

Explore the Bible: April 18

Cornerstone • Luke 20:9-19

By Laura Lee Leathers



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Recently I heard the song, He Came to Me (words and music by Squire Parsons). Here is the chorus: “He came to me...When I could not come to where He was, He came to me. That’s why He died on Calvary, when I could not come to where He was, He came to me.”

Jesus came, bringing salvation for everyone. Rejection of this biblical truth will bring God’s eternal condemnation in hell. John 14:6 is clear – there is only one way, and that is through Jesus Christ, not universalism (the belief that all will be saved).

Today’s valuable lesson is a cautionary story for us. Before we begin The Parable of the Wickend Tenants (see Matt. 21:33-45; Mark 12:1-12), let’s define the setting. Jesus is in Jerusalem, daily teaching in the Temple courtyards (Luke 19:47). Meanwhile, the chief priests, scribes, and principal men are trying to find ways to destroy Him.

Next, we have the symbolism. The vineyard represents the Jewish nation, the landowner signifies God, the tenants are the Jewish leaders, the servants are Old Testament prophets, and the cornerstone is Jesus.

The Servants (Luke 20:9-12). Jesus told the parable for all

the people to hear. The parable's focus was "to reveal the true motivations of His religious opponents and to warn them of judgment if they did not repent" (LifeWay).

The hearers would have been familiar with a similar parable found in Isaiah 5:1-7. This passage contains a warning of judgment against Israel, who was unfaithful and disobedient. Also, it was a common practice for an owner to purchase a vineyard and lease it to tenant farmers. It took time, possibly as long as four years, before the vineyard reached maturity.

Harvest time arrives and the owner sends three different servants in succession to obtain the harvest. Rather than the tenant farmers welcoming each servant, the servants are beaten and sent away empty-handed.

This action is symbolic of God's call and the sending of the prophets to call God's people to repentance (see 1 Kings 22:24; 2 Chron. 24:20-21, 36:15-16; Neh. 9:26; Jer. 2:30). They were foretellers, "giving revelation to declare concerning future events that God would bring about. And forth-tellers, delivering God's messages of hope or warning about present conditions including during times of apostasy" (LifeWay).

The Son (Luke 20:13-16a). The third and final servant returns in his abused condition and the landowner asks with a reflective query, "What should I do?" Perhaps there was a brief pause after the question, giving the audience time to ponder what they would do and who they would send.

The landowner owner decides to send his "beloved son" (see 3:22; 9:25). Possibly the farmers would have respect for him. This verse shows the landowner's extraordinary patience and mercy with the tenants (see 2 Peter 3:9), continually trying, but this is the last opportunity the tenants have to repent.

When the son arrives at the vineyard, the tenant farmers

realize who he is. Would they recognize the rights of the son or harm him? They decide to kill him and claim the inheritance for themselves.

Why did Jesus come to us? Because His Father sent Him. Since the Garden of Eden, human rebellion has continued but one day God's patience will end and judgment will come.

Verse 15 is a foreshadowing of the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus that will soon occur. Jesus asks the challenging question, what was the owner to do with the farmers? Quickly, Jesus answers with a three-part statement: The owner will come, execute justice by killing the farmers, and give the vineyard to others – meaning the inclusion of Gentiles.

The Stone (Luke 20:16b-19). Talk about a conclusion! Looking directly at His audience, Jesus asks about the meaning of this teaching, then quotes Psalm 118:22. The word Scripture means "to write," pointing once again to the doctrine of the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The reference to the stone being rejected (Isa. 8:14-15; Dan. 2:34-35, 44-45) alludes to crushing those who are opponents of God. The rejection of Jesus means a person will be broken to pieces, but those who believe in Jesus will become living stones (see 1 Pet. 2:5). For the church, Jesus is the foundation stone and the chief cornerstone (1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20).

The scribes and chief priests "knew he had told this parable against them." The description of the wicked tenants, filled as it is with anger and hate, accurately described the religious leaders of that day. Also, the leaders' fear of the people showed in their cowardly inability to take Jesus in that setting.

It's always about the Good News! God sent His beloved Son. Every individual must decide, will it be salvation or condemnation? He came for you!

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