

The Gospel According to
Luke

“Vintage Jesus”

Chapter 20:9-19

Introduction

God enjoys hanging-out with you. We like to call hanging-out with God by its fancy biblical name – *Fellowship*. We talk about ‘having fellowship’ with God. It’s accurate – but it sounds a little too formal.

Formality is in vogue, by the way. More-and-more evangelical Churches are rediscovering old liturgies and traditions. There’s a lot of talk about how we disrespect God by conducting ourselves too casually in Church. My use of the words “hanging-out with God” would infuriate some people. I think it’s an overreaction.

God created a universe... to sustain a planet... upon which He planted a garden... within which He placed Adam and Eve... **so He could hang-out with them every day.**

Of all the possible environments God could have created, He chose a garden. He didn’t choose a temple, for example, with rites and rituals. He chose a garden; and not just any garden. A perfect garden, that watered itself, where nothing ever died, where there were no weeds or pests or parasites. He didn’t want Adam and Eve to have to *work*, but only to *walk* with Him.

Fast forward from the Garden of Eden to God’s choosing the nation of Israel to be a special people for Him on the earth. He started with Abraham, who would be the father of the nation. Abraham was called **the friend of God** (James 2:23). A friend is someone you like to hang-out with.

In describing the nation of Israel that descended from Abraham, God called them His **vineyard**. The most famous passage describing

Israel as the Lord's vineyard is found in Isaiah 5:1-7. Parts of it read like this:

Isaiah 5:1 Now let me sing to my Well-beloved a song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill.

Isaiah 5:2 He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, and also made a winepress in it; so He expected *it* to bring forth *good* grapes...

Isaiah 5:7 ...For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts *is* the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant...

God depicted Himself hanging-out in His vineyard, to enjoy its fruit.

As with His garden, something went wrong in God's vineyard. Its vinedressers – representing the leaders of Israel – had a history of refusing to obey God, and rejecting His efforts to restore them. That history was about to come to a terrible conclusion now that the Son of God was in their midst.

Were going to take a look at God's description of, and dealings with, Israel in these two parables. But we are also going to remember that God enjoys hanging-out with His people on earth; **and today that is us**, Jews and Gentiles who have believed on Jesus and who comprise what is called the Church.

We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 You Are The Field: Is God Enjoying His Fruit?, and #2 We Are The Foreigners: Are We Established On God's Foundation?

#1 You Are The Field:
Is God Enjoying His Fruit?
(20:9-16)

The crucifixion of Jesus is rapidly approaching as we read these words. The Lord was putting things into perspective; He was illustrating what was happening to Him, and why it was happening. The Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers, followed by the illustration of the rejected cornerstone, could not have been any simpler to understand. We see by the reaction of both the *listeners* and the *leaders* that it was understood.

The nation of Israel was God's **vineyard**. I read portions of Isaiah that describe Israel as His vineyard; there are other references in the Psalms, in Jeremiah, in Ezekiel, and in Hosea.

The **vinedressers** represent wicked religious and political leaders of Israel throughout her history. The **servants** represent the prophets that God sent to Israel through the centuries, to call them back to repentance. The **son** in the parable represents Jesus as the only begotten Son of God. The **vinedressers** were about to kill the **Son**; the **vineyard** would be taken away from Israel and given to non-Jewish foreigners.

Luke 20:9 Then He began to tell the people this parable: "A certain man planted a vineyard, leased it to vinedressers, and went into a far country for a long time.

Remember, from the Isaiah passage, that the vineyard was fully equipped, fully functional. God was described as digging it out, clearing the stones, planting only the choicest vines in it, erecting a tower, planting a hedge around it, and building a winepress in it.

Each of those activities provide hours of meditation! For example: How many times have you heard someone pray that God would plant a hedge about them? Well, God did plant a hedge about Israel; He has planted a hedge around you. A hedge planted around a vineyard was to keep out pests, like foxes, that would otherwise come and destroy the grapes. If things are spoiling your life... Perhaps you are not tending a portion of the hedge that God has planted to protect you?

We could go on and on just talking about hedges! The point I want to emphasize was that the vineyard was intended to produce fruit; and God wanted to come into His vineyard and enjoy His fruit.

If you are a Christian, you are familiar with the passages in the New Testament that describe your spiritual life as producing fruit. You are familiar with the fruit of the Spirit: **love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance** (Galatians 5:22-23).

God's Spirit produces His fruit in you. It's the equivalent of God planting and totally preparing the vineyard for Israel. What we sometimes forget is that the fruit is not for us; it is for God. **He enjoys the fruit that only He can produce in a human life that is yielded to His Holy Spirit.**

God enjoys His spiritual fruit. Maybe it's not a big revelation to you; maybe it's just something I need to remember. But I find that if I remember that, it puts things in a different light entirely.

For example: If God is going to produce fruit in and through my life, I need cultivating... watering... weeding... and pruning. I should therefore go to places where those things are more likely to occur – like Church and Bible Study. Sometimes I get busy with life – so busy that I have to decide if I have the time and the energy to get to Church. I weigh my priorities: I'm doing pretty well with the Lord; I'm hanging-in there. I come to the conclusion that I can afford to miss the study. It's not going to kill me.

Ah, but what if it's not just about me? What if it's about God enjoying His fruit?

1. I may not think that I need cultivating... watering... weeding... or pruning. But I'm not in a position to make that call.
2. I may be content with the state of my fruit. But when I am, I've forgotten that it is God's fruit, and that He enjoys it.

Luke 20:10 Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that they might give him some of the fruit of the vineyard...

God seeks after His fruit. He works hard in your life, putting you in *places* and through *predicaments*, that call upon you to yield to His indwelling Holy Spirit to produce His fruit.

The parable gets very historical, very Israel:

Luke 20:10 Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that they might give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the vinedressers beat him and sent *him* away empty-handed.

Luke 20:11 Again he sent another servant; and they beat him also, treated *him* shamefully, and sent *him* away empty-handed.

Luke 20:12 And again he sent a third; and they wounded him also and cast *him* out.

Throughout their history, God sent prophets to Israel to call them from their sin back to obedience. The prophets were almost always mistreated, if not killed outright:

1. We've mentioned Isaiah. He was reported to have been placed in a hollowed-out tree trunk, then sawn in two pieces.
2. Jeremiah was placed in stocks, ridiculed out in the public square. He was thrown into a pit and left to die.
3. In the New Testament Book of Hebrews, God's servants are described as being stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented... They wandered in deserts and mountains, *in dens and caves of the earth.*

Luke 20:13 "Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son. Probably they will respect *him* when they see him.'

On the surface, this was a bad idea. In the story, it revealed the awesome lengths to which God's compassion and longsuffering go to save His people. The owner of the vineyard was willing to risk the life of his son. The son willingly risked his life.

It was and is, of course, a description of God the Father sending His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to call Israel to repentance. In their case, Father and Son already knew the outcome: Jesus would come to His own people, but not be received by their leaders. He would be refused... rejected... crucified.

How could they not **respect Him when they see Him**? To see Jesus was to see God in human flesh. The hardness of a human heart is beyond that of the hardest substance known to man. Sin is the world's worst hardening agent.

Luke 20:14 But when the vinedressers saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.'

Luke 20:15 So they cast him out of the vineyard and killed *him*. Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do to them?

Luke 20:16 He will come and destroy those vinedressers and give the vineyard to others.” And when they heard *it* they said, “Certainly not!”

The listeners knew the meaning of the story. They knew Israel was God’s vineyard – and that Jesus was representing the son. Their exclamation *Certainly not!* tells us they understood it.

God did take the **vineyard** away from Israel. In 70AD, Titus and the Roman legions overran and overthrew Jerusalem. The Jews were scattered all over the planet for almost two thousand years. God is not through with Israel as a nation, or the Jews as His special people. But He is not among them, enjoying His fruit.

Instead and in the mean time, God has turned to the **others**. When you read the Book of Acts, you see Israel’s rejection of Jesus even *after* His resurrection; and you see the message of God’s salvation go out beyond Israel to the Gentiles – to the non-Jewish foreigners.

We live in the time between Israel’s official rejection of Jesus and His return to the earth. During this time God still enjoys fruit – but it’s the fruit of the Spirit He produces in **your** life. You are His vineyard; you are His field.

God makes you fruitful to enjoy His fruit. He does not need you; you do not add anything to the glory of God. But in a very profound sense, God enjoys hanging-out with you. Much more so than we enjoy hanging-out with even the very best of friends – *and we enjoy that a lot!*

Next time you think of a spiritual duty or discipline... Think of it as hanging-out with God.

Back to our verses: The listeners understood Jesus was saying that God’s vineyard would be given to foreigners.

#2 We Are The Foreigners: Are We Established On God's Foundation?

Jesus had just said that the vineyard would be given to foreigners. He always gave a biblical basis for His comments. Was that to be found in God's Word?

Yes it was – in the verses regarding the rejected cornerstone that would eventually hurtle through history to grind many to powder!

Luke 20:17 Then He looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written:
*'The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone?'*

Jesus quoted verses from Psalm 118. It was Passover season; Psalm 118 was one of the psalms recited by the pilgrims approaching Jerusalem prior to Passover. The Jewish leaders had been reciting this portion of it for years, without understanding it. Just a day or so earlier, the multitudes had applied portions of Psalm 118 to Jesus, declaring that they believed Him to be their promised Messiah.

Jesus quoted this passage and said it was a prophecy of His rejection. It was His scriptural basis for saying that the vineyard would be taken from Israel and given to foreigners. The **son** of the parable became the **stone** of this prophecy; the **vinedressers** of the parable became the **builders**.

If Jesus always had a biblical basis for what He said and did... *How much more should we!* It needs to be a solid biblical basis.

Why would **builders** reject a **chief cornerstone**? If we understand a cornerstone to be a foundation stone, there are many possible reasons:

1. First, builders would reject it if they didn't think it fit right. Jesus was certainly not the type of Savior they were expecting. He did not 'fit' their expectations.
2. Second, builders would reject it if it lacked a certain beauty. Jesus was common, ordinary; He wasn't even educated. They wanted someone more to their liking.

3. Third, builders would reject it if they didn't think it could support the structure. Jesus was about to fulfill and finish all the Old Testament symbolism. Their whole system of doing things was about to be changed. They liked their system! They wanted it to be supported, not fulfilled.

Though they would reject Jesus, God would establish Him. Listen to this passage from Ephesians 2:19-21,

Ephesians 2:19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,
Ephesians 2:20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone**,
Ephesians 2:21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,

We were once **foreigners**. But after the leaders of Israel rejected Jesus, God began to build His Church – with Jesus as the foundation, as the chief cornerstone. **We are His Temple on earth.**

All this talk about prophetic stones got Jesus thinking about another prophecy:

Luke 20:18 **Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."**

The prophet Daniel (2:34-35) spoke of a **stone** that hurtled down from heaven upon the kingdoms of the world and destroyed them. The **stone** then became a mountain that filled the whole earth.

Weird, I know; but it was descriptive. Jesus was and is the **stone** that will one day hurtle down from heaven to destroy the kingdoms of the earth. He is the mountain whose kingdom will fill the earth.

In the mean time... If you **fall on that stone**; if you fall on Jesus; you **will be broken**. This is not a good brokenness; it's a bad brokenness. Jesus is describing people who stumble over Him because they refuse to acknowledge their sin and need for a Savior.

If you fall on Him, **He will fall on you!** **Grind him to powder** is a warning about the danger you are in if you reject the Lord. You will be lost for all eternity.

One thing I like about this section is how Jesus found Himself everywhere in the Bible. **We should look for Him on every page.**

Luke 20:19 And the chief priests and the scribes that very hour sought to lay hands on Him, but they feared the people - for they knew He had spoken this parable against them.

They wanted to commit **Deicide**; they wanted to murder God.

It's interesting that **they feared the people**, but they did not fear God. You should, of course, fear God – then you will never fear anyone else.

The fear of man too often guides and directs Churches, rather than the fear of God.

We should constantly review our efforts as a Church, to be sure that the Lord really is at the foundation of everything we are doing:

1. On the one hand, we can get too involved with our own traditions. We cling to them long after Jesus has asked us to move along into something more contemporary.
2. On the other hand, we can get too influenced with current trends. We adopt them even though they have no biblical foundation – simply because they seem to 'work' on some level.

Traditions and *trends* are not always wrong; but they are worth reviewing to be certain Jesus is their foundation.

Applying the Word...

If you are a Christian... Other believers might be suggesting to you that you don't show enough respect for God, because your worship is casual. Of course, it is possible to be too casual. But it's usually more the case that we become too formal. Hang-out with God.

If you are not a believer... Jesus is the stone, whether you want to believe it or not. Why stumble over Him now, and risk being ground into powder? He's calling out to you – like He did to Adam and Eve after they sinned. Show yourself to Him.