

# The Outrageous Landlord

Mar 12:1-17

Use RSV

To The Village Church, 03/05/2006

## Main Idea:

Intense goodness pushes us to intense evil because of our evil hearts but we may enter righteousness through the gate of Christ's rejected glory if it is marvelous in our eyes.

## Meditation:

The image of the Emperor appears differently in his son and in a piece of coin. The coin has no knowledge of its bearing the image of the prince. But you are the coin of God, and so far highly superior, as possessing mind and even life, so as to know the One whose image you bear.

--Augustine, *Sermons on New Testament Lessons*

Post-Sermon Song Theme: Jesus is our Humble King, reaching His throne through His rejection.

## Benediction:

May Jesus Christ, the stone which the builders rejected, be the foundation stone of your life.

## Charge:

Go and bring forth fruit from your Owner's redemptive vineyard, rendering the things of God unto God.

## The Outrageous Landlord

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12:10-11--The stone which the builders rejected...

Isa 28:16

Christ reverses the system of man. the Least is the greatest. The king comes on a donkey. The widow gives more than the rich. The suffering servant is the Messiah. The One discarded turns out to be Divine, the Son of God Himself incarnate.

This is how to escape our evil. The verses right before this quote in Psa 118:

<sup>20</sup> This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter. <sup>21</sup> I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation.

Made a big impression on Simon Peter. Act 4:11 –Peter in a sermon to the Sanhedrin quotes the cornerstone Scripture again, and again in 1Pe 2:7.

V11—All the best stories in the world come from this verse.

Mar 12:35-37 –Jesus Identity as David’s Son

Mar 11:27-33 –Jesus Identity and John’s Baptism.

Jesus’ identity as related to authority. Do you bow to His authority?

Identity and Warfare: The Good Fight of Faith. Jesus was incessantly involved in controversy and a battle of how people perceived him. He was subject to continual lies that persuaded some to hate Him and so He had to manage the gossip. Many people then struggled over whether He was good or evil:

- **Mar 9:38-39** But Jesus said, "Do not forbid him; for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon after to speak evil of me.
- **Joh 10:19-21** At these words the Jews were again divided. <sup>20</sup> Many of them said, "He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?" <sup>21</sup> But others said, "These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

Horace’s Rule of Dramatic Art: When to introduce a god? Martin Luther somewhere in dealing with this matter refers to Horace’s rule of dramatic art:

- “a God must not be introduced into the action unless the plot has gotten into such a tangle that only a God could unravel it.”
- This was an ancient formulation of the problem of “deus ex machina” [dĀĕs ěks mĀĕ-nĕ]
- Well, the human condition is such a tangle.

The appeal of ID—It puts God back as owner of the world. If Christians heard scientists thanking God for the world they enjoy, they would be much more inclined to accept their theories.

Vv13-17 Jesus’ temptation: See Bible Study\Teaching –on Pharisees Hypocrisy.

When Aslan roars, you don’t cheer. You cover your ears.

## I. Interpreting an Outrageous Parable

### A. Interpreting Parables #1: What is Jesus calling Himself?

1. Remember principle #1 of interpreting parables?<sup>1</sup> It's about Jesus.
  - Who are the wicked tenants (end of periscope tells you)?
  - Who, then, is the Owner of the Vineyard?
  - Who, then, is the son of the Owner?
  - What, then, is Jesus calling Himself here?
2. V6—Only one Son. Jesus is uniquely, the Son of God
  - Not an avitar
  - That is why the tenant farmers say, v7, “the only heir.”
  - That is why it makes sense to them to kill him and that's it. In terms of contemporary legal process, if there was only one son, then, killing him, the vineyard would become what was called, “ownerless property,” which could be claimed by anyone, priority going to the first claimant to show up.<sup>2</sup>
  - From which the expression came “the only begotten Son of God,” as in **Joh 3:16**.
3. His quotation of “the rejected cornerstone” verses, come from **Psa 118:22-23**. It is the same psalm from which the people quoted when they laid down their garments for Him on His entrance to Jerusalem and shouted, “Hosanna!” They were shouting to Him, “God, save us!” In fact, the verses about the rejected cornerstone are right before that Hosanna chorus.
4. And now, in Jerusalem, the verses He quotes, in that Psalm, are talking about the foundation stone of the temple of Jerusalem. Jesus is standing there, in the temple, calling Himself the foundation of the Temple. The very foundation of the Jerusalem Temple is Himself, standing there, telling this story. He is saying, “Look around you. You see this great structure of worship? This place where God comes to earth? It's all about Me. I am its Foundation.
5. Saying, Can you recognize this image of God in front of you?
6. Marika, to calm the new church administrator, Alex, about talking weekly to the pastor said: “He's just a guy.” Right! But no one was around the disciples telling them—“He's just a guy.” If they said that to one another in the beginning, it was soon overwhelmed by the question, “Who is this guy?” And Jesus kept saying the opposite.

### B. Interpreting Parables #2: What do you feel?

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<sup>1</sup> Only this parable, says Lane, 417, was told for the purpose of being understood.

<sup>2</sup> Lane, 419.

1. Second principle of interpreting parables. What does this story make you feel? Forget about the surrounding events and just listening to the story, ask, what do I feel about the characters?
2. **V1**-This Landlord has gone to a lot of trouble.Christ’s audience would understand
  - The winepress generally consisted of two excavations dug into the earth and lined with stonework, or hewn out of a cliff, one for the grape crushing and one for the collection compartment. Something of an elaborate construction.
  - A watchtower because it was an expensive operation. Danger from pillagers or foxes or jackels.
  - Show slide<sup>3</sup> Remains of watchtowers like these can still be seen in some of the orchards and vineyards of the central hill region of Israel, silent sentinels of the practice to which Jesus refers.
  - Also, a shelter for the workers of the vineyard, when they were working.
  - In short, He made every provision for the tenants to live well, dwell safely, and to work easily, with technologically up to date equipment to ease their burden.
3. **V2**-After all this preparation, the Landlord sends to collect His due. And the tenants react.
4. Feeling #1: “What does their reaction make you feel about the tenants?” [Raise hands] Answer: Outrage. The tenants are just so ungrateful.<sup>4</sup>
5. Maybe, because of Landlords we’ve encountered here in New York, we have a harder time seeing the Landlord as the good guy. Jesus’ hearers might be quicker to outrage at this violation of contract.
6. And when the Owner sends His son, what are you feeling? [Raise hands]. Don’t do it! They’re trouble! It is going to turn out badly. And sure enough, these tenants do the unspeakable: they kill the Son, twirling their mustaches and delivering—the scene suggests—a sinister laugh of some kind. The Landlord’s greater long suffering is met with greater wickedness.
7. Feeling #2: Secondly, what do you feel about the Landlord? How do you feel about him when he sends the second servant? He’s gullible.
8. Feeling #3:**V9**- How feel? Gives us a sigh of relief. That there will be a reckoning of the wickedness.
9. These teaching is given to make you understand, through your emotive reactions, the right way to look at God and those who rejecting Jesus.

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<sup>3</sup> See *The Biblical World in Pictures* for a picture.

<sup>4</sup> As Jeremiah put it, **Jer 2:21** I had planted you like a choice vine of sound and reliable stock. How then did you turn against me into a corrupt, wild vine?

## II. Feeling #1: The Outrageous Tenants

So I want to look with you at those three feelings, for they provide for us the point of the parable. As we pay attention to our reactions to the story, we can see the three things being taught here:

First, the outrageous behaviour of the Tenants

Second, the outrageous behaviour of the Landlord

Third, the relief at there being a reckoning

### A. Three Incidents Follow of Wicked Tenants

1. After Jesus tells the parable, there follows this incident of the Pharisees and the question of paying tax. We could spend time looking at different things being taught by Jesus in vv13-17:
  - How you have Dual citizenship in two Kingdoms
  - How to hold your money loosely.
2. But we are more interested in the story. And how this incident about paying taxes to Caesar plays in Jesus' story.
3. And what I noticed, as I read this whole chapter, is how this parable of the wicked Tenants, is then acted out during the events of Passover Feast Week.
  - Jesus telling these leaders what is going to happen in **v8**. They are going to do the unthinkable.
  - And then Mark describes them deciding to do it in **V12**.
  - And then they go and start doing it in **V13**.
4. What follows this parable are interactions with the three leading sects of Jerusalem: The Pharisees, the Sadduces and the Scribes. And in these interactions these leaders show themselves, with few exceptions, to be very the wicked tenants of the parable, resisting the message they are getting from the Landlord of Jerusalem and machinating about how to get rid of the Son.
5. So let's look at just the first wicked tenant incident, with the Pharisees, to show you how your feelings about the tenants are justified.

## B. The Trap of the Capitation Tax

1. Let me show it to you in this trap of the Capitation Tax
2. **V14** We see that these cosmopolitan Pharisees were studied in communication skills. They hoped to lure Him into a state of false security with what they say about Him, that He teaches the truth with no respect of people. They are hoping He will relax, thinking, “Finally someone here in Jerusalem is recognizing the truth about Me.”
3. And then they will trick him. And they’ll do it with one of the most difficult cultural questions of that time: The capitation tax, instituted in **A.D. 6**, was collected from every adult male in Judea, paid directly into the imperial treasury.
4. Besides being a bitter reminder of Roman domination, many saw it as affront to the sovereignty of God:
  - Judas the Galilean (Act 5:37), from Gamala in Gaulanitis, during the census of A.D. 6, when it was instituted, led a revolt against paying taxes and was killed.
  - His cry was that taxation was tantamount to slavery.<sup>5</sup> “We left Egypt to be free from slavery!”
5. The silver *denarius*, [dī-nâr□ē-ēs] showing the head of the Roman emperor Tiberius, is the type of coin used by Jesus.<sup>6</sup>
6. The inscription on a silver denarius read (in Latin):
  - TI CAESAR DIVI AVG F AVGVSTVS =
  - TIBERIUS CAESAR DIVI AUGUSTUS FILIUS AUGUSTUS(unabbreviated)
  - = Tiberius Caesar--Son of the Divine Augustus--Augustus
7. And on the reverse side: “Pontif Maxim” = Highest Priest
8. So the Roman Emperor claimed for Himself tribute-money which God commanded to be paid to Himself under the Law (Exo 30:13). And called himself their High Priest. And called himself the son of God.
9. It was a troubling question for believers at that time. Some felt that they couldn’t be true to God while having anything to do with this tax.
10. So they were sure they had Jesus trapped. If He said, “yes”, they peg Him as an enemy of Israel. If He said, “no,” they could immediately run to the Romans and offer proof of his sedition. They had Him trapped. But, it turns out, they didn’t. Because of how Jesus understood cultural engagement.

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<sup>5</sup> Josephus, Jewish War II.117, 118. Jewish Antiquities 18, 1-10.

<sup>6</sup> See *The Biblical World in Pictures* for a picture.

### **C. Jesus' goodness unites His enemies in their hatred of Him**

1. But in the process of this trap, they showed how His goodness made them more wicked. You can see the way this dynamic plays out, the way Jesus' presence unites his enemies.
2. **v13** Pharisees and Herodians came together—strange conspiracy, unlikely bedfellows. Herodians were those who sold out to the culture. Pharisees were self-righteous legalists. Opposite sides of the spectrum. Liberals and Fundamentalists. But Jesus united even them in their hatred of Him.
3. His goodness fanned their hatred. These tenants were willing to cooperate.

### **D. The Really Good make the wicked worse**

1. And that is the way it happens. The greater the presence of goodness, the more wicked wickedness becomes.
2. And so, just as the patience of the Landlord made the tenants worse, and the Son brought out the worst in the leaders of Jerusalem, so the really good brings out the really evil. “The worse get worser.”
3. Example:
  - The Broadway play, *Wicked*, is clever, and thoughtful musing on the story behind the wicked Witch of the West in the Wizard of Oz. And in that story, the Witch is not really the wicked one. And the better she acts to the characters around her, the more wicked they become.
  - Her sister, her room-mate, the wizard. The more she tries to love them, the worse they become.
  - Great illustration of this principle.
4. And so we have the outrageous behavior of these tenants. Understandable, from life.

### III. Feeling #2: The Outrageous Landlord

Now recall the second feeling from the parable, being bothered by the behavior of the Landlord

#### A. The Parable shows God's outrageous patience

1. That stone watchtower is poignant.
  - Show slide of Watchtower again.
  - You can get a sense of how beautiful and useful this tower and wall were when they were in use.
2. Jesus is not original in using this parable. Who knows where this parable comes from? [Raise Hands] The prophet, Isaiah, used it, to the same purpose, hundreds of years before. And Isaiah put it this way:
  - **Isa 5:**<sup>3</sup> "...Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. <sup>4</sup> *What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it?* When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad?..."
  - What more could He have done to provide for His people?
3. What does the story make you feel? What a silly story! Why would the Landlord wait so long? Who would respond with only patience, when his first servant returns, beaten and empty-handed?
4. Only One with outrageous patience. Only one whom you would look at from the outside and call "gullible," or "too soft."
5. Jesus is teaching us the way God is, and His immense longsuffering. His outrageous patience.
6. So we need to understand this, who have aspirations to godliness. If you are not patient with those around you, you are a million miles away from God. That is what that feeling should teach you.
7. He is sloooooooooow to anger...

#### B. Jesus' telling of the parable shows God's outrageous patience

1. You can see the Son of the Landlord demonstrating His Father's Longsuffering patience being demonstrated, even as Jesus speaks: **V15** Jesus holds out hope for them---"Why do you tempt me?" I.e., even now, you could change. You should have met me on the donkey. But even now, you could reverse the direction of your life and receive me.
2. But, even while they are twirling their mustaches at Him, planning His murder, He was offering them a chance.

3. Jesus holding out one last opportunity to the leaders: Can you see your wickedness? But these outrageous tenants don't take it: "Nope, we cannot be wicked. We're the leaders!"
4. Who would send His son into such a dangerous situation? Only the gullible or the stupid or One who knew that it was needed.

### C. They would not recognize the true Divine Image before them

1. Why this outrageous behavior? Because He needed to. He needed to because our wickedness was so wicked. We share the guilt of the Pharisees. You may not have done what the Pharisees did, but if you were in Jerusalem at this time, do you think you would have stopped this execution? Think so?
2. Show the Denarius Slide again.
3. The denarius bears the image of Tiberius Ceasar, "Son of the Divine." The "icon" of Ceasar was on the money.
4. But the irony of the situation is that they could look at the image on the coin and recognize it. But they couldn't look at the Son of the Divine standing in front of them, demonstrating His Father's patience, and recognize Him! Even those with Him.
  - **Mar 1:11** And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love..."
  - **Mar 9:7** Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"
  - Yet even those who heard it had trouble recognizing that image.
5. And so it had to be: "Take your son, Isaac, your only Son, whom you love..."<sup>7</sup> and sacrifice Him.
6. Would you not desire such a Landlord? Who bore such a cost for you?

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<sup>7</sup> Gen 22:2.

## IV. Feeling #3: There is a Reckoning

### A. There is no neutral ground

1. Finally, last feeling: The need for a reckoning. Remember how you felt at the end of the parable?
2. There are really only two places to end up in regard to the Son of the Landlord. Jesus takes away neutral ground.
3. So **Psa 2** says, ‘Kiss the Son, lest He be angry.’ You either kiss Him or end up on the side of His wrath.
4. The parable teaches us to desire the coming of the Landlord, clarify things. To understand it from God’s perspective, there needs to be a reckoning. It is right to feel a relief at that thought, at His justice.

### B. As the image of God, give yourself to God

1. And, it is heartening to see, that there are two examples of good tenants later in this chapter. By “good” I mean who recognize the heart of God. One of them is a single Scribe, who sees the beauty of the Father in the Son.
2. The other “good tenant” we see is a widow who gives her whole living to God, all her money.
3. And this is the response of those who come to love the outrageous Landlord. They pay Him His due. And what is that? Their whole lives.
4. The denarius bears the image of Tiberius. As Augustine points out, the image of God is stamped on us.
  - “The image of the Emperor appears differently in his son and in a piece of coin. The coin has no knowledge of its bearing the image of the prince. But you are the coin of God, and so far highly superior, as possessing mind and even life, so as to know the One whose image you bear.”
5. Render to God what you owe, your whole self, body and soul. Kiss the Son.
6. You bear the image of God. So, this tax season, give to Caesar only money. But to this outrageous God, give yourself.

