

1. Jesus told them the parable of the tenants and the vineyard.
 - a. This parable is set in a series of parables in the temple before the chief priests and elders.
 - b. The parable tells of a landowner leasing a field with a winepress and winery to the workers of the field. After building the field and the winepress, the landowner leaves town.
 - c. At the end of the season he sends some servants to come and collect the produce from his field.
 - d. The workers leased the field, which means that they would have a stake in the produce. They would be paid for their efforts. So this wasn't an issue of the workers wanting the fruits of their labor; but an issue of the workers wanting more than what is rightfully theirs.
 - e. When the servants come to get the produce, some are run off and others are killed. The tenants have decided that they don't need the owner anymore. They got his land, what do they need him for?
 - f. Finally the landowner sends his son to reclaim his goods. But the tenants kill the son.
2. The chief priests and the elders agree that the tenants would be destroyed for such action.
 - a. Jesus asked the chief priests and elders what they thought would happen in this situation. They didn't hesitate, but all agreed that the "wretches will be put to a miserable death" and the land will be leased to those who will give the produce to the landowner.
 - b. Of course this was the answer. Anyone hearing this story would have a similar answer. Perhaps some wouldn't say "the wretches will be put to a miserable death." But surely everyone would agree that justice must be served for this egregious crime.
3. Jesus told them that they were the tenants, and that the field would be given to those who bear fruit.
 - a. This is one of those cases where Jesus sets up a situation that there is just no getting out of. The chief priests and elders were already at odds with Jesus from the previous passages leading up to this one. Yet the scenario Jesus set up didn't allow them to answer any way other than they did.
 - b. Even the imagery would be unmistakable to the religious leaders. The image of a field flowing with good wine was a common understanding for Israel itself. So in telling the story, Jesus isn't being very subtle about whom he is referring to.
 - c. This parable is set in the context of the cursing of the fig tree, which is symbolic of Jesus cursing Israel for a failure to produce fruit. So after symbolically cursing Israel for their failure to produce good and godly fruit in their lives; Jesus confronts the religious leaders of Israel and offers them the same curse.

- d. Jesus was even being specific about things Israel had done. God had given Israel the promised land as a blessing and inheritance. Israel had not only disobeyed God, but when he sent the prophets to call them back to their covenant- to hold them accountable to the terms of their lease, which were pretty clear in the Mosaic covenant- the ignored, threatened, and even killed those prophets.
 - e. He told them that indeed the landowner would take the field and give it to those that would produce fruit. This meant that they, the chief priests and elders, and all of Israel, were indeed condemned for a failure to produce the good fruits of righteousness in their lives. They had failed to follow their God, and God was going to finally hand the vineyard over to new tenants.
4. We must bear fruit or we will have the field taken from us as well.
- a. The Christian Church is the beneficiary of the new lease on the field. As Christians we have been given the field with the winepress by a landowner who expects us to grow and produce fruit.
 - b. When Jesus told the chief priests and elders that the field would be taken from them and given to those who bear fruit, it had two important meanings.
 - i. First, it meant that the Jews were no longer the chosen people of God's inheritance. They thought his Kingdom was theirs. They didn't realize it was on lease, and would be taken back if they disobeyed. God was opening a new way by which his people would be known.
 - 1. This doesn't mean that Jews weren't eligible for God's grace anymore. It meant that the nation of Israel was being stripped of its inheritance as a whole. No more would sharing Abraham's blood be enough. It was time for them to share Abraham's faith and his righteousness.
 - ii. Second, it stands as a statement that any who wish to be included in the inheritance must bear good fruit. The land won't just be given to someone else. It will be given to those who will bear fruit.
 - c. Remember, this was about more than Israel not following all of their overbearing God's rules. This was also a prediction by Jesus that Israel would become so apostate- so at odds with their God, that they would try to steal God's kingdom for themselves by killing his son. This is about the reality of rejecting Jesus as God's Son, and as the rightful heir to the kingdom.
 - i. Jesus said as much, "Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures: `The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes'? Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom.'"

- d. We know that as Christians we are given the lease that Israel rejected throughout their history, culminating in their execution of Jesus, the landowner's son. But we have to understand that while we have received the vineyard through God's grace in giving it to us, we are still expected to produce the fruits of righteousness.
 - i. We gain the vineyard apart from our good fruit, but we are expected to yield good fruit as the tenants. This is the same as it was with Israel. They were already the tenants, yet lease was revoked for their failure to produce good fruit- to obey God and live lives of righteousness. They weren't made tenants of the promised land because of their good fruit, but before they had ever yielded fruit of any kind.
- e. As the tenants- the lease holders- of the vineyard we must commit ourselves to good works and faithfulness to God's word. Though in his grace and great mercy, God has seen fit to impute to us the good fruits of Christ's righteousness. And even still, that isn't an excuse for us to fail to produce the good fruit of righteousness. Because of the immense and great gift we have received we should be overjoyed at living lives that are pleasing to our heavenly Father.
- f. Therefore, as tenants of his vineyard- as joint heirs with Christ of his Kingdom- we must, first and foremost, love God and worship and glorify him. We must love our neighbors as ourselves. We must share the gospel message with others, that they might become tenants of this field as well. And the good fruits of godliness and righteousness must be present, so that God can be glorified through our lives.