

Murder in the Vineyard

I. Slide#1 **Announce:**

- A. Slide#2 Harvest Crusade - Last night tonight.
- B. Next Sun - Dave Eubank, FBR.
- C. Also next Sun, your High Schoolers - meeting @ our lower field @ 1:30pm. Be ready to get wet.
- D. Children's Ministry - Next week starts our new year for our teachers/helpers. Already have all but 1 teacher. But we need 20 assistants to come love on the kids.

II. Slide#3 **Intro:**

- A. I've had a number of friends that each have at least one horror story of one of their rental properties. It must be easy for landlords to get *fed up* with problem tenants. Often the law is on the renters side rather than the owners. Sometimes tenants just stop paying rent & wait for the long process of getting evicted.
 - 1. This morning we'll see how Jesus so *graciously* worked with His tenants that wouldn't pay rent.
- B. Slide#4 Here is Mark's last recorded parable. [and it was an *unusual* one]
 - 1. In consists of a quick review of Israel's history. God's Cliff Notes to *the Big Picture*.
 - 2. Jesus told it *before* they had a chance to leave the Temple mount.
 - 3. It is a parable they understood (12)
 - a) The group Jesus is addressing is the same group from 11:27. *The Chief Priests, the Scribes, the Elders...the Sanhedrin Interrogators.*
 - b) Jesus warns them of their hostile intentions & warns them of their consequences.
- C. Outline: The *Kindness, Patience, Love, Severity, Triumph, & Grace* of God.

III. Slide#5 **THE KINDNESS OF GOD (1)**

- A. Background Details:
 - 1. God is the man who planted the vineyard.
 - 2. The vineyard was a national symbol for the house of Israel. (Is.5)
 - 3. Set a hedge were stones piled up.
 - a) For protection from thieves - Ps.80:12,13 Why have You broken down her hedges, So that all who pass by the way pluck her fruit? The boar out of the woods uproots it, And the wild beast of the field devours it.
 - 4. Slide#6 Dug a place for the wine vat (winepress; see 3 illus)
 - a) In the upper vat is where the grapes were trod.
 - b) In the lower area is where they collected the juice. [These were connected by a trough]

5. **Slide#7 Built a tower.** This was a 15-20' high **watch tower** placed on the top of the terraced hill (also in Is.5:2)
 - a) This provided: shelter, protection, security, storage, & a lookout.
 6. **The vinedressers** - would **lease** the land (like sharecroppers).
 - a) They would **cultivate** & **prune** grapevines.
 - b) Here Jesus uses it to represent *Israel's religious leaders*.
 7. The owner went **into a far country** - He lived abroad. He was an **absent landowner** which were very common & **also were often resented**.
- B. **Slide#8,9 Oh one last thing**, Jesus was standing at Solomon's porch, where hung a **richly carved grapevine**, 70 cubits high, sculpted around the door which led from the porch to the Holy place.¹

IV. **Slide#10 THE PATIENCE OF GOD (2-5)**

- A. **Fruit** was the issue last chapter also. (w/the Fig Tree & Temple mount)
- B. The owner usually got 1/3 to 1/2 the produce.
 1. It was also not uncommon for **rent collectors** to be **treated badly**.
- C. Time and again God had sent prophets to Israel to gather **fruits of repentance and righteousness** **but** His prophets were *abused, wounded, and killed*.
 1. Jer.7:25,26 **From the day your ancestors left Egypt until now, I have continued to send my servants, the prophets - day in and day out. But my people have not listened to me or even tried to hear. They have been stubborn and sinful - even worse than their ancestors.**
- D. **Slide#11** Jesus parable was *no exaggeration* (eg. Isaiah, Zechariah, John the baptist)
 1. Heb.11:35-38 **And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were **sawn in two**, were tempted, were **slain with the sword**. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.**
- E. So here we have the **sad rejection of God's messengers**; **before** the **sad rejection of God's Son**.
 1. **Today** we still have the **sad rejection** of **God's messengers**...some rejections are not just *verbal*. Some result in **beatings** & even **death** for some of God's messengers.
 2. **Slide#12 TODAY'S PERS CHURCH**
 - a) **In IRAN: Christian Female Incarceration Rate Increases**

¹ Kent Hughes, pg.94, quoting Rosscup.

- b) Reports are indicating that a growing number of **Iranian Christian women** are being incarcerated. While religious minorities are frequently harassed by Iranian police, **the most severe police brutality is inflicted on female believers who are targeted for their violation of Iran's strict protocols.**
- c) A Christian activist, *Maryam Naghash*, was sent on July 15th to Iran's brutal Evin prison. She was previously sentenced to five years in prison for evangelistic activities.
- d) **CHINA: Churches Raided as Shouwang Pastors Remain under House Arrest**
- e) Local police broke up the worship service of a house church and arrested its pastor in China's *Xinjiang region* for the second time. On August 4th, at least 20 police officers shut down the worship service and arrested **Pastor Tan Wen.**
 - (1) We need to **pray** for our Christian brothers & sisters.
 - (2) We need to **write** to them; **or write** to the authorities.

F. It would have been unheard of for the owner to have been so **patient**.

- 1. **But God wouldn't turn His back on the world; He continued sending servant after servant.** (What persistent love!)

G. **Slide#13** Martin Luther said, "If I were God & the world had treated me as it treated Him, I would kick the wretched thing to pieces." :O

H. **How was God patient with you prior to your conversion?**

I. **How is God patient with you presently?**

V. **Slide#14 THE LOVE OF GOD (6-8)**

A. He(Jesus) stands in succession to the great prophets of old, **but** He is distinct from them.

- 1. **Slide#15** Spurgeon, **If you reject Him, He answers you w/tears.**
If you wound Him He bleeds out cleansing. If you kill Him; He dies to redeem.
If you bury Him; he rises again to bring resurrection. *Jesus is love made manifest.*

B. (6) **They will respect My Son** - As if the Father said, *Since **Heaven adores Him; Hell trembles at Him; Surely they will reverence My Son.***

C. (7) This verse tells of Jesus crucifixion, which was only 3 days away.

D. (8) **Cast Him out of the vineyard. *God is Dead!***

- 1. **Heb.13:12,13 Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered **outside** the gate. Therefore let us go forth to Him, **outside** the camp, bearing His reproach.**

E. **In verse 8 we find *The key*. They claimed everything as their own:** Their capacity to work, their output, the whole scene of their work & their life, namely, the vineyard itself. In the end they take credit for sunshine, rain, & good climate...heck, in the end **they** were the ones that produced this good wine!

1. Where do you **live**? That's **His** Vineyard. Where do you **work**? That's **His** Vineyard. Where do you **vacation**? That's **His** Vineyard. Where do you **rest**? That's **His** Vineyard.
- F. Slide#16a Jesus was God's ultimatum [*nothing* remains when Christ is refused]
 1. Slide#16b "You put your finger in the eye of God, when you slight His Son." Kent Hughes
- G. God the greatest Giver so loved the greatest motive the world the greatest need that He gave the greatest act His only Son the greatest gift that whosoever the greatest invitation believes in Him the greatest opportunity should not perish the greatest deliverance but have eternal life the greatest joy.

VI. Slide#17 THE SEVERITY OF GOD (9)

- A. The leaders actually *answered the question themselves* thus condemned themselves.
 1. Mt.21:41 They said to Him, He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.
 - a) Then Jesus repeated their solemn verdict.
 2. This of course was fulfilled only a few decades later.
- B. How can people say **hell** isn't fair? How can **hell** *not* make sense? They killed a Father and only Son!
 1. *God should have kicked this blue soccer ball we live on, so hard out of our atmosphere, so it burnt up immediately with a fervent heat.*
 2. The question should be How can **heaven** make sense? How can any **imperfect** being, be invited to inhabit such a **perfect** place?

VII. Slide#18 THE TRIUMPH OF GOD (10,11)

- A. Jesus now changed the metaphor from *vineyard* to **building**.
- B. The picture is of builders who throw aside a particular stone as they build, **which** turns out to be **vital** to the whole building.
 1. Ever **set aside** a puzzle piece that seemed *useless* to you in the beginning, **but** then when you found it, **it completed the puzzle**.
 2. Slide#19 The **Taj Mahal** is one of the most beautiful and costly tombs ever built, but there is something fascinating about its beginnings. In 1629, when the favorite wife of Indian ruler **Shah Jahan** died, he ordered that a magnificent tomb be built as a memorial to her. The shah placed his wife's casket in the middle of a parcel of land, and construction of the temple literally began around it. But several years into the venture, the Shah's grief for his wife gave way to a passion for the project. One day while he was surveying the sight, he reportedly stumbled over **a wooden box**, and he had some workers **throw it out**. It was months before he realized that his wife's casket had been destroyed. *The original purpose for the memorial became lost in*

the details of construction.

- C. Slide#20 Everything in your life has to begin with Jesus. You say...
1. "I want a great marriage." Start with Jesus and then build your marriage on Jesus.
 "I want to raise a family." Start with Jesus and then make some babies.
 "I want to have a business." Start with Jesus and then figure out your business.
 "I want to overcome some addictions, some sins, some hurt, some trouble in my life." Start with Jesus, then work from there.
 - a) Anything you want to be or do all starts with Jesus. Don't let Him be the rejected stone.
 - b) This is really the problem that some of you are having practically with your life.
*You built your life, forgot Jesus and now you're trying to find a way to slip him in.
 It doesn't work like that.*
- D. Jesus would soon go from rejection to the highest exaltation.
- E. Luke adds, Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.

VIII.Slide#21 THE GRACE OF GOD (12)

- A. The final plea - One last chance for them to turn from the error of their way.
- B. The parable is a powerful demonstration of the love & patience of God.
- C. Note the owner's attention & care for the vineyard: He bought the land; cleared the land; prepared the soil; & even made provisions to keep out the wild animals or thieves.
 1. God has taken every care to provide for His people.
 2. He still sends messenger after messenger...but so often they are still rejected.
 3. Deliberately, repeatedly, people reject His love.
 4. "Oh the generosity & patience of God & yet the stubbornness of humanity."²
- D. This seems to be one more way the Lord shows His patient love in allowing his precious servants to be mistreated.
 1. It could be viewed as a lack of love for His children or
 It could be viewed as such a radical love for the lost.
- E. How many more Christians does God need to send into your life before you'll respond to His gracious love?
 1. God has been waiting patiently for you...Will you respond to His love today?
 2. Slide#22 Richard Armstrong, Make Your Life Worthwhile, reports the story about a man in Wales who sought to win the affection of a certain lady for 42 years before

² David Hewitt, pg.158.

she finally said, "Yes." The couple, both 74, recently became "Mr. and Mrs." - For more than 40 years, the persistent, but rather shy man slipped a weekly love letter under his neighbor's door. But she continually refused to speak and mend the spat that had parted them many years before. - After writing **2,184 love letters** without ever getting a spoken or written answer, the single-hearted old man eventually summoned up enough courage to present himself in person. He knocked on the door of the reluctant lady and asked for her hand. To his delight and surprise, she accepted.

- a) **Imagine God's dilemma.** **Time and time again** He tried to get His **message of love** through to His human creation with little response. **Finally**, when there was no other way, *He wrapped up His message in person.*

F. **Slide#23blank** In *The Wounded Healer*, **Henri Nouwen** retells a tale from ancient India:

4 royal brothers decided each to master a special ability. Time went by, and the brothers met to reveal what they had learned.

"I have mastered a science," said the **1st**, "by which I can take but a **bone** of some creature and create the **flesh** that goes with it."

"I," said the **2nd**, "know how to grow that creature's **skin & hair** if there is flesh on its bones."

The **3rd** said, "I am able to create its **limbs** if I have flesh, the skin, and the hair."

"And I," concluded the **4th**, "know how to **give life** to that creature if its form is complete."

Thereupon the brothers went into the jungle to find a **bone** so they could demonstrate their specialties. As fate would have it, the bone they found was a **lion's**. **1** added flesh to the bone, the **2nd** grew hide and hair, the **3rd** completed it with matching limbs, and the **4th** gave the lion life. *Shaking its mane, the ferocious beast **arose and jumped on his creators. He killed them all and vanished contentedly into the jungle.***

1. The religious leaders in our story **created** something that ended up **devouring** them. They created a **vener religion** where an **attractive appearance** **disguised** a **wretched soul**. *It was dress up religion.*
2. We too have the capacity to **create** what can **devour** us.
 - a) **Goals and dreams** can consume us. **Possessions, property, things** can turn and destroy us. **Unless**, we 1st seek **God's** kingdom and **His** righteousness, and allow **Him** to breathe into...*what we make of life.*