast out.

The owner of the vineyard said, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son. Perhaps they will respect him. But when the vine growers saw him, they reasoned with one another, saying, This is the heir.

Let us kill him so that the inheritance will be ours. So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them?

He will come and destroy these vine growers, and will give out the vineyard to others. When they heard it, they said, May it never be. But Jesus looked at them and said, What then is this that is written?

The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief cornerstone. Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.

[2 : 21] This is the word of the Lord. Think about that song. I keep thinking about it. The word, you're the one who saves us. You're the one who saves us.

I wonder how often we sing that in our lives. I wonder how often we need to sing that in our lives, and we don't sing that in our lives. I've shared before that, okay, so we have four kids, and I would say that the place that I ask God to save me the most is in parenting, in being a dad, in being a husband, because I feel like I have very little good modeling in that area in my life.

So I'm continually trying to figure out what to do and how to do that. I'm so thankful that we have a perfect Savior. That way my kids don't need a perfect dad, right? They can look to Christ.

But today, even just kids getting dressed, and I had three of my daughters come in, and they asked me, does this outfit look nice? Well, how do you answer that with your daughters, right?

I know how to answer that with my wife. Honey, does this make me look fat? No, you don't look fat at all. The dress looks really good. But how do you answer that with your daughters, right?

[3 : 38] And so I would look at it, and I said, okay, so what kind of style are you trying to get there? Okay, that's great. Okay, yeah, that looks good. And so we got dressed, and it's always a challenge to me to think about what does it mean to trust the Lord and to walk with Him and to be a parent.

We needed, you're going to die, we needed some eggs and some bread in our house. And so we needed to go get it, and I was busy doing, I can't remember what I was doing.

So I gave some money to one of my kids, who will remain nameless. And I sent them to go get the eggs and the bread. And right as they were walking out of the door, they asked me the question, if I have anything left, can I buy something for myself?

I thought, that seemed like a reasonable request, right? And so I said, yeah, that's great. Go ahead and do that. And so they went. And they come back about 20 minutes later, chewing on a drumstick ice cream cone, and they have a whole box of drumstick ice cream cones in their bag.

But they have no eggs or no bread. And I'm like, what happened? He goes, well, I didn't have enough money for eggs and bread. So as a parent there, you have some choices to make in your mind, right?

[5 : 05] So you're figuring out, okay, how do I respond to this? Part of me, I'm really angry, right? I'm really, because it's an authority issue, right? I'm like, I ask, well, why did you think that you could buy the ice cream instead of the eggs?

And well, I just felt like it was a thing to do. And so there's an authority thing there, right? So the authority part of me is like, I'm furious. And then the other part of me is like, I'm just kind of laughing, because I don't, I never read that in a book, what to do when that happens, right?

And so I'm trying to use this as a teachable moment. And so I'm asking myself, what do I do? Do I give the kid more money and have them go out and buy some bread and eggs? What if they come back with six-pack of Diet Coke or something else?

And they say, well, I just didn't have enough money to buy the eggs and the bread. And I wondered about that in my life. And I kind of laughed, because I think that is sometimes me.

God gives me resources. He gives me things that he wants me to use for his kingdom to make his name great. And I listen, I say, yeah, that's great. That's good, that's good.

[6 : 16] But then I end up buying him other things that I really need, like ice cream cones or other things like that. And I make the excuse, well, I didn't have enough money to make your kingdom great.

If you give me more money, I can make it great, but I need to live. I need to get these things done. Luke 19, Jesus is finishing the last week of his life.

He's up on Bethany, which is on the southeast corner of Jerusalem. Jerusalem sits on a hill. The only way you can attack Jerusalem was from the north, because it's the only place where it's flat.

Everywhere else there's a valley. And in Bethany is where Lazarus came from. So he's going, and he's leading this group, and sometimes they were told it might be like 10,000 or 15,000 people joining him.

And they're heading to Jerusalem for the Passover. And at that time in Jerusalem, Jerusalem would swell to like 2 million people.

[7 : 16] Normally there's about 350,000 people, but on the Passover, 2 million people, pilgrims, would come to take part in this. And so Jesus is on this hill, and he's looking down through the Kidron Valley, and he's looking up at Jerusalem, and he realizes what's going to happen this last week of his life.

All the prophecy that he's going to fulfill, and so he sends his disciples in, and they go to a little house, and they grab a colt, a donkey.

It's out of Zechariah. Instead of traveling into Jerusalem on a stallion, which would be the symbol of a king and a conqueror, Scripture, the prophets, hundreds of years before he was even born, said he would come in on a colt.

The symbol of mildness, and gentleness, and meekness. And so he goes down this valley, and as he goes, people are yelling, and they're screaming, Hosanna!

Hosanna! Everyone thinks this is it. The Messiah's come. We're going to be free. We're going to be free of the Romans. Everything's going to be perfect. They're taking off their coats. They're laying them on the ground.

[8 : 19] They're waving palm branches. Everybody, and this is really significant, because on this day in the Old Testament, Exodus 12, it tells us for the Passover, that this is the day that you buy your lamb without blemish, spotless and clean, and you bring that lamb into your home to take care of it, so that seven days later, you sacrifice it to cover your sins.

And so this is the day that Jesus is entering in, the Lamb of God, into the temple, and people are going crazy, and it's a party, it's a rock festival, and the rabbis and the leaders come to him and say, tell your disciples to stop.

Tell them to be quiet. This is unacceptable. Remember what Jesus said? He said, even if they stopped, the rocks would shout and sing because God has come.

We're told that he gets there. He walks into the temple. He would have entered into the southern gate. It's the gate of the Gentiles, the court of the Gentiles. Now historians tell us, I've tried to verify this, and I've looked over, but what I've been told is that this is the first year this has happened, and what happened was that the leadership of the temple moved all the livestock, all the money changing, into the temple to be in that place this year.

It's the court of the Gentiles, so if you were not a Jew, it's the only place that you could go into. But the Jews, the Gentiles couldn't go in there because it was stocked full of animals and money changers.

[9 : 47] And there's this racket going on that the church leadership had, and it was something like this. When you came into the temple, you had to pay a tax, but you had to pay a special tax. And this coin could only be seen in Godden at the temple.

You couldn't buy it with you. So when you came in, let's say it was \$1, you needed to buy a \$1 tax, but you ended up having to pay \$1.40 to get that tax. And so you took that coin, and they just pocketed the \$0.40, and they stuck it in the treasury as you walked in the church.

There's a big racket. And Jesus says in the scripture, when he saw that, he became furious. It was an anger with righteousness kind of wound up in it.

It says he makes his rope, and he starts to whip all of the money changers. He turns over the tables. He throws out the animals. There's this total chaos, and everybody's just in awe because in their mind, they're thinking this is it.

The Messiah's coming. This is it. We're going to be free. This is it. This is all going to happen. Hallelujah. We've been waiting for this. Oppression's off. We're going to be free. And he walks in there, and he throws out all of these things, and then scripture tells us at Luke chapter 9, right at the very end, his disciples and him go into the temple, and they begin to teach.

[11 : 06] And basically, they stage a sit-in. And so they're teaching in the temple where the priest and the rabbi should be preaching, but Jesus has it under control, and they can't even get in because there's all these people listening to him.

Remember what they said about Jesus? They said he preached in a way unlike any other man before. He preached with authority. With the leadership, they just can't handle this, and so in chapter 20, which you have in your bulletin, they come to him.

And it's a very interesting passage, and in this passage, I just want to look at three things really quickly or briefly and talk about them and ask ourselves questions like what is going on in our life and what can we learn from these things.

And in these passages, I just want to talk about three things. I want to talk about authority, the idea of authority, because Jesus was told to be teaching with authority that no one else had ever had before. I want to talk about the vineyard.

There's this parable that's told. It's actually out of Isaiah, and Jesus retells this parable, and it's very powerful. I want to talk about the vineyard, and last, I want to talk really, it's kind of the core of everything.

[12 : 16] I want to talk about the vineyard owner. So the first thing that comes out in verses 1 through 8 is you see they come to him, and they come at night, I mean, not at night, but all the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders, verse 1, that means everybody within the leadership.

That's all three sections of the Jewish leadership at that time. So whenever they came together with something very, very serious, and so they come to confront him, and they ask him two questions in verse 2. They ask him, tell us by what authority you're doing these things, or basically ask him, are you coming as a prophet, are you coming as a priest, or are you coming as a king?

Because they want to know. Are you coming as a king to set us free? Are you coming as a prophet to set us straight? Or are you coming as a priest to minister to us? Which way are you coming? What authority are you coming by? And then the second question they ask him is, who gave you this authority?

authority, where did it come from? Now in Jesus' day, you always taught, like I taught last week, I gave this quote, and I said, hey, don't, it's not from me, it's from Jonathan Edwards, and Jonathan Edwards stole it from John Owen, and John Owen stole it from Tertullian, and Tertullian stole it from Paul, and Paul stole it from Jesus, and Jesus wrote it, and that's how you would teach in Jesus' day.

That's where your authority came from. So I would be up here teaching, and I would say, well, Rabbi so-and-so says this, and then Rabbi so-and-so said this plus this, and then a long time ago, Rabbi so-and-so said this also, and as I taught that way, what I would be doing is establishing my authority, and so everybody would listen to me and go, wow, he's very well educated, he knows what he's talking about, we should listen to him, because he's not bringing anything new, he's bringing something the same.

[13 : 51] Now remember, in Jesus' day, if you were there and if you were a Christian, let's say we're all Christians here, we would be the rabbis, we would be the Pharisees, we would be the holders of the truth, and all these people coming in with Jesus, they would be the radicals, they would be the liberals, they would be the people who just came to faith, they would be the people who aren't mature, they don't know what's going on, and so when we saw Jesus coming in, the first question we would ask is, why are you doing this?

Because all the authority is from us. You read the passage and you realize that the leaders did not think that they were breaking God's rules.

You read the passage and you understand that the leaders did not think that they were rejecting God, they actually assumed that they had the right to govern their lives, they assumed that they had the right to govern these people, and so they want to know why Jesus thinks he has the right to do that, and so they asked him this question and as a good rabbi does in teaching, they always ask questions after questions and Jesus answered them and said, I'll ask you a question and you tell me, was the baptism of John from heaven or from men and they reasoned with themselves, if we say from heaven, then why don't you believe me because that's where my authority is coming from or if we say from men, they're going to storm me because the penalty for a false prophet was stoning, and if John was a false prophet and the rabbis allowed him to teach, then they were guilty of his sin and so they would have been stoned too and so they realized that they're in this untenable position when it talks about authority and they basically said, well, we don't know.

We don't know. And Jesus said, well, I'm not going to tell you either and what I see from this passage and what I keep asking myself these last couple weeks is this, where does our authority come from?

where does your authority come from?

[15 : 59] Why do you live the life that you live right now? Why do you make the choices that you make right now?

The passage says that our authority only comes from one of two places. Verses three and four. Either our authority comes from God, the word there in Hebrew would be they said heaven, which means God, or our authority comes from men.

And so the question we have to ask ourselves as we think about this is where, where does our authority really come from? I don't know if you've ever heard this or said this, but I've said this sometimes in my life.

You know, I'm a Christian. I don't know what I think about this part of the Bible. This part of the Bible is really hard. It's very difficult. It's very confusing. I don't know if I can live my life the way Scripture tells me to live it right here.

You know, I follow God and the Bible is good for some things, but you know, there are other things in the Bible, you know, like the sexuality and relationships and how we handle our money and things like that.

[17 : 18] You know, I think maybe it's kind of outdated for that because God, God wants me to be happy, right? Right?

Where, where, where does our authority come from? Do we live our life in our own authority as these Pharisees did and not realizing that they were doing that?

Because they didn't realize that they were doing that. They thought they were living under God's authority, but the Scripture is really clear that they weren't. They were living under their own authority. They didn't handle God's Word.

They didn't know God's Word. They didn't allow God's Word to seep into them. They changed God's Word. They didn't like the Scriptures that quoted the things that were happening. I mean, all they had to do is look into the Old Testament and all the things that were happening to that point, it was really clearly told of.

But they didn't like that. And I think sometimes we don't either. And I realize, if we're honest, sometimes in our life, we just want to be our own authority.

[18 : 26] We say we love God. We say we came to Christ at this time. But if you look at our life day by day by day, how we live it, the question is, are we living it according to God's Word or are we living it to our Word?

One of the early church fathers said it this way. He said, sin is largely a matter of authority. We sin because we refuse God's authority. Well, when we sin, we reject God, we reject His Word, we reject His authority, and we replace it with something else.

Us. The Bible says that we have a problem with authority that deep down in our heart there's this darkness that prevents us from wanting to obey.

The Scripture actually says that we are angry towards God that we don't like His authority. And the Jewish leaders in this passage really, really show that. They would rather live life and run their lives the way they want to.

But Jesus is presenting to them something else, something different. And the question we have to ask ourselves today is what authority do we live by? What do we do with that deep, dark struggle in our heart when we know we should buy the eggs in the bread but we want to buy something else?

[20 : 01] What we know in the deep, dark struggle in our heart when we know we should do certain things or we're called to bring comfort in healing but we're too busy.

The Scripture says that we have a heart problem and there's this darkness there that even after we've come to Christ we still struggle with it, we still deal with it, we still have to face it.

And the problem is that most of us, a lot of us don't even realize that we struggle. the problem is that most of us don't like having somebody in authority above us.

Think about that. Do you really like to know that you're under somebody else's authority? I mean, how do you do in the speed limits? How do you do with the signs?

I mean, Kip and I love to play baseball and we throw baseball on a podium. We were so fortunate there's this big podium right around the house and so we go out maybe once every week throw pitch and last week we went out and there was a sign there that said no throwing balls.

[21 : 14] It had never been there before. Ever. But this time the sign was right in front of my face no throwing balls. Kip looked at me and said, what are we going to do?

Wow, I wish I could say I was just the person perfect dad and like, yeah, you know, we got to obey our authority and they're putting it above us and I kind of took the sign and I kind of turned it around backwards. I said, just one time.

But the scripture says that our whole life is about turning signs around backwards because we don't like to be in authority. We don't like people to have authority over us.

And so the question this passage brings up which is the question for you and me is where does our authority come from? How do we live our lives? How do we know that we're living for God and how do we know that we're living for ourselves?

How do we know that we're not under God's authority? How do you know when you're not living the way God wants you to? Who tells you?

[22 : 31] I mean if you're fortunate you have a friend or a spouse or somebody in your community group that says, dude, that's just wrong. But sometimes we don't. And what happens when we don't?

The leaders were blinded to their blindness. They thought they were doing the right thing. They thought that they were living under God's rules. They thought that they were obeying the Lord. They thought that they were checking off all the boxes.

They thought that they were under the right authority and they were the authority and they were helping everybody else be under their authority. But Jesus says that they were under man's authority. We either live today under our authority or under God's authority.

Can I give you a hint that I'm learning in myself? I realize that if I'm living under God's authority I will always be challenged in my selfishness.

Because there's this selfishness inside of me that I struggle with. And if I'm not struggling with that selfishness, for me, it's a very good indicator that I'm living under my authority.

[23 : 45] Because all rules are off and I can do whatever makes me feel good and I can turn the signs and all those things. But if I'm struggling with that selfishness, if I realize the depth of how depraved and how selfish I am, it's a sign for me that God's authority is being lived out in my life.

And the amazing thing about that is as that happens, he gives me grace to continue on. He gives me grace to continue on under his authority.

So authority, whose authority are you under? Yourself's or God's? Really? And how do you know when you're not? The next thing this passage screams out to me is just this idea of the vineyard.

You know, sometimes I've used these ten verses when someone comes to me and they say, hey, can you give me a CliffsNotes, a short version of the Bible, what the Bible's all about, what the story of the Bible's all about? Can you just give me like a brief synopsis of what the Bible's all about?

Sometimes I take them to this parable. Because I think within this parable, within these ten sentences, is God's whole story lived out.

[24 : 57] God's whole creation plan lived out. And what do we learn about this vineyard? Well, what we learn is a couple things. We learn that the vineyard was made by God or the owner. In Matthew 21 and Mark 11, it tells the story again and it even gives you a better picture of the vineyard.

This vineyard was massive. He dug this deep trench around it, these high walls to protect it. It was interwoven with vines and stickers so no animals could get in. There was a big tower in the center of it so that you could look out for your enemies but you also can go underneath it for the shade and be protected.

There's a big wine press in the middle of it so you could do all your work and live within that community and everything you needed, everything that you needed was there. In the passage, it says that the vineyard owner produced it, he made it and he just opened it up for us to use and to be a part of it.

So that everything in the vineyard was made by the vineyard owner or God, we also see that everything in the vineyard was expected to produce fruit. I mean, you wouldn't make a vineyard if he didn't expect produce, right?

So everything in the vineyard was made to produce produce. We see that the vineyard owner isn't greedy. He's not a mean owner.

[26 : 13] I mean, basically, he lets the people go into the vineyard and do whatever they want. He basically says, hey, here's the vineyard. You take care of it. You use the resources in it. You produce whatever kind of grapes you want to make, whatever kind of wine you want to make.

You can do whatever you want in it. This is my vineyard but I'm giving it to you to use. You do this. Hands off. I'm going away on a long trip but there's one thing that I expect.

I expect fruit. I expect produce. So the vineyard is this amazing place that the creator made and gave to us.

He's given us all this freedom. He's allowed us to do all these things. He's allowed us to have our hand in creating and changing and fixing creation but the problem is that sometimes when we live in a vineyard for a long time and the owner hasn't come back, we start to think that we're the owner.

Right? I mean, sometimes if we've lived in a vineyard for a long time and we've done some amazing things with the vineyard, we start to think, wow, wow, I did this. I mean, the world around us is going to encourage us to think that way, right?

[27 : 31] I mean, you made it in Oxford. You passed the test. You presented that thing so well. You brought yourself to this place. You're the authority.

You made it. The struggle is sometimes, I think, deep down inside of us we want to believe that but we know that it's not true and the fact that it's not true kind of makes me angry because I want to be able to say I did it all by myself.

I want to say I'm the one who did it. I want to say I made it. I manifest destiny. I came across and I cleared the land and I did it. I did it. It's all mine. But the rules of the vineyard say something totally different.

The rules of the vineyard say that it's not ours that was given to us and everything within it is somebody else's.

Maybe the question we should ask ourselves is who are we working for? I mean really? Who who are we working for?

[28 : 58] Are we working for ourselves? Or are we working for the true owner? I mean I think the problem sometimes is we don't even recognize that we're acting like owners.

How do you realize when you're acting like an owner? Jesus talked about it really clearly in the passage and the problem is as we look at it as we think about it as we look at our finances as we look at our gifts as we look at our talents as we look at all these things that we've been able to accomplish and do within the vineyard because the owner has been away for so long we start to doubt whether he's ever going to come back.

you start to think that the things are ours. The leaders in this passage didn't understand this.

They thought that Jerusalem the Jewish people the temple was all theirs until 70 AD when Titus led the Roman army in and destroyed everything and the Jewish nation ceased to exist from that point on.

You're never going to find in history again the idea of priest. You're never going to find in history again the idea of scribes. You're never going to find in history again the idea of elders within the Jewish nation. If you go to the day they're just teachers and there's rabbis because those guys thought that the vineyard was theirs they clung to it they said this is what we've done we've made all these things and it was taken away.

[30 : 47] Finally and I think this is the main point of this passage this is the point that sticks out to me over and over and it's what I've been challenged to. At the time of the harvest he sent a slave to the vine growers and so they would give him some of the produce of the vineyard but the vine growers beat him and sent him away empty handed.

And he proceeded to send another slave and they beat him also and they treated him shamefully and they sent him away empty handed and he proceeded to send a third slave and they treated him and they wounded him the word trauma and they cast him out and the vineyard looks around and he tells this story as Jesus is talking and this would be a very powerful story guys because Jesus is in the temple we're told that the temple is decorated by this huge carving of a vine it was a symbol of Israel and Herod started it it was over 130 feet tall and it was inlaid with gold and whenever a wealthy person came into the temple they would donate jewels to be the grapes of this vineyard and so Jesus is teaching this story with this vine as the backdrop so everybody is looking at him they're looking at him looking at that looking at that looking at that so they understand what he's saying and the owner sends all of these people in and patiently he comes to them and he sends messengers to them trying to remind them that they're not the owners and the tenants continually beat them and in verse 13 there's this pause in the original language and the owner pauses and he says what should I do

I will send my beloved son it's the same wording that is used when Jesus was baptized remember John sends Jesus down and the dove lands on it and God speaks and says behold my beloved son in whom I'm well please listen to him it's the same word and so the owner takes this pause and he goes what should I do what should I do in Hebrew culture what it says that he's doing is he's taking his anger and he's turning it into grace you think about that for a second what if you're living the ideal Hong Kong life you have your three apartments you're living in one you're renting out two it's time for rent people go to collect your rent and the people living in the apartments beat them up this is our apartment this is not your apartment what do you do would you send a second person would you send a third person everybody listening to this story in Jesus day would have been amazed because all the rules would have said after the first break you send the army and the army gets rid of everybody you send your hired thugs and they do business on those people when they break their arms and legs and they're out of there but Jesus tells this story of this landowner who continually continually continually sends people to wake us up to remind us that we're not the owners the word there is a very special word and I don't like talking all these

Greek words but this word is only used this one time and there's not a word in English that means it in Arabic there's a word kind of that means it halim and it basically is this idea that he puts aside his anger he turns his anger into grace he's patient he's long suffering he's risk taking he's compassionate he's self sacrificing he's gentle all these things are rolled up into this word and Jesus says this is what the character of the landowner is Jesus says this is what the character of God is so everybody listening to this would have been freaked out they would have understood that this is wrong because he's been dishonored you should go in and you should kill these people get rid of them but Jesus continually reminds us and continually shows us of how gracious God is think about it in your life maybe you've come to Christ how many messengers did God send to you before you realized that you weren't the owner statistically there's an average of 23 people that enter into a person's life and share the gospel and share their testimony and before someone says wow this something's here

I need to pray about this or I need to think about this how many messengers did God send into your life what would have happened if God stopped at the first messenger the first time Johnny told me of why I needed to go to church and I laughed at him I said you gotta be kidding me what would have happened if the landowner had stopped and so he says he's gonna do one more thing this incredible act of mercy this incredible act of grace this incredible act of compassion this incredible act of long suffering this incredible act of gentleness he says I'm going to send my son my beloved son I've never heard anything like this before have you one of the things

[36 : 32] I grew up my dad was in the military and one of the neat things about being in the military is my dad became a teacher for other military officers and we had a lot of Middle Eastern officers in our home we would talk and things like that and we had these big parties and I remember hearing this story one time and it stuck in my head I never forgot it because it was just so weird that I couldn't believe it and he told this story one day in the 1980s when King Hussein who was King of Jordan at that time was at a party and one of his aides came in and said hey I got to tell you this in the building over there there's 75 senior officers who are playing a coup right now they're playing a coup to overthrow the government to kill you and take over Jordan what are you going to do you want me to send the soldiers in to arrest everybody and my friend said this is what King Hussein said he said no call a helicopter so he got on a helicopter all by himself he flew over to the top of the building left his gun in the helicopter turned to the pilot and said if you hear shooting leave without me he walks down the building into this big room where there's 75 officers planning a coup and he looks at him and he says gentlemen it's come to my attention that everyone in here is playing a coup to take over the government don't do that because if you do that the government will be fractured the military will be fractured and thousands of people will lose their lives if all it takes is me dying here I am you can kill me now and the story goes that when the officers heard that and they saw that and they saw the love and compassion that King Hussein put forth towards them they all ran to him and embraced him and pledged allegiance for the rest of their lives but here we have a story that's so much greater than the King of Jordan we have a story that we are farmers on this vineyard that the good vine owner gave us that we're living our lives we're producing these things we're living under our authority and continually and continually he sends messengers to us he says it's not yours if you live under your authority you're in trouble if you live according to your rules ultimately you're going to fail

I have a better plan for you I have something so much greater for you if you can just trust me and over and over and over God sends messengers to us to show us his mercy and his grace I have one last question how do you feel when you hear that does that story of the vineyard does this story of what goes on in your life right now does that move you when you think of God's grace in God's mercy in God's gentleness in your life how do you respond

Jesus goes on and he shares the ending of the story which is incredibly harsh harsh and real it's a story of judgment often we don't talk about it in churches because people don't like to hear the idea of this in churches that we're going to be held accountable and something's going to happen one day if we don't listen to the messengers if we don't understand grace if we don't understand what Christ has done for us to move us and to change us and to mold our way of thinking and doing and being the passage probably says that if it doesn't move you then you have a lot of heart questions to ask and you need to figure out today whose authority you're living under everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces but on whomever it falls it will scatter them like dust authority who's your authority in your life the garden who are you working for today the father how do you respond to his love and his message is there over and over and over again in the gospels the parable of the dinner the parable of the sun running away the parable of the vine growers the story says that we have a God who's so gracious and so amazing and continually continually continually pursues us and the question is what do we do with that how do we respond father we just thank you for this day we thank you for your words that are overwhelming

I confess that when I hear this story and I think about these things sometimes I am disturbed and I'm angry because there's just sometimes I want to be my own authority and I want to live my life my own way and what I realize that there's some of us in here who are like that right now there's some of us here when we hear this story we say well so what what a stupid owner why would he waste his son but your word your story your authority centers around your son whom you send to free us from the darkness of our hearts and our own authority Lord I pray for those of us in here who right now are just realizing for the first time that they're living by their authority and not yours

I pray Lord that they would just feel your mercy and grace upon them they would realize that this is something that is going to happen throughout their whole life as they struggle with whose authority they're in but they realize how merciful and gracious you are and they come to you for forgiveness for healing Lord I pray for those of us who are in here and we've been digging for a while and it's been so long since we've heard from you or we wonder just like Theophilus wrote when Luke wrote this gospel is Jesus really real and is he really powerful and is he really in authority because I haven't seen him in a while would I pray for those of us in here like that that you would heal our hearts that we would see the mercy and grace of the cross that we would see your gentleness and your goodness and your long suffering that we would realize over and over the messengers that you continue to send to us to you that we understand that judgment the stone the rock is the last thing that you want to do it's the unusual thing as the prophets would say but your usual operation is mercy and grace and compassion so

[45 : 03] Lord I pray that we would embrace that as a church help us to be a people of mercy help us to be a people of grace help us to be changed as we reflect on all these things that you've done for us and in us and we don't deserve them and we know that deep in our heart we might say that we yeah we worked really hard we kind of deserve this but we know that that's not true because you've given us everything Lord help us to be a church that changes people that we touch as they see the lives of community being lived out as they see people who are radically generous with the resources that they're given as they see mercy and grace changing people that they never thought would be changed Lord help us to be your hands and your feet and to trust you to be good and Lord amidst all this we just realize continually the attitude and actions of our hearts we realize that the darkness is there and we continually struggle with it that we unthroned you and we put you back and we put ourselves in there over and over and over and we put us amongst the people a community that speaks the gospel to us regularly that encourages us when we've lost vision that inspires us with obedience even when it's not convenient that shows us everything that we've been given is yours and we go on a journey to use those together for your kingdom

Father we love you and we need you and we pray these things in your son amen