

Introduction:

- The start of three confrontational parables aimed against the religious leaders of the day. Unlike Mark and Luke, Matthew takes these three parable and puts them together to for a impressive and startling body of teaching.
 - All three parable focus on the failure of Jewish leadership to respond to God's call and the consequences to future generations.
 - All three parable compare: one, those who feel they have a right to their privileged position and those who unexpectedly find themselves promoted. *"Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said to Him, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you."* (Matthew 21:31, NKJV)
 - All three parable radically show how the people of God in the future will differ from the people of God of the day.
- What Jesus stresses in these three parables has already been outlined in: *"And I tell you this, that many Gentiles will come from all over the world—from east and west—and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the feast in the Kingdom of Heaven. But many Israelites—those for whom the Kingdom was prepared—will be thrown into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* (Matthew 8:11-12, NLT)
- Text Mt 21:27-ff. We need to remember that there is no break between verses 27 and 28.

I. My Two Sons

- A. The endorsement of John the Baptist.
 1. We need to also recognize the continuity of Matthews thought from vs. 24 John the Baptist to 21:32 back to John the Baptist.
 2. The people's response to Johns preaching determined whether they entered the Kingdom of Heaven or not. (cf. 5:20; 7:21-23; 8:11-12; 18:3; 19:23-24).
- B. The parable itself is made up of verses 28-30. But is framed by two questions:
 1. What do you think about this? v 28
 2. Which of the two obey his father? v 31
 3. Israel is the vineyard. We have already seen this in 20:1-ff Parable of the equally paid laborers.
 - a) "The implied fault of the chief priests and elders, then, is not simply the inconsistency of their behavior but their failure to fulfill their God-given role as leaders of Israel". NICNT
 - b) Vs 31-32 are Jesus verdict to the religious leaders. They are basically excluded from the Kingdom and not just demoted.
 4. God is the Lord. vs 30 Sir-Gr Kyrios
- C. Jesus charges them with not having lived up to their answer. Their reading of the story, he implies, is right, but their correct thinking is shown to be false by their actual behavior.
 1. In light of what Jesus has already spoken about doing the will of God, He once again 'sets up' the religious leaders to step into the truth.
 - a) *"Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter."* (Matthew 7:21, NLT)
 - b) *"Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother!"* (Matthew 12:50, NLT)

- c) As they share their answer we are lead to remember Nathan the prophets 'set up' of David.
- 2. The consequence of their actions:
 - a) They will be behind corrupt tax collectors and prostitutes getting into heaven.
 - b) Vs. 31 "Go before"-Gr. *Proago* to be lead. If you get in it will be corrupt tax collectors and prostitutes that lead you in! What a slam to these religious leaders! We can't argue that they will get in from this passage. There are to many other passages that lead us to believe otherwise...such as:
 - c) "In the parable of 25:1-12 those who go in first enjoy the feast, but the door is shut before the others get there. And in 7:21-23 the fate of those who do not "do the will of my Father" is to be excluded from the kingdom of heaven." NICNT *Proago* may be seen as mercy on the part of Jesus to lead these religious leaders to salvation by repenting.
- 3. John the Baptist came to show men how to live the right way (righteously). And in so doing many repented and began to live rightly. The religious leaders refused his message and repentance. They should have seen the 'move of God' in how the common man was coming into the Kingdom!

II. **Bad Farmers** Mt 21:33-46

A. Opening comments on the parable.

- 1. This is the most sever of Jesus comments. "*I tell you, the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation that will produce the proper fruit.*" (Matthew 21:43, NLT)
- 2. The parable also moves away from everyday life when the farmers beat the owners slaves and kill his son.
- 3. The symbolism in the parable begins to reveal Jesus future execution by the religious leaders of the day.

B. Parts of the parable

- 1. Again we are in the vineyard. The vineyard is Israel. This is the third vineyard parable in Matthew.
 - a) In it is seen Is 5:2-ff so there would great familiarity with this scripture. As in Isaiah this parable will end with disappointment in Israel religious leaders.
 - b) In Is. the fruit is bad. In our parable the tenants are bad.
 - c) In Is. the vineyard is destroyed in our parable it is given to new tenants.
 - d) Therefore in this parable there remains hope for the future.
- 2. A key understanding of this parable's "*interpretation is strengthened by noting the insistent repetition of the word "fruit" (vv. 34, 41, 43) to describe what the owner requires of his tenants.*" NICNT
 - a) The term fruit has recurred throughout the Gospel to describe what God requires of his people. (3:8, 10; 7:16-20; 12:33; 13:8, 23, 26)
 - b) And the lack of fruit to describe Israels religious leaders. 21:18-20
- 3. The tenants are the current failed Jerusalem leadership.
 - a) We are reminded of Is. 14:13, "I will arise, I will ascend..."
 - b) To kill the son is an act of defiance to the father.
- 4. The servants are the prophets that came before.

- a) They were beaten.
 - b) They were killed.
 5. The Son is Jesus. The Son is the last Word to Israel. Heb 1:1-2.
 6. ***What will be done to the farmers? They will be destroyed by a horrible death. Jesus will answer this question in vs. 43.
- C. The Rejected Stone
1. vs 42 *"The psalm quotation adds an element which is missing from the story: if the same stone which is rejected will become the cornerstone, then the son who is rejected may also be expected to be vindicated and to replace the present leadership."* NICNT Matthew; France It is this verse that points us beyond the death of Jesus to the resurrection.
 2. The new nation in vs 43 may be understood to be the people who follow the risen Christ.
 3. There is thus, in this parable, a bold Christology of rejection and vindication, of death and resurrection, and its main focus is in the parable's character of the owner's son.
 4. Jesus now makes clear and connects the dots. You will be destroyed and the a new nation will take your place. The vineyard is not destroyed but given a new lease on life!
- D. Obviously the priests and Pharisees realize they have just been called "bad farmers." A bad farmer is one who cannot grow a crop.

Conclusion:

- The old tenants lose their place because they fail to produce fruit.
- Lets be that new nation. Lets bare fruit in Christ Jesus.