

# Matthew 21:33-46

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Preacher: Ray Kelly

[ 0 : 00 ]     Good morning. It's so nice to see some new faces. Very, very, very much welcome. I hope you're blessed.

I also hope for your sake that I managed to pull out of this passage of Scripture the passion I felt when I studied it.!

So we're in Matthew 21. We're going to start at verse 33. So those of you who are not normally here, we've been going through Matthew's Gospel.

And so we're now in the last week of Jesus's life. I think we're at about Wednesday, but I could be wrong by 24 hours. I'm not that certain.

And what we have had thus far, immediately preceding the passage we're about to study, we've had Jesus leaving the Jews with absolutely no reason at all to reject Jesus.

[ 1 : 12 ]     John the Baptist in the early part of Matthew's Gospel, John the Baptist had drawn out the fact that Jesus was the Messiah.

He said, behold, the Lamb of God who comes to take away the sins of the world. So John the Baptist was marked out as the forerunner of the Messiah, as prophesied in the Old Testament.

And of course, the Jewish leaders had this decision to make when he asked them that awkward question. Was the baptism of John from man or from heaven? And they didn't want to say heaven because then they'd have to admit that John the Baptist was right.

But they didn't want to say man because the people would round on them because they had the people perceived that John the Baptist was a prophet. So he kind of put them in this really awkward corner.

And over the time up to this point in Matthew's Gospel, he'd healed the sick. He'd brought hearing to the deaf. He'd healed and cast out the dumb spirits, which incidentally was a miracle specifically attributed to Messiah by the Jewish teachers.

[ 2 : 21 ]     So the very people who were teaching that this was a messianic miracle were saying, no, no, no, he didn't. This isn't Messiah. He's doing this by the power of Beelzebub. You'll find that in Matthew 12.

He'd raised the dead. He'd healed the blind, including someone who was born blind. Another strictly messianic miracle. He'd also demonstrated his power over the natural world, controlling the weather, turning water into wine, feeding a banquet to thousands on two occasions from some very meager beginnings of just a few loaves and a few fish.

So he had showed who he was without a doubt. They had absolutely no reason to reject him other than their own corruption and hypocrisy.

And the latest thing, when they he if you remember, he cursed the fig tree. And when he cursed the fig tree, that was an analogy for Israel.

It was he was saying that like the fig tree, because Israel was always associated with the analogy of the fig tree. And he was saying like this particular fig tree, they were all leaves and no fruit.

[ 3 : 35 ] There was no fruit to come from, no fruit of righteousness, just the pretense of fruit. In other words, the leaves. As you remember, we looked at the fig tree, which produces fruit before leaves normally.

But this particular fig tree had leaves and no fruits. It was kind of all a bit back to front. So he cursed the fig tree as a metaphor for the future of Israel as to what Israel had become.

And so now we hit this passage of scripture in Matthew 21, where he hits them. Matthew, sorry, Matthew 20, Matthew 21 and the beginning of Matthew 22.

He hits them with three parables in quick succession. And we dealt with the one of them last week, which was the parable of the two sons, how Israel had become the disobedient son.

As opposed to the son who was initially disobedient, but repented. They'd become the lying son who promised to do stuff that they didn't actually do.

[ 4 : 42 ] So they were above all incredibly disrespectful of their father. And so. He was showing them in that parable that simple repentance would have restored them to their position.

It was only the fact that they were unrepentant that kept them at arm's length. And so he told them, if you recall, that they were in fact so bad that the tax gatherers and the prostitutes would gain entry to heaven ahead of them.

And in some cases, instead of them, although that's not what the scripture actually says, it says ahead of them. So the door to heaven is not barred for these people because they can still repent.

But what he was saying was, you are far more awful than you know. And it's at that point that he then says, listen to another parable.

So if we look at verse 33 of Matthew 21. And I get the impression that they haven't even really had time to draw breath.

[ 5 : 57 ] He's finished the one parable. And before they can discuss it, he's saying, listen to another parable. And this is an immediate imposition of another thought on them. It's probably worth mentioning before we read it that I believe that what the this and the next parable reveals is God's dealing with Israel.

It's specifically to Israel. However, what you'll find as we go through today's talk is that you are prophesied in this. And I find that amazing.

This is before Jesus has died. And I believe that what we're going to read is a prophecy of the coming church. More of that in a moment. So let's read it. He said, listen to another parable.

There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a wine press in it and built a tower and rented it out to the vine growers and went on a journey.

When the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine growers to receive his produce. The vine growers took his slaves and beat one and killed another and stoned a third.

[ 7 : 10 ] Again, he sent another group of slaves larger than the first, and they did the same thing to them. But afterwards, he sent his son to them, saying, they will respect my son.

But when the vine growers saw the son, they said among themselves, this is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.

They took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine growers? And they said to him, he'll bring those wretches to a wretched end and will rent out the vineyard to other vine growers who will pay him the proceeds at the proper season.

Jesus said to them, did you never read in Scripture the stone which the builders rejected? This became the chief's cornerstone. This came about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing the fruit of it. And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces.

[ 8 : 16 ] But on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust. When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they understood that he was speaking about them.

When they sought to seize him, they feared the people because they considered him to be a prophet. He decides to speak to them in a parable.

And normally a parable speaks to a mixed group of people, some of whom will understand because they are spiritually discerning and some who won't. And it's put there deliberately to cover something that they're not supposed to yet understand.

But I think because of verse 45, this is an exception in that this was deliberately spoken to them so that at the end of it, they would understand that he was speaking about them.

And it says this, there was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a wine press in it and built a tower and rented it out to the vine growers and went on a journey. I'm going to say right at the start and we'll probably revisit it as we go through.

[ 9 : 31 ] But this vineyard is Israel. Now, there are others who would argue with that. Some would say, no, the vineyard is the world. To an extent, I don't mind that.

But I believe it's Israel. And I believe it's Israel because it's talking about the nation that God planted to manage the vineyard. Sorry, the elders of Israel were supposed to manage the vineyard is what I'm trying to say.

The elders of Israel were supposed to manage the vineyard and the vineyard was supposed to grow fruit for God. And so the landowner then must be God. It must be a type of God or a representation of God.

And so God planted this vineyard, put a wall around it and dug a wine press in it and built a tower. And what we can infer from that is that this vineyard was everything it needed to be to give God the fruit he wanted to get from it.

There was nothing lacking. It was protected. It was resourced. It was overseen.

[ 10 : 36 ] The groundwork had been put in place so that the people who were tending the vines knew what they were doing if they paid attention to it and didn't get corrupted along the way.

So the vineyard has been created by the master. And it's important that there was nothing about this vineyard that the master did not own.

It didn't belong to anybody else. Other people tended it on the master's behalf. But it always belonged to the master. Now.

How do we know that this vineyard is talking about Israel? Turn to Isaiah 5 for a moment. And your Bible might have parts of verse 33 in bold, sorry, in capitalised type, which means it's a quotation from the Old Testament.

And the quotation comes. And it's only part of a sentence, actually. The bit that says planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a wine press in it and built a tower. You might find in your version of the Bible that's in capital letters.

[ 11 : 56 ] And so therefore, Jesus, when he gave this parable, he included a quotation from the Old Testament, which to most Jews who knew the Old Testament very well would have flagged up in their mind.

They think he's quoting from Isaiah. Isaiah. And so Isaiah 5 and verse 5.

So now let me tell you what I'm going to do to my vineyard. That I have not done.

Let me tell you what I'm going to do in my vineyard that I have not done in it. Why? When I expected it to produce good grapes, did it produce worthless ones?

So now let me tell you what I'm going to do in my vineyard. I will remove its hedge. It will be consumed. I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground.

[ 13 : 00 ] It will lay. I will lay it waste. It will not be pruned or hoed, but briars and thorns will come up. I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it.

For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel. And the men of Judah, his delightful plant. Thus he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed.

For righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress. Stress. So. The Lord is drawing their attention to the fact that God planted what he chooses by his own description to call his vineyard.

And he planted it in its fullness that it could produce all the fruit that he wanted it to produce. And over centuries, arguably over millennia, what did it actually produce?

It didn't produce any fruit for the gospel at all. And at this point, the point that this parable is given, the leaders of Israel are hypocritical and corrupt.

[ 14 : 11 ] And they're using what they've done. And we'll return to this concept as we go through. But what they've done effectively is they have taken ownership of the vineyard that was not theirs, that belonged to the Lord.

And having taken ownership of the vineyard that wasn't theirs, they are exacting from it robbery, wealth through robbery, because they're robbing the people. And I won't rehearse all the previous studies we've done that have shown that what they were doing was utterly corrupt and were feeding themselves and making themselves wealthy at the expense of the people they should have been serving.

And so what the Lord is saying here is this is going to change. Now, this example, Israel was replete with vineyards like this.

It was a common thing for the landowner to plant his vineyard, set it up so it could work, rent it out to vine growers and, what do they call them, husbandmen, to raise those vines and to get fruit from the vines.

And then they would go off on a journey. And if you read the account in Mark and Luke, what you also get is that he went off on a long journey. In other words, he was gone a long time.

[ 15 : 33 ] Now, quite often they wouldn't return. They would send their agents to get their fruit or money, depending on the agreement. And the vine dressers who'd been working the vineyard would also keep wine or money, depending on the agreement.

But they didn't have to be there to make it happen. And it's a bit like it's a bit like when we rent out our flat and we get an agent to look after it for us. It's that kind of arrangement. So this was common, an example that would have been common to them, and therefore they would have had an easy understanding of this example.

And of course, the vine growers were then utterly dependent on the trust that they had with the people who were raising the grapes.

If they're not even there, when they send their agents to get the spoil, they could be fiddled, they could be robbed.

Or in this case, the example used was that when he sent his agents to inspect the fruit, so to speak, they killed them. Or beat them up or beat them up or threw them out or whatever, treated them harshly.

[ 16 : 44 ] So let's go back to Matthew. Matthew 21. Verse 34.

When the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine growers to receive his produce. The vine growers took his slaves and beat one and killed another and stoned a third.

Now, in the other gospel accounts, what you'll realize is that this process took place over a few years. It wasn't all in the same year, necessarily, that people came in succession.

Now, if you think of the profile of Israel, what happened with Israel is that over centuries, God sent them his prophets. And he sent them to instruct Israel and he sent them to challenge their fruitfulness over centuries.

And in so many cases, they were beaten up, they were killed, they were abused. So. If you turn with me to Hebrews 11.

[ 17 : 53 ] It's to the right of where you are, if you're not familiar with the Bible. Hebrews 11. And we're just going to read from 32 to 38.

Verse 32 to 38. Hebrews 11. Verse 32 to 38. This is the track record of what Israel did with God's prophets. For what more shall I say?

For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, and quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

Women received back their dead by resurrection, and others were tortured, not accepting their release so that they may obtain a better resurrection. And others experienced mockings and scourgings, yet also chains of imprisonment.

They were stoned. They were sawn in two. They were tempted. They were put to death with the sword. They were about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated, men of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

[ 19 : 16 ] And all of these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised. Now, that gives a synopsis of how the Jews treated God's messengers.

They went to tend the vineyard. They got mistreated. They got abused. They got absolutely, well, killed. You can't really get worse than that.

Stoned, sawn in two. So what Jesus is drawing attention to in the parable is that they have continually rejected God's word through his prophets right up to the end.

And so in the end, he sends his son. He, firstly, don't miss this.

The fact that God sent his son after all that was an amazing act of grace. When you think that the son of God, well, first of all, he sends prophets after prophets after prophets after prophets.

[ 20 : 28 ] And in every case, he loves his servants. He doesn't take lightly the death of his saints.

And yet, rather than round on Israel for many, many centuries and even millennia, he didn't react against them. He sent them more messengers and more prophets and more grace and more compassion and more kindness.

And now we are a couple of days, three days maybe before the crucifixion. And there's no time left. So in the three years around and about this time, he has sent his son.

And so the analogy used, you know, they must have been aghast when they were saying, so the vineyard owner. Sent his servants, sent more servants.

And in the end, he decided to send his son. And that must have caused a bit of an intake of breath. He did what? Sent his son when all the others have been killed. Sent his son when all the others have been killed.

[ 21 : 41 ] Why? Why? Why would anybody do that? Because he loved them. So what he's saying and he's prophesying his own demise.

We need to get back into Matthew. Because the death of Jesus is a few days away. But he's still prophesying how it's going to pan out.

Verse 37. But afterwards, he sent his son to them, saying, they will respect my son. But when the vine growers saw his son, they said among themselves, this is the heir.

Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance. So we've got this situation where they're already behaving as if they own the vineyard. There's no sense of servitude.

There's no sense of this is the vineyard that we are preparing for the Lord God so that when he comes, there will be fruit in the house of God. And they've developed this attitude that it's actually theirs.

[ 22 : 46 ] You know, this is how we make our living. This is how we get by. They are all subject to us. Hence, when they bring their sacrifices on the time of Passover, we can reject all their sacrifices.

We don't have to accept them because we can force them to buy animals from us at extortionate prices. Now, it's the sort of thing you do if you own the place. They created this illusion that they own it.

And so the whole idea of this is the heir. So when he comes for his inheritance, if we kill him, we get his inheritance. It is so satanic and it is a ploy of Satan himself.

Satan, as we know, always wanted to replace God and be someone who received the worship of men. So. So.

Having tried to preserve this illusion of ownership and then the son arrives. If we carry on reading in Matthew, it says they took him.

[ 23 : 58 ] This is verse 39. They took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Just think to the crucifixion accounts for a moment. You see, when the son was there in the vineyard and was doing everything to show that the word of God was true and everything to confirm what their real job was, which was to take the oracles of God to the Gentiles and to produce fruit for God, fruits of righteousness for God.

As all that unraveled over three years, what they did with him in the end was they beat him and then they took him outside the city and killed him.

And so this is a prophecy of his own death in the sense that we just read it in verse 39. Nine was it. They took him and threw him out of the vineyard.

Israel being the vineyard. They took him outside. And killed him. And so what he. What the parable then says, given that that happens, what is God going to do next?

What's the master going to do to these people who have taken his son, taken him outside the vineyard and killed him outside the camp, which is a direct prophecy in the Old Testament and all of the Old Testament rituals were set up that any executions had to take place outside the camp.

[ 25 : 31 ] So. Before they did that, they beat him, they scourged him. So beaten and taken out the outside the city to die.

There's this pride and arrogance that's come about among the Jews that prevents them from simply being humble.

The appropriate response here for them and for us. Was. Sorry, Lord. Got that wrong. We need to change our ways.

No sign of that. Let's get him out of the city and kill him and seize his inheritance. Then in verse 40.

Sorry, verse 41. They said to him, he'll bring those wretches to a wretched end and will rent out the vineyard to other vine growers who will pay him the proceeds at the proper season.

[ 26 : 31 ] They are telling Jesus in response to his question. They're telling him what should happen to them. They're actually confessing.

Their own situation. We are basically an unrepentant bunch. We need to change our ways and we deserve for the landowner to come and subject us, subject us to a horrible death.

They'll bring those wretches to a wretched end. What they're saying is, this is what we deserve. We deserve a wretched end. But they don't realize that's what they're saying. That's the point. They're completely blind to their own faults, despite the fact that their faults are writ large as far as Jesus is concerned.

Now, these people to whom this is addressed are the teachers of Israel. In James 3 and verse 1, what we read is that those of us who teach, we incur a much harsher judgment.

And they should have been terrified. And unfortunately, in our churches today, there are many people who preach and teach who should be terrified because they're leading people away from God's word and they're leading people astray.

[ 27 : 59 ] And sometimes they're doing it for personal gain, just like these people did. And God will not tolerate that. It won't end well. It is also the one scripture that keeps me very circumspect about what I say, because I actually believe it's true.

And I do fear God. And I would hate to say stuff from the front of this church that leads people astray or to do it for personal gain or any other spurious reason.

But note something else, which I think is glorious. And that is, he says, verse 40, what will he do to those vine growers?

And they said, he will bring those wretches to a wretched end and he will rent out the vineyard to other vine growers who will pay the proceeds at the proper season.

He's coming back. The job is not done. He's coming back. And he's coming back. Now, I have to be careful, as I say, this next part, because people could read into it things that I don't mean.

[ 29 : 18 ] But he's coming back. To grow that vineyard through another vine grower other than Israel. And lots of people would say, oh, that's replacement theology.

We'll deal with that in a moment. But it's not what I mean. OK, God has not finished with Israel. And we will look. We'll look at that in a moment. But what God did do with Israel is he put them on the back burner.

He effectively, he stopped them from doing what they were supposed to be doing at this time. And over the next 70 years or so. No, the next 40 years or so.

What he did was he took away their kingdom from them. And he put it in the hands of the church. And AD 70, Israel was effectively wiped off the map for a good length of time and wasn't restored until 1948.

So the vineyard, the vine growers were replaced by you lot, by the church.

[ 30 : 27 ] Which means we have a job to do. Which is to grow vines. And to make vines fruitful. We'll turn to that in a moment. But note, the master intends to return and there will be a day of judgment.

There will be a day when he exacts his price from the vine growers and says, where's my fruit? And the teachers of Israel will face a stricter judgment because they are the teachers of Israel.

And so they have a duty to be diligent in their job of teaching. Just as we have a job to be diligent. I have a job if I'm to teach here. I have a job to be diligent in the stuff that I prepare.

But we all have a job to be diligent so that we understand the scriptures. So that when we share those scriptures with each other or with the unsaved. We're telling them the truth.

So Jesus then goes on and quotes from Psalm 118. Now you remember in the triumphal entry, they all gathered around the approaching Jesus who was coming in on a donkey's colt.

[ 31 : 43 ] And they all started crying out from Psalm 118. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. That is a quotation from Psalm 118.

And it means Lord save. Lord save. Hosanna means Lord save. And they weren't actually, from what we can deduce, they weren't expecting to be saved from their sins.

They were expecting to be saved from Rome. They were expecting a military victory. But Jesus was not focused on military victory when he came into the city. He was focused on saving humanity from their sins.

But he now quotes from the same psalm that they'd been crying out a few days earlier. From verse 20 and 23. And he says, Did you never, the sarcasm in this.

Did you never read in the scriptures? Of course they'd read it in the scriptures. Did you never read in the scriptures? The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief cornerstone. And this came about from the Lord.

[ 32 : 51 ] And it is marvellous in our eyes. Just in case there's someone in the room that doesn't really understand the analogy here.

The cornerstone of a building is the first one laid. So you put the foundation down and you lay the first stone. And the first stone has to be perfect.

Has to be absolutely perfect. It has to be perfectly plumb. It has to be perfectly aligned. It has to be perfectly level. Because the whole of the rest of the building is taken off that first stone.

So if you have a wonky cornerstone, you finish up at best with a wonky building. But the cornerstone has to be perfect.

And so this prophecy in Psalm 118. The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. Is saying to them, you are rejecting the stone that will become the chief cornerstone.

[ 34 : 00 ] In other words, you're rejecting the stone that will be perfect, level, plumb, absolutely suited for its task.

And so the point is that the people to whom this is addressed should have been the ones laying that cornerstone.

And instead they were rejecting him. And I use the word him because the stone was a reflection of Jesus. So he says, this came about from the Lord and it is marvelous in our eyes.

So this leads to quite a bit of confusion. Because the stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

And this is something the Lord brought about. So this is talking about the Lord bringing about the rejection of the cornerstone, as well as the replacement of the cornerstone as the chief cornerstone.

[ 35 : 08 ] It's the whole process is from the Lord. Now that can cause us to think, I don't get this. Why? How does that unravel?



How does that unravel? Turn with me to Romans 11. We're going to read quite a big chunk of Romans 11.

And we're going to start with verse 7. And this is about Israel. So this speaks directly about Israel and shows us that God has not yet finished with Israel.

What then? What? Israel is seeking. It has not obtained. But those who were chosen obtained it. And the rest were hardened.

Just as it is written, God gave them a spirit of stupor. Eyes to see. Sorry. Eyes to see not and ears to hear not down to this very day.

[ 36 : 13 ] And David says, let their table become a snare and a trap and a stumbling block and a retribution to them. Let their eyes be darkened to see not. And bend their backs forever.

So just to begin with here, God is the one who's putting a sense of stupor on them. Why would he do that? Well, for the same reason as he did it to Pharaoh in Egypt, which is that their hearts were hardened against the Lord.

And eventually the Lord says, OK, I'm now going to give you over to this hardness and you'll have to work it through. So they were not going to repent.

They were not going to turn back. So God brings the axe down and says, right, that's an end of it. Your hearts are now hardened. So the Lord has hardened their hearts for their own good. And the potted version is that he then releases the church to do the work that they should have done.

And if we read Romans 11, 11, what we read is that we're supposed to be making the Jews jealous. Make them crave to be back in favour with God. Let's read on.

[ 37 : 21 ] Verse 11. I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be.

But by their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make them jealous. Now, if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfilment be?

But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles in as much as I am the apostle of the Gentiles. I magnify my ministry. If somehow I might move to jealousy, my fellow countrymen, and save some of them.

For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also.

And if the root is holy, the branches are too. But if some of the branches were broken off and you being a wild olive were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant towards the branches.

[ 38 : 34 ] But if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root that supports you. See, the Bible tells us salvation is from the Jews. And the Jews have had their hearts hardened and have been kind of put on the back burner so that the Gentile church can get on with preaching the gospel.

However, if we go down the same route that they did and become arrogant and act as if we own the place and lord it over people and corruptly exact money from people, that's never going to happen in the Christian church, is it?

It's rife in the Christian church. May it never be the case here, but it is rife in the Christian church that people who call themselves apostles and who call themselves servants of God are wrecking the church and wrecking people's faith.

And it is abysmal. We are under, I believe, the same rules as the previous vine dressers. The church has become the new vine dressers and the new vine dressers need to look after the vine properly.

And that involves no corruption, no lies, no hypocrisy. It involves humility. It involves compassion. It involves us crying for the lost.

[ 39 : 52 ] Reading on. Where did I get to? Verse 25. For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery so that you will not be wise in your own estimation that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

So all Israel will be saved, just as it is written, and the deliverer will come from Zion. He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. This is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.

From the standpoint of the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But from the standpoint of God's choice, they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. Let us not get a bad attitude to Israel.

Israel, the Bible tells us Israel is God's firstborn son. Let us not get a bad attitude to Israel. Let us accept that their hearts have been hardened for now, and our job is to nurture them like vines and draw great fruit from them if we get the opportunity.

Verse 29. The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. We can't disparage people, a people, who God has gifted, even though that gift is on the back burner for the moment.

[ 41 : 22 ] Those gifts are irrevocable. Israel will have its day again. For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, so these also have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you, they might also now be shown mercy.

For God has shut up all disobedience, so that he may show mercy to all. The whole thing should be drenched in mercy. And we shouldn't get an arrogant position in our hearts above the vineyard of God, which at the moment is languishing under nettles.

But it's not finished yet. So in verse 43 in Matthew, it says, Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to people producing the fruit of it.

I believe that prophesies of us. And we need to not get proud about that, but to be diligent about that, to use every opportunity to make sure we know the word of God and can feed the people that God wants to grow fruit from.

At the start, we read about this vineyard that had its tower and its wall around it and so on. It speaks of protection. Now in John 4 verse 22, we read that salvation is from the Jews.

[ 42 : 53 ] God protected the vineyard and made sure that there was ample provision to feed the fruit that was coming. We must never lose sight of that or be ungrateful for it.

If we just turn for a moment to Acts 4, just to confirm for you, Acts chapter 4 verses 10 to 12, Let it be known, Peter is preaching in Israel about Jesus.

And in verse 10 says this, Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, whom you crucified, carted him out the city, duft him up, killed him, let it be known to all of you, to all the people of Israel, that is, by the name of Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by this name, this man stands here before you in good health.

He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.

The apostle Peter identifies Jesus as this cornerstone. And so it's a, there's a New Testament confirmation of this. So he then issues them this dire warning in Matthew, doesn't he?

[ 44 : 36 ] He says, those who fall upon this stone will be broken and those who, upon whom this stone falls, will also be broken to pieces. And this references Isaiah 8, verses 14 and 15, which is, you can read it when you get home, is a prophecy about the fall of Israel and the preservation of a believing remnant.

And anyone upon whom this stone falls will be scattered like dust. And that's exactly what happened in AD 70.

The Jews weren't just defeated, they were scattered throughout the world. And so in verse 45 in Matthew, it just then seems to dawn on them that they realise he's speaking about them.

He's talking about us. What a cheek, fancy talking about us like that. And note their response.

And unfortunately, I have to say, I have no confidence whatsoever that the same response wouldn't be forthcoming from many churches today. Their response is not to go, oh my Lord, we've offended God.

[ 45 : 47 ] We need to repent. We need to drop on our knees. We need to sort ourselves out. None of that we want to seize him. But we're afraid of the people. Response is completely inappropriate.

And unfortunately, we live in a time when you can't trust the church either to make a right response. We just have to make sure that we, as a little enclave of the church, make a right response.

So I'll finish with this application. And it's a very simple application. It's to understand we are the new tenant farmers. So our job is to nurture the crop of God as though they are precious and to encourage fruit from them.

Not to use or abuse them. Not to own them. Not to manipulate them. Not to dominate them. A vine does not look after its gardeners.

What you have with this taking pecuniary advantage of the church is instead of instead of the gardens looking after the vine, the vine finishes up looking after the gardeners.

[ 46 : 56 ] Not voluntarily, I have to say, but they get they finish up parting with money and things and emotions and everything else to look after the gardeners rather than the gardeners looking after the vine.

And so many so-called churches have become like the Jews of this day and they bear the name of Christ but only as leaves.

We turn into the parable of sorry, not the parable but the account of the cursed fig tree. They bear the name of Christ like leaves but they don't have a fruit of righteousness.

So let us never be among them. Let us look for the fruit of righteousness for God to grow that fruit in us and for us to grow that fruit wherever we go. Father, thank you for this word.

I don't know whether I did it justice but you are so amazing and we are so privileged to be in the role of the new vine dressers.

[ 47 : 57 ] and I pray that we would never usurp that role that we would count it as an honour and a duty and that we would always look to you to guide us as to how to grow the fruit in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.