

It's hard to hear when we are wrong. But since we are all sinners, wrong is what we often are. And when confronted with our errors, we have a choice: change or argue. At first, arguing seems easier. We defend our actions, justify our choices, and try to poke holes in the opposing view. But eventually, the excuses run out, and the truth stands firm, unmoved by our resistance.

So what happens when we reach that point? When we've run out of justifications, what do we do? For many, the next step is to silence the voice that challenges us. We hang up the phone; eventually, we block the number or avoid the person altogether. We retreat to our room and slam the door behind us; eventually, we may move out entirely. If the message at church starts to hit too close to home, we switch to another church. And if that doesn't solve it, some of us stop going to church altogether.

What are we really trying to accomplish by acting this way? We are trying to control the situation by silencing the voices by killing the relationship. This approach works for human relationships, but what happens when you can't mute, cancel, or move away from the other person? What if the voice nagging you is God? That is what Jesus addresses with the Parable of the Wicked Tenants.

A vineyard owner decided to lease his land to some tenants while he embarked on a long journey. It's a simple arrangement—he provides the land, the vines, and the means for a great harvest. All he asks is a portion of the fruit in return.

This owner didn't just own the vineyard—he planted it himself. He had a personal connection to the land. He chose the spot, prepared the soil, and planted the vines with his own hands. From the beginning, this vineyard was his. So, when he entrusts it to these tenants, it's not just a business deal—it's a relationship of trust. He's giving them something valuable, something he's personally invested in. He expects them to treat it with the same care and respect that he did.

At harvest time, the owner sends a servant to collect what is rightfully his. Verse 10 says, "When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants so that they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard."

Now, was the owner's request unreasonable? Absolutely not! It was still his vineyard. According to the terms of the contract, he wasn't asking for anything beyond what was agreed upon. In fact, this arrangement benefited the tenants—they were allowed to use the owner's property as if it were their own, enjoying the fruits of his labor.

But the tenants, driven by greed, beat the servant and send him away empty-handed. Undeterred, the owner sends another servant, only for him to be treated even worse. The pattern repeats with a third servant, who is wounded and cast out. At this point, the vineyard owner makes a decision that seems almost reckless. Instead of calling in the authorities or retaliating with force, he decides to send his son. "They will respect my son," he reasons.

But the tenants see an opportunity. "This is the heir," they say to themselves. "If we kill him, the inheritance will be ours." And so, they throw the son out of the vineyard and kill him, believing they have secured their future.

Jesus concludes the story with a question: "What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them?" The answer is obvious. The owner will come and destroy those wicked tenants and give the vineyard to others.

This story, specifically the actions of the stewards towards the owner and the owner towards the stewards, defies human logic.

The decision of the vineyard owner is baffling. Why would he send his son after everything that had happened? In human terms, it doesn't make sense. But in divine terms, it reveals the depths of God's grace and love. The owner's decision is a picture of God's willingness to go to extraordinary lengths to reconcile with humanity. He sent Jesus, His Son, not because it was logical, but because His love and grace are so profound that He offers Himself even to those who have repeatedly rejected Him.

This is the nature of God's love. It's extravagant, irrational, even reckless. It defies human wisdom and logic. God's grace doesn't calculate the odds; it doesn't weigh the potential for loss. It simply gives and gives and gives again.

But the plan of the tenants is just as irrational, though for entirely different reasons. They seem to think that by killing the heir, they will inherit the vineyard. In what world does killing the owner's son make you the new owner? Their actions reveal the depth of their delusion, a picture of how sin warps our thinking. Sin leads us to believe we can control our lives, our destinies, and even God's blessings, all while rejecting the One to whom they rightfully belong.

Their decision to kill the son was a desperate act of self-preservation that only sealed their fate. The irony is sharp: in killing the son, they think they've secured their future, but they've only assured their destruction.

Part 13: The Heart of a Killer

The parable is a direct foreshadowing of what would soon happen to Jesus. Like the son in the story, Jesus would be taken outside the city, rejected, and crucified. Yet, even in this rejection, God's plan unfolds. What seems like defeat becomes the pathway to victory. Jesus' death, which looks like a victory for sin and darkness, is actually the means by which God reconciles the world to Himself.

So, what do we do with this story? At its heart, this parable isn't just about some wicked tenants long ago; it's about us. How often do we, like the tenants, try to silence God's voice in our lives? How often do we attempt to act like owners when we are actually just stewards?

Maybe we don't beat up God's messengers or literally kill anyone, but we find other ways to shut out His voice. We dismiss the convicting word of Scripture, rationalize away the prompting of the Holy Spirit, or avoid those who speak the truth in love.

But what happens when the voice we're trying to silence isn't a human voice but the voice of God Himself? God's voice will not be silenced. He will keep calling, keep sending, keep reaching out. His love is relentless. Yet, there comes a point when the offer of grace has been spurned one too many times, and judgment becomes the only response left.

Jesus' parable forces us to confront the uncomfortable reality of our resistance to God's grace. The truth is, God's message will find us wherever we are—whether in the church pew, at home, or in the quiet of our hearts. When it does, we have a choice: Will we repent and turn back to Him, or will we continue to act like an owner instead of a steward?



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