

Message Transcript

THE REJECTED STONE OR CORNERSTONE

| THE KINGDOM REVEALED

AARON BROCKETT | OCTOBER 10, 2026

Well, it's so good to be with you today. And I don't know how, exactly, you are coming in here or what you are bringing with you, but I'm trusting that God has a word for us today from our passage in Mark, chapter 12. So, if you have a Bible, and I hope you brought one with you, go ahead and meet me there.

If you have been with us or tracking with us for most of this year, then you likely know that we've been spending the majority of 2026 just taking our time, working our way through, chapter by chapter, verse by verse, this fast-paced gospel of Mark.

And we've called the whole series The Urgent Kingdom because that's exactly what Mark is doing. He is the most urgent of all four gospel writers as he describes to us this coming, eminent Kingdom of God. We will finish up this series by the end of November, so we're in the home stretch here.

And we'll finish up Part 5 of this series next weekend. And we've been calling it The Kingdom Confronts. If you were here last week we saw a little bit of that because Jesus confronts and curses the fig tree and then He does some confronting by clearing the Temple. And in today's passage, that confrontation is going to come to a head with the religious leaders. And, just a heads up, it's pretty intense.

The irony of the confrontation is that the religious leaders think that they are the ones doing the confronting, but Jesus is going to flip the tables and ultimately end up confronting them.

Now, when I say confrontation, I'm not talking about things getting kind of awkward or weird. I'm talking about Gerard Butler style from the movie 300. Do you remember that scene where the Persian messenger comes and thinks he's confronting him and he kind of looks over his shoulder at this lady and she gives him the nod and he's like, "This is Sparta." It's going to be like that. Alright? Now, to set the stage for our passage, at the end of chapter 11, verses 27 to 33, the religious leaders throw the first punch. And they walk up to Jesus in the temple area asking him this question in verse 28:

"By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you the authority to do then? (ESV)



In other words they are like, "Jesus, You're making us really nervous here. Who do You think You are?" And as Jesus often does, He responds to the question with a question of His own. And He says:

"I will ask you one question: answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things." Here's the question, "Was the baptism of John," talking about John the Baptist, His cousin, "from heaven or from man? (ESV)

In other words, is that God ordained or is that manmade? And then He goes, "You answer Me." I love that because Jesus is like, "Oh, wait a second. You think I answer to you? That's cute. No, boys, you answer to Me." And they couldn't answer Him.

And, honestly, Mark tells us they didn't want to answer Him out of fear of what everyone might think. So, they give the cop out answer. And they were like, "Well, we don't know." And Jesus says, "Well, then I'm not going to tell you by what authority I do these things."

That's the set up for our text today. Our passage today is the first 12 verses of Mark 12 and it's a parable. Or as one commentator describes it: a parable is what Jesus would often use to teach and He wasn't using them as illustrations, He wasn't using them to try to entertain or get people's attention. No, they were earthly stories with heavenly meanings. Meaning that Jesus tells a story in terms that they could understand to describe what the Kingdom of God is like. And this is a big one. It's oftentimes referred to as The Parable of the Wicked Tenants. Some translations say The Parable of the Evil Farmers, which are two words that I would never would have thought to put together because most farmers that I know are pretty good folk.

But not the ones here. And Jesus tells this story to expose them, to reveal what is in their hearts. And they are not going to like it because this is one of the sparks that ignites the fuse that is going to get Him crucified on a cross here in a few short weeks.

So, He tells the parable to expose them and by doing so, He exposes me and He exposes you. And that's not a fun thing to endure, but oftentimes it's a necessary thing to experience. So, let's look at our passage together with that set up. Mark writes these words beginning in verse 1:

"And he began to speak to them in parables. 'A man planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a pit for the winepress and built a tower, and leased it to tenants and went into another country.



'When the season came, he sent a servant to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again he sent to them another servant and they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully.

'And he sent another, and him they killed. And so with many others: some they beat, and some they killed. He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, "They will respect my son."

'But those tenants said to one another, "This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours." And they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.

'Have you not read this Scripture: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes"?

"And they were seeking to arrest him but feared the people, for they perceived that he had told the parable against them. So they left him and went away."
(ESV)

Let's pray together.

Father, we come to You right now and we just want to take a moment to clear our heads and ready our hearts for what You might say. We've read the text but there is a difference between understanding or acknowledging what we just read and then perceiving the word You might have for us.

So, I pray that in these next few moments that You would just help me to simply amplify what You want said and are saying. We know we need it. We know we need some exposure because sometimes that's the most loving thing You can do.

And so, God, would You please put us on the anvil, so to speak, and lean in because we know that a word from You can be trusted because You are compassionate, kind, and patient. So, would You please speak? We ask this in Jesus' name. And everyone said: Amen.

Now, I think a common mistake that we can make when it comes to the parables of Jesus, like this one, is to read it and think it is about other people. That's easy to do, sort of like (I've mentioned this before) when you listen to a sermon and immediately you've got somebody in mind that you are going to share the sermon link with on Tuesday. I call it surrogate listening.



And don't get me wrong, it's not that you shouldn't do that. I mean, I'm sure that your boss probably needs to hear it and I'm sure your spouse who isn't here could really use it. But it's just that, before you go send this sermon link to somebody else, you need to first stop and perceive the word that God might have in it for you.

So, we come to a parable like this thinking that it's primarily about the religious leaders. And make no mistake, it certainly is. But, it's also about you. You are in this parable somewhere. And so am I. The parable is for us. The Bible calls itself living and active. So, it's not just telling us what happened, it's telling us what always happens. So, God has a word for us in it. Don't miss that.

But before we can discern the word that God has for us in it today, in 2026, we've got to first understand what the parable originally meant then. This is Bible interpretation 101. You've got to understand who the original audience was, and what the original meaning was, before you can pull an accurate application out of it. So, we look at the parable and we see what the figures are and what they represent.

Man = God

And a very plain understanding of it is that Jesus said, "A man had a vineyard." So, the man represents God.

Vineyard = Nation of Israel

The vineyard, in it's original telling represents the Nation of Israel, or you could say the covenant God made with His people, the Israelites.

Tenants = Jewish Leaders

The tenants are representative of the Jewish leaders who have been held responsible to uphold that covenant, namely the Jewish leaders that Jesus is confronting in this passage.

Servants = Prophets

The servants that come to give a message from the owner of the vineyard, they are the prophets—the Old Testament prophets. Men like Jeremiah and Elijah, among others.

Son = Jesus

And then the Son represents Jesus.

Now, everybody who would have heard Him tell this story would have immediately recognized it, because Jesus is almost quoting word for word, Isaiah, chapter 5. And Isaiah 5 is called a song about the Lord's vineyard. Let me just read the first two verses of it to you and you can begin to pick up and to see traces of the parable within Isaiah 5. It says:



"Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes."
(ESV)

So we see here that the primary, straightforward meaning of the parable that the owner is representative of God, the vineyard is representative of His covenant with the Israelites, the tenants are temporarily entrusted with that vineyard and they are the Jewish religious leaders that Jesus is confronting here in our passage. That's the plain meaning of the parable.

So, here's the question. What's the application for you and for me? Where are we in this story? See, until we ask that question we can just dismiss it as a cute little parable about farming instead of an examination of our own lives. Remember the parable isn't just about them; it is also about us as well.

So, I've got three questions for the remainder of our time together today for us to consider. I'm going to spend the majority of my time on the first one. If you're jotting down some notes or maybe you want to take out your phone and take a snapshot of the question so that you can give some thought to it later, here's the first one:

Am I taking care of the "vineyard" God has entrusted to me?
"Pastor, what are you talking about?" Well, in both the parable here in Mark 12 and the song in Isaiah 5, God not only owns the vineyard, but He's the One who does all of the work to establish it. Now, I have never owned or established a vineyard, but it sounds like a lot of work. I can barely keep the houseplants alive when my wife goes out of town for a few days. I can't even imagine a whole vineyard.

And I want you to notice all of the action in the parable. Jesus said that a man planted a vineyard, he put a fence around it, he dug a pit for the winepress, he built a tower, and he leased it. In other words, Jesus is stressing that he has done all of the work and he has taken all of the financial risks. It originated with him. He's the owner. And then he leases it or entrusts that vineyard that he has worked so hard to establish to tenant farmers. That would have been a very common practice at the time.

Now, understand the farmers are not the owners. Their names are not on the deed. They hadn't funded any of the investment. They weren't the ones who put the first shovel in the ground. Everything of value was already there when the keys were handed over to them.



According to Psalm 80 and Jeremiah 2 a vineyard was a common metaphor for Israel, which would have included God's covenant with them. So, if you think about the Old Testament covenant, if you think about the Temple, the sacrificial system, that all began with a covenant that God made with a guy named Abraham. And God said, "Abraham, this blessing does not terminate upon you, this blessing should flow through you to generations of people."

And He set up this Old Testament sacrificial system so that a lamb could be slain or a sheep or whatever. They would come, the priest would offer it, the blood would cover over the sins of the people reconciling them and keeping them in a relationship with the one true God.

Jesus is saying, "That's my vineyard." And He entrusted all of that to the Jewish religious leaders. And Jesus is the beloved Son who has finally showed up because all of the prophets that God was sending them they were beating and killing and sending away. And Jesus is saying, "Your job was stewardship, not ownership." And they were mismanaging God's vineyard at best; they were abusing it at worst. Which is why Jesus is confronting them so hard right here. Now, I think this might be a good time for us to maybe switch analogies so that you can see it from a little bit of a different angle. I don't know if any of you have noticed this, but people can be a little bit cranky now a days. Have you noticed this or am I the only one? Maybe you work a job, I don't know, customer service or I don't know what it may be, where you just kind of come across the animosity or the frustration or the criticism of people.

I think all of us have probably experienced that. Maybe it's on your commute. You see it on the road. Or you see it online. Wherever. I work a job where I have tremendous blessings and then there are some other days. And there are days, man, when I am driving home...

I had a mentor say this to me one time. He was like, "Hey, man. If you wanted to make everyone happy..." Honestly, there is a people pleaser in me. It's really hard. It's like really hard to confront people with the truth and then there is the people pleaser in me. And I don't like criticism and I don't like nasty comments. I don't like it.

So, a mentor said to me, "Aaron, if you want to make everybody happy just go sell ice cream." And I've been like, "That sounds like a pretty good idea. Because every day is a great day if I could hand somebody a mint chocolate chip or a rocky road and they had a smile on their face." You'd feel pretty good about yourself.



So, let's just imagine we all quit our jobs and we open up an ice cream shop. And so let's just say that you take out a business loan and you lease a building and you research all of the flavors, and you create a catchy little logo and a jingle, and you hire some employees, and you hire somebody to manage it. You own it. The manager's job is to steward what you own.

Let's say you go out of town for six months to take care of some family business. And so, you're expecting him to maintain your business and to produce a profit from the ice cream shop. So, you're sending messages, emails, and somebody to check in on the business, but they are ghosting you.

And then finally you return, six months later, and you discover that the building is run down, the store is an absolute mess. The ice cream has all melted and gone bad. The employees have all quit. There is a mountain of unreturned messages and mail. And nothing but solid, one star reviews on Google. In other words, your ice cream shop has been mismanaged, to put it mildly.

Now, how is that going to make you feel and how is the conversation going to go with the manager that you hired when you see him? Probably something along Gerard Butler from the movie 300. A confrontation is about to go down. That's what Jesus is doing with the Jewish religious leaders. He's like, "Guys, this is God's vineyard. This is His covenant. We've been sending prophets. You've been rejecting them. So, now I am the beloved Son and I'm holding you to account."

Now, before we get out the popcorn and go, "Get them Jesus," remember this parable isn't just about them. It's about us. We're in it. "Pastor, what do you mean?" God has handed you and me a vineyard so to speak. "I don't know anything about grapes. I'm not in full time ministry."

I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about the fact that everything that you have been entrusted with did not originate with you. I don't think we think about that enough. Think about how much of your life didn't originate with you and doesn't have anything to do with you—how much lack control you have in it. Just think about the list.

I thought about this last week. I didn't have a say who my parents were or what time in history I would be born or in what part of the world I would grow up in. I didn't determine my personality, my skin color, or my height. I did not wake up today telling my heart to beat or my lungs to take in a breath. God gave me my looks, my abilities, and my intellect or lack thereof. There is so much about my life that did not originate from me or come from me. And the same with you.



Psalms 24, verse 1 says it this way:

"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him." (NLT)

In other words my life is God's vineyard. I'm just a renter. I'm here to manage it. I'm stewarding it. Now, that word stewardship, if you've been in church for a while, has sometimes only gotten linked up when it comes to talking about generosity and tithing. But stewardship goes way beyond your bank account. Stewardship is all of life. Stewardship is the way you spend your time. Stewardship is your relationships. Stewardship is your thought life. Stewardship is your talent. Stewardship is the relationships that you are fostering. Your life did not originate with you. You have very little say about your life or when in time and history you would be born. All of life is stewardship. God is the one who owns it.

And I'm going to say a truth. And I need to say this very delicately but very directly. God does not owe you or me an explanation for what He does with what is already His. And so often we're asking God for an explanation, "God, what's going on here? Why aren't You doing something different in my life?" Now, please understand. I know right now... It is not lost on me that the number of people listening to the sound of my voice right now both in person and online, and later in the week online, thousands and thousands of people, what is represented by those thousands of people is a lot of pain: crisis, health diagnosis, relationships falling apart... I'm already experiencing this weekend praying with people afterward.

If we could just pull back the veil and see everybody's emotional and spiritual struggle it would simply overwhelm us. And yet, I just want to point this out to you. Even in the midst of that He is a good God.

It is His vineyard. Jesus stresses the point that the fence, and the tower, and the winepress in the parable—all of that is God's provision for us, not just decoration. He is Creator, we are curator. We are not the owners. We are the stewards.

In fact, you wouldn't want to be the owner of your vineyard because you wouldn't be able to bear the weight of the responsibility. And God didn't just hand you a bare patch of dirt and say, "Figure it out." He has given you protection and purpose and tools to produce fruit from that vineyard. A life that He has entrusted to you.



And I was reading in Ecclesiastes this last week where it said that it is not up to us for us to determine our lot in life. All of that is His. All of it is stewardship. And we are simply here to present to the owner of the vineyard fruit from the vineyard that He's entrusted to us. And I think oftentimes that our pain and our suffering and our crisis ends up overshadowing all of the blessing. We become consumed by it and we miss the blessing.

You're going to say, "Man, where did the blessing come from?" Have you ever noticed...? Just pay attention to this. I started to track it this last week. How many times, when I start to talk about my life, how many times I use the word my. I already said it. My life. So, my friends, my marriage, my time, my kids, my family, my clothes, my car, my money, my house, my job, my school, my hobbies, my city, my church.

How about this one? My faith. Is it really? "What are you talking about, Pastor? It is my faith. I made a decision to follow Jesus." Did you? My faith? Like even that. I'm just going to read Bible verses to you. Okay? I'm just going to read Bible verses to you.

John, chapter 6, verse 44:

"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. (ESV)

Ephesians 2, 8 through 9:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not a result of works," or you could say your efforts, "so that no one may boast." (ESV)

In Acts 16, talking about a lady by the name of Lydia, her faith, it says:

"The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul." (ESV)

In Hebrews, chapter 12, verse 2:

"...looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith..." (ESV)

In 1 John 4:19:

"We love because he first loved us." (ESV)

John 15:16:

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit..." (ESV)

What's He saying? It's His ice cream shop, man. It's His vineyard. All of it. Even your faith. You can't speak in possessive language because all of life is stewardship. God is saying, "I've done it all. I've made the initial investment because I'm a good and compassionate God. And I will be back to check on the fruit that you've borne with what I've entrusted to you—in everything.



I don't mean to make light of the fact that some of you are going through it right now. I know. Some of you are in a lot of pain. And there is real struggle right now. And real questions. And God can handle it. And He wants you to bring them to Him. And He wants you to be honest about them. He doesn't want you to pretend. He doesn't want you to stuff it.

And yet, at the same time I think we've got to acknowledge simply this. It is true that if God never did another thing for me, He's already done enough. We have to be really careful about being honest and vocal about the things that have gone wrong in our life and instead of taking them to God, we end up making God the object of our disappointment. And that turns, very easily, into bitterness, entitlement, and contempt.

And pastors are not above this. My second week of sabbatical this summer I was out in Wyoming with a group of about 24 pastors. For about 10 years now I've kind of curated a group of pastors to go out to something called The Refuge and we just get off of the grid, we get out in the mountains, we do fly fishing, we ride horses, we sit around fire pits, we eat really good food. And it's a place for us to find refuge and to be real and to not be on.

And we sit around a table after dinner every night, all 24 of us at this big, long, huge table and we do what's called Table Talk. And we share and we get vulnerable and we take off the masks and we confess sins and we cry and we pray.

It's a non-negotiable on my calendar. I do it every year. And this year I was there on the second week of sabbatical, We sat down together the first night and the facilitator of the conversation went around and he said, "Hey, guys. This is the place for us to be really, really raw and real. If you can't be real here, where can you be real? And your congregations aren't here. Your families aren't here. This is just us. So, why don't we go around the table and just talk about some disappointments or some pain that you are experiencing right now in your life?"

That's a good thing to do. And so we started off and two or three guys began to share. But it was somewhere around the third or fourth guy that the conversation began to twist ever so subtly to where one of the guys phrased it this way. He said, "Well, where I'm disappointed with God is..." And then he began to share.

And then it started to build. Like the next guy was like, "Yeah, I've actually got three or four things that I'm disappointed with God." And then he began to share things about a wayward teenager, or maybe a health diagnosis, or...



Hey, by the way, pastors are oftentimes the recipients of church hurt too. And guys began to share about how people were leaving the church or had betrayed them or were divisive or whatever it may be. And there were tears shed and there were things...

It felt like almost an anger or bitterness was kind of beginning to flare up around the table. And I got really, really uneasy, and even nauseous. I was like, "This took a turn in a direction that I wasn't expecting." And I didn't sleep well that night.

I remember talking to a couple of guys the next day and I was like, "Hey, did you notice that?" And I took a walk down by the river and I was praying and it was as if God kind of gave me this image of this group of pastors sitting around a table representing dozens of churches and thousands of Christians across the country. And boy, Satan would love to take that table out.

God just kind of gave me this image. What if in the spiritual realm we had the Lord of heaven's armies and His angels leaned in listening to the table talk and Satan and his demons leaned in listening to the table talk, this epic spiritual war. And it was just this question: Which side was grieving and which side was celebrating?

And I just shared that the next night at the table. I was like, "Guys, I think we need to be real. I think we do need to share all of those things. I don't think we need to be fake about it. But I think we need to be really, really careful that we don't make God the object of our disappointment. We take it to Him. We don't blame Him."

Listen. Does anybody need that word? I know you are in pain right now. And I know you've been hurt right now. And the enemy would love to turn your disappointment and your grief and your lament... He'd love to see you aim it at God rather than take it to God. There is a difference. He can handle it. The Bible talks a lot about this. Just read the Psalms. The psalmist is very real with God. We've got a whole book of the Bible that deals with this. It's called Lamentations. The root word is lament.

But please do not let the enemy delude you into making God the object of your disappointment because that will turn into contempt and cynicism toward Him. And Satan will slowly lead you away from the God who loves you and is compassionate toward you. Listen, man. I know you're going through it. He's a good God who has entrusted to you and to me far more than we ever deserve.



Can I just take it one step further? Jesus gave His life so that we could be reconciled to God in relationship. He did not come to start another religion. Religion is fundamentally different from what Jesus died for you to have. I am not religious. I refuse to be. Some of you are like, "That is the oddest thing I've ever heard a pastor say."

And oftentimes, whenever I get on an airplane, and somebody is sitting next to me and we begin to make small talk, inevitably the question comes, "Well, what do you do?" And I'm like, "Here we go." And I'm like, "I'm a pastor." That always changes the dynamic of the conversation.

And, I don't know, maybe 40 or 50 percent of the time the person, when I say that to him, will say, "Oh, well that's cool. I'm not very religious." And I say, "Great, neither am I." And they are like, "What?" They don't even understand it.

And some of you don't understand it right now. Here's what I mean. Religion tries to take from God rather than receive what God has for you. Look at the parable. The tenants were trying to take the vineyard from the heir by killing him when God had already given them the vineyard. But they were like, "No. We actually want all of it."

So, if I'm saying, "I'm using God for what I can get out of Him..." He is a good God who wants to give you good things, but He refuses to be, He refuses to be that vending machine in the sky where you're only here, you only show up, you only go to Him whenever He can give you what you want on your timetable when God actually has a much more sovereign understanding of your life in the universe.

Guys, can I just tell you this? This is the sin that got Satan kicked out of heaven. Satan is very religious because he was trying to take from God what was not his. Isaiah 14 describes this spiritual rebellion behind Satan getting removed from heaven. It was Satan's pride. It was pride. What's behind pride? Entitlement and contempt and anger.

Do you know what the name Lucifer means? Light bearer. It comes from two Latin terms. And listen to the description of what happened to him in Isaiah, chapter 14. It says:

"How you are fallen from heaven, O shining star," referring to Lucifer, "son of the morning! You have been thrown down to the earth you who destroyed the nations of the world. For you said to yourself, 'I will ascend to heaven and set my throne above God's stars. I will preside on the mountain of the gods. I will climb to the highest heavens and be like the Most High. Instead you will be brought down to the place of the dead, down to its lowest depths.'" Isaiah 14:12-15 (NLT)



Satan got kicked out of heaven. Think about that for a minute. Our friend Zack Meerkreebs said to our All Staff on Tuesday, "What would it take to get you kicked out of heaven?" And I always thought that once you got to heaven you were good. This. Satan's pride. He was trying to elevate himself above God. So, Jesus would say of Satan in Luke, chapter 10, verse 18: "I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning." (NLT)

And he said he wanted to be like the Most High. Think back to the Garden. The conversation he has with Adam and Eve and what he tempts them with. He tempts them with this very thing. He said, "Oh, you're not going to die if you eat the fruit. You'll just be like God." He was tempting them with what he ultimately wanted. Guys, that's religion.

Revelation 22:16 tells us that only Jesus is the Bright and Morning Star. Our ultimate rebellion against God is that instead of worshipping Him, we want to be worshiped. And you would say, "That's ridiculous, Pastor. I don't want anybody singing songs to me."

That's not what I'm talking about. We want control. The root of all sin in our life is that we think that what we want is better than what God has for us. We think that our perspective makes more sense than His.

And so, instead of being filled with the Holy Spirit, what we do is we chase after control. Jesus wants to fill you with the Holy Spirit but instead we go after a counterfeit feeling. So, we get hooked on a narcotic to get high, or we get drunk with drink, or we get drunk with anger, or we numb out, or we look for a feeling, another dopamine hit, a feeling of control or euphoria.

Why do we do that? Because we don't believe that the peace of Christ is enough. So, we go looking for it somewhere else. What is that feeling that we are chasing? It is a counterfeit to being filled with the Spirit and what He has promised us. We want to sit on a throne made for Him. But we've got to recognize it's His vineyard and His throne. And He's coming back soon to check on the fruit.

So, what are you doing right now with the vineyard He's entrusted to you—your life, your relationships, your time, your talent, your treasure? Here's the second question:

Am I listening to the "messengers" God keeps sending me?

Am I listening to the messengers that God keeps sending to me? In verses 2 through 5 in the parable the owner sends servants to check up on the vineyard three different times. But then it says he sends many, many more and they got beaten, they got sent away, they got killed.



Now, historically, God sent Israel a series of prophets and preachers to attest to His goodness, to call them to repentance, and back to faith. Men like Jeremiah and Elijah. But they were continually beaten, and rejected, and even put to death. In fact, prophets had a terrible time getting life insurance because of the occupational hazard of what they did.

In fact, in 2 Chronicles, chapter 36 it says:

"The Lord, the God of their ancestors, repeatedly sent his prophets to warn them, for he had compassion on his people and his Temple. But the people mocked these messengers of God and despised their words. They scoffed at the prophets until the Lord's anger could no longer be restrained and nothing could be done." (NLT)

So, it says that multiple times the owner of the vineyard sent messengers to these tenants warning them. And He says out of His compassion he did so. And repeatedly they beat them, killed them, sent them away.

And I've got to ask you, man. Why would He keep sending servants? Is it because He's naïve? Is it because He's foolish? No, it's because He's patient. He's compassionate. Which is really, really good news for you and for me. Because I don't know about you all, I can only speak for me, I can be a knucklehead at times. There are times when God is sending me messages, times in which God is speaking, times when God wants to confront me in something and I don't see it. I don't want to see it.

And I'm so, so grateful that God has allowed me another day, another month, another year of life so that I might finally perceive the message that He's been sending me and that I might receive it in humility and repentance and therefore be changed by it. And here's a long, theological word coming your way, so that I might enter into the process of progressive sanctification.

Guys, has there ever been a season in your life when you can look back (I don't know if any of you keep prayer journals or not) at a season of your life? For me it was in college and I thought I knew everything and I knew nothing. When I go back and I read some of those prayer journals I am like, "That kid was an idiot." But I thought I knew everything.

And here I am telling God what He should do. I'm lamenting about my circumstances. And all of that is real. And all of that is fine. I don't need to minimize any of it. But yet, God had a perfect... I thought I had a better perspective at the time and I look back now as a 50 year old on that kid and I think, "Man, I had no perspective."



And God looks at me as a 50 year old and goes, "You have no perspective. What gives you the right to think that you are entitled to anything? I am patient. And I am kind. And I'm continuing to send you messengers."

2 Peter, chapter 3 says that God is not slow in keeping His promises but He is patient for our sakes. And we say, "God, you aren't on time." And He goes, "Nope, I'm just patient." He doesn't want anybody to be destroyed but everybody to repent and turn to Him. And He is long suffering and patient because He loves you. He is regularly sending you a word and a message. God is speaking into your life all of the time.

The question is: Am I listening or is the volume on other things turned up so loud I can't hear Him. Or, I actually heard it but I didn't like what He said so I didn't receive it. God is speaking. He's moving.

In fact, I perceive now more than ever, because, I don't know, man, time is running out. I think Jesus' eminent return is coming. I don't say that to scare you. I don't say that to predict it. It could be in a year. It could be in 100 years. I don't know. It doesn't even really matter. He's coming and I think the spiritual realm is getting stirred up. And He's speaking. The question is: Are we listening? One of my favorite stories from Women's Night a week ago was that a young lady, who 24 hours before Women's Night... She didn't go here. She wasn't planning on going to Women's Night. And she is going through a really, really difficult time.

She was on her way to get some help. And she gets in her car and she enters the address in the GPS to go to where she was going to go to get some help. And for whatever reason, I don't know why (actually I do know why) but I don't know why the GPS blipped and sent her to Traders Point Northwest. And she took a screen shot of it because she knew she had a friend who went here and she just kind of shared that with her, "I don't know what the deal is, but my phone blipped and sent me here." And her friend, perceptibly, said, "Well, I've got an extra ticket to Women's Night tomorrow night. Do you want to come with me?" And so she said, "Okay." And she came and she was going through all of this stuff. She sat in one of the seats.

What you all need to know is that we had hundreds of ladies, Difference Makers, hand write prayer cards to hand out to every woman who was in attendance. So, she got a handwritten prayer card from somebody and she was sitting in her seat. She was reading it. And she began to cry. There was a lady sitting next to her who is a prayer counselor. She noticed this. And at the break she went and talked to her. The young woman told her story and how she got there. And she said, "I got this prayer card and it really meant a lot to me." And she let her read it. And it was the prayer card that lady had written. Out of 3,600 she got placed right next to her and they prayed together. Coincidence? Or the Spirit of God?



I have a friend who is a relatively new Christian. She is ferociously reading through the Bible right now for the very first time because most of her life she has not been a Christian. She came up to me a couple of weeks ago and she said, "I can't get enough of this. And I'm meeting for coffee with other Christian ladies. And I'm sharing with them what God is teaching me from the Bible. And some of them look at me like, 'Hey, I've never heard of that before.'

"And I've come to find out that they are Christians but they are telling me that they never actually read the Bible all of the way through. Not even one time." And she looked at me and she said, "I just can't even believe that. So, I asked the great theologian ChatGPT how many Christians have read through the Bible all the way through at least one time? And ChatGPT told me that only 20 percent of Christians have ever read through the Bible."

And she looked at me and she said to me through tears, "Pastor, is that true?" And I said, "On this one I think I'm going to have to go with professor ChatGPT. I think that is probably in the ballpark." And she looked at me through tears and she said, "That breaks my heart. I can't understand why somebody would call themselves a Christian and not be listening to what God wants to say to them." He's sending you a message. He'll send a message through Scripture that you didn't expect convicting you from a passage, which is why you shouldn't skip Deuteronomy. He will send a message through a sermon that hits a little too close to home. I don't know, say this one. He'll send a message through your spouse who pushes you in an area of your life that you don't want touched. He'll send a message through a friend who loves you enough to tell you the truth instead of what you want to hear.

He'll send a message through pain and suffering, and breakups, and unwanted circumstances. Not because God doesn't love you, not because He doesn't care, not because He's asleep at the wheel but as a wakeup call because He has been sending gentle messengers your way, but you've been turning them away. So, He'll crank up or allow some pain and some suffering to get your attention. That's not mean, that's kind and loving. C.S. Lewis said, "Pain is the megaphone of God." And we tend to shoot the messenger because we don't want to deal with the message.

Guys, some of the most formative seasons of my life were not seasons where I got everything my way, but when I found myself pinched and crushed in such a way, through pain and difficult circumstances and discomfort, and God formed me through that and I look back on it and I see it as a gift instead of a curse. So, what are you doing with them, man? Listen, man. People don't reject God in one big dramatic moment but rather through one ignored nudge at a time. Nobody wakes up one morning suddenly distant from God. They just kept slowly turning down the volume, kind of like on the radio in your car. Just a slow, imperceptive turning down of the message and the messenger until you can no longer hear Him anymore.



Part of my job as your pastor isn't just to prepare messages every week, it's to try to discern at a thirty thousand foot level what's happening in the spiritual realm. And right now I just get this perception that things are getting spun and cranked up in the spiritual realm. I have never personally felt more spiritual resistance than I'm sensing right now in this season of my life.

As I look at the metrics of our church, the dashboard of our church, none of that would show up there. Record baptisms, tons of people in Rooted, everything seems to be great here. And yet I get this feeling that there is something crouched behind me all of the time.

I preached in Lexington, Kentucky last weekend at a great church there. My son went with me. We checked into the hotel. We turned out the light. I couldn't sleep all night because I felt like there was a dark presence in the corner. And I don't talk that way very often. It just feels like things are getting spun up here. Would you not agree that right now the world feels darker than ever and people are panicking. We are looking around and saying, "Is the economy going to bail us out? Are the mid-terms the answer? This thing over here? AI?" All of those things. The world is a dumpster fire right now and the spiritual realm is spinning up and God is like sitting back going, "This is My vineyard. Hey, I'm sending you a message. The answer is revival. Will you wake up?"

Take this, receive it how you will. It just feels as if, quite possibly, maybe with us as a church, maybe even more people than that, it just feels like maybe we're treating God a bit too casually right now. Just a little bit too casual, "Things are okay. I've got my Bible. I'm doing my Bible Reading plan, going through Rooted." And there is a difference between a casual posture (You ever been interviewing somebody for a job and they are just a little bit too casual on the job interview, just kind of slouched back like, "What can you do for me?") and a posture that is leaned in. Something is stirring. God is speaking. I don't want our church to be asleep. And I'm responsible. We've got a vineyard to tend to. Here's the last question:

Am I putting Jesus in His rightful place?

In verse 6 the owner said he had a beloved son. That's intentional. That is the exact description that God speaks over Jesus at His baptism in Mark, chapter 1 and again in His transfiguration in chapter 9.

And I don't know, man. If it was me and I'd been sending all of these servants to the tenants and they kept getting rejected and beaten, there is no way that I'm going to send to you my one and only son. I love you all a lot. I don't love you that much.



But God loves you that much. And He sent His one beloved Son. And here, in a few short weeks, they are going to take Him and nail Him to a cross and throw Him out of the vineyard. And three days later He would return to cover you and to cover me.

And it said Jesus ends this whole talk with quoting Psalm 19, that He is the cornerstone of the building. That's ancient language that says that He is what keeps things aligned and in full support.

See, the tenants wanted to take by force what God wanted to give by grace. And that's really at the root of all of our sins. If we are honest, many of us have found ourselves in that place where we are really coming to God for what we can get out of Him and failing to recognize this Lordship issue where He is asking for you to give Him access to every area of your life.

See, I think the answer to the world's issues right now is revival. That's what I'm praying for. That it would begin with the church, with Christ followers, who would say, "It is Your vineyard," instead of us developing an entitlement spirit toward Him that can very easily turn into contempt. Because God is not on our timeline and He refuses to be a cosmic vending machine. And we, instead of becoming casual, would become consumed with Him. That instead of being indifferent, we would say, "You know what, God? I am here to make a difference in these days."

You can take one of two postures here. You look all around. At times when I turn on the news I get overwhelmed. And I'm like, "Oh my goodness. This is crazy. What kind of a world will my kids and grandkids grow up in?" And then the Holy Spirit nudges me and He says, "I've actually ordained your days to be these days. What better time for you to be a representative than right now?" And so right now are you going to be self-focused or fully surrendered. Listen, man. You can either receive Jesus, you can reject Jesus, or you can attempt to reshape Jesus. And Jesus' blood on a cross either covers all of you or none of you. What it can't do is cover some of you.

So, if you've got one foot in and one foot out you've got to decide right now, "Where am I going to go?" He is the God of the vineyard. He is returning soon to find fruit. And what He'll do is He'll put the squeeze on to produce something in your life.

We've been using battleground language a lot around here lately. It's in our Mission Statement, if you haven't noticed. And I want to be very clear that our battle posture is not this [hands fisted and raised] our battle posture is this [kneeling with hands open toward God] where we come fully surrendered before God, empty handed.



And if the answer is revival, revival always begins with repentance. Revival always begins with humility. Man if we have an entitled spirit that is beginning to turn into contempt toward God because we've made Him the object of our disappointment, it will quench the Spirit in our church and in our lives.

So, right now would we have a spirit of repentance and humility and confession and say, "God, forgive us when we've acted like owners rather than stewards of what is already Yours, including everything about our lives, even our faith." It is a gift of God's grace that we have stepped into salvation. That didn't originate with us. We're not smart enough to respond to that or think that up. The Spirit of God spoke into our lives.

So, if you would, across all of our locations and in this room, could we maintain this battle posture, if you are able right at your seat, in the aisles, or down front just to come to your knees, if you are willing and able to step into this posture. And for us to cloak ourselves, right now, in humility as we come before the Owner of the vineyard. And this act right now would be a leaning in toward God instead of a casual response toward Him. To say, "God, we are Your servants and we are listening."

This world is a dumpster fire. And the answer is found through revival. And revival comes through humility and repentance. So, we assume this battle posture.

Lord Jesus, forgive us, forgive me, when I have acted more like an owner rather than a steward. All of life is a stewardship and You are the Owner of the vineyard. And everything we have is Yours and it will return to You. So, Father, forgive us when, in the midst of our pain and suffering, which is legit, we have allowed it to morph into bitterness and contempt. Forgive us when we've made You the object of our disappointment and pain expecting You to explain Yourself rather than trusting You with our pain that You would produce a purpose from it and through it.

So, God, we come to You in this posture as a church. May this be a pleasing scene in Your eyes and a sweet smell to Your nostrils. And I pray that Your Holy Spirit would ignite revival within us, our fully surrendered lives because that is our only hope and that is the hope of the world.

So, we worship You because You are King. You are Lord of all. And we acknowledge it. And so, Father, would You please meet us in this space and do what only You can do. And we ask this in the name of Jesus. And everybody said: Amen.

