

# The Parables of the Two Sons and the Wicked Tenants

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- [ 0 : 00 ] Please open your Bibles to the Gospel of Matthew, the 21st chapter, Matthew 21. Matthew 21, today we're looking at verses 28 through the end of the chapter, verse 46.
- So if you look there with me, we'll read together beginning in verse 28. What do you think?
- A man had two sons, and he went to the first and said, Son, go and work in the vineyard today. And he answered, I will not.
- But afterward he changed his mind and went. And he went to the other son and said the same, and he answered, I go, sir, but did not go. Which of the two did the will of the father?
- They said the first. Jesus said to them, truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you.
- [ 1 : 20 ] For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him. But the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.
- Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a wine press in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants and went into another country.
- When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another.
- And he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. Finally, he sent his son to them, saying, they will respect my son.
- But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, this is their heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.
- [ 2 : 25 ] And they took him and they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. When, therefore, the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those servants?
- They said to him, he will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons. 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 marvelous in our eyes. Therefore, I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.
- And the one who falls on the stone will be broken to pieces. And when it falls on anyone, it will crush him. When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them.
- And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds because they held him to be a prophet. Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father, again, we ask for your spirit's help as your word is open, that you would be with us in the message, that you would teach us from your word.

[ 3 : 38 ] Lord, that it would not end just with our understanding, but with praise and worship of you. We ask this in Christ's name. Amen. And just a reminder, as we're going through the Gospel of Matthew, that we're now in the last week of Matthew's life.

I'm sorry, last week of Jesus' life before the cross, before the resurrection. But this is the week before the cross. We've seen in this week somewhat of a theme of judgment already upon Jerusalem.

Ever since Jesus has entered Jerusalem, we saw, for example, the cleansing of the temple. Jesus' judgment upon the temple and the worship that was going on there. We saw the cursing of the unproductive fig tree.

And even when challenged by the chief priests and the elders, he challenges them. He doesn't answer their question. He responds back and challenges them about John the Baptist. And this really is falling directly on what we just saw happen in that interchange with the questions by the chief priests and the elders about John the Baptist.

This judgment that I'm speaking of is true for all of Jerusalem, all of Israel, but in particular for the religious leaders of Israel.

[ 4 : 47 ] So verse 45 tells us that these parables were spoken against the chief priests and the Pharisees. We look at verse 45. When the chief priests and Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them.

Now, maybe that seems quite obvious as you read through the parables. Parables, I was thinking as I read that, well, duh, you know, of course, yes, this was directed directly at them.

And so they perceived that it's about them. And so it seems Jesus told these two parables, I think at least, in response to the preceding interchange, the interaction he had with them. You remember they asked him about John the Baptist.

And if, well, they were challenging him and Jesus asked them about, was John the Baptist baptism? The question was whether it was from heaven or not. And so following that interchange, now they come to this.

And I think Jesus is directly answering their questions and dealing with that question of John the Baptist and his whereabouts. So it seems he told them to deal with that interaction as if to say to the people, to the crowds around you, let me tell you what these leaders are really like.

[ 5 : 55 ] And so we want to look at these two parables. And I want us to consider as we look at them, what is Jesus condemning and what is he commending? So what is Jesus condemning and what is he commending?

I want to take some time just really to exposit both of the parables. Let's look first at the parable of the two sons. I won't reread it, but it's in verses 28 through 32. Now there's some similarity between the sons.

With both of the two sons, they did something different than what they said they would do. Neither one of them actually fulfilled what they said they would do. They did something different than they said. And so there's a disconnect between what they express and what they end up doing.

They don't do what they say they're going to do. Now, as the crowd examines this that's around, and again, we're not told who all's there. We know it's some of the chief priests and Pharisees that are there hearing this.

But as the crowd is questioned, the crowd acknowledges that it matters more what you do than what you say. So there's a beginning principle. Even the crowd pits up on this.

[ 7 : 02 ] Even, apparently, the chief priests and Pharisees are aware of this common idea, this concept, that it matters more what you do than what you say. That doesn't mean lying's okay.

It doesn't mean you can just say whatever you want to as long as you do it. It doesn't mean you have a bad attitude about it. These things do matter. But what really matters is doing the will of the Father is more important than what we say we're going to do.

We're just saying that you're going to do it. Maybe today we'd say something along the lines of, actions speak louder than words. Right? You've heard that phrase before. Actions speak louder than words. It's one thing to say you love me, but doing something kind of shows me that you love me.

And so actions speak louder than words. It's part of the concept that's being portrayed here and what even the chief priests and Pharisees are picking up on. But what's really interesting is how Jesus responds, even after they acknowledge that it's the Son who did it, not the one who said he was going to do it, who did right.

Jesus goes on to say, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. So what is Jesus implying there in light of the parable? Well, I think he's obviously implying that the first son is representative of sinners, such as tax collectors and prostitutes.

[ 8 : 22 ] He's kind of picking what in that day and age would have been considered the worst of the worst. The worst sinners there were, people who were looked down upon in society, that they're represented by the first son who said he's not going to do it, but then goes and does it.

Now, if that's true, who's represented by the second son? What's the leaders of Israel? Israel. It's the chief priests, the Pharisees, the scribes, those who are the religious leaders of Israel.

Outwardly, the religious leaders are saying they're doing the will of God. They're expressing that they want to do the will of God, that they're the ones who are following God, and even looking down upon the tax collectors, the prostitutes, those who are sinners.

They are the righteous ones in Israel that do the will of the Father. So they say. But the reality is they're not doing the will of God. They're saying they're doing the will of God, but they're not actually doing the will of God.

So outwardly, they're claiming to do the will of God, but their heart is pierced, and they're not receiving Jesus as Messiah.

[ 9 : 28 ] They're not trusting in him as their Messiah. And so even though they're saying that they're doing the will of the Father, they're rejecting the will of the Father, which is what? To follow Christ, to go to Christ, to trust in Christ.

This isn't what they're doing. And so Jesus demonstrates this by their response to John the Baptist. So they had questioned him before about this. There was discussion about John the Baptist and where his authority came from.

And now Jesus redirects this and says, their response to John the Baptist kind of indicates where they fall in this. And again, that connects it to that preceding conversation. The religious leaders did not believe John, but the sinners did.

Even the sinners could see who John was. Maybe that's a way of thinking about Jesus' argument here. Look, even the worst in society could understand that John was a prophet.

They could see who John was, and they went to John. If that's true of the sinners in society, what might the expectations be of the religious leaders in the society?

[ 10 : 32 ] What should they have done? How ought you to have responded to John? And so even now you're coming and asking, this is Jesus, even now you're coming and asking Jesus, asking me, was John from heaven or not?

And it's as if Jesus is saying, are you kidding me? The prostitutes, the tax collectors could see he was from God. What should our expectation of the religious leaders have been?

What should you guys have done when you saw who John was? And now this is being mirrored. It's being replicated.

It's being repeated with Jesus. And so Jesus is setting this example for them. Even the sinners could see that John was from God.

And you're still asking if he's from God? There may well be an implication that you know already he's from God. And I said last week, as we looked at the passage, or two weeks ago, as we looked at the passage, that I think there's some idea there that they knew who he was, but they couldn't admit it.

[ 11 : 39 ] They were more worried about what the crowds thought of them. They couldn't acknowledge that he truly was from God. But there may be an implication, Jesus is saying, you know he's from God, but you're denying it.

And now what I'm saying is this is being repeated in their presence. And Jesus is indicating their reception of Jesus is indicated by how they received John. John's the forebearer.

He's the one who came before the Messiah, proclaiming the coming of the Messiah. And so if they rejected John, they're going to reject Jesus. But notice what it says in verse 46.

And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds because they held him to be a prophet. So the crowds, the sinners again, can see that Jesus is a prophet at the very least.

But the religious leaders are ready to arrest him, to be done with him, even as we see later in the week, to put him to death. And so Jesus adds, I think in verse 32, we see there in the second part, even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

[ 12 : 46 ] Look at verse 32. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

So when they saw what? I think that's an important question, maybe one that our text doesn't fully answer. Jesus may be saying that when you saw the crowds going to John, even then you didn't believe and turn to him.

And as I said already, though, in the previous interaction, they consider acknowledging that John was, his message was from heaven, but they don't do so for the crowds.

So it may be that Jesus is saying, even when you saw that John was from, or his message was from heaven, even then you didn't go to him. Their hearts are so hardened that they cannot receive or respond to the truth, even when they know it's the truth.

And so when we get the message of this parable and what Jesus is saying, what he's teaching us is that salvation, faith, whatever we want to say here, salvation is a heart change and not merely an outward expression of religion.

[ 13 : 58 ] It's not how good you look, how religious you look. Where's your heart? And so you have the two sons, one who says, oh, I do the will of the father, but he doesn't really do the will of the father.

His heart's not in it. And that's the religious leaders of the day. And then you have the other ones who almost an open rebellion. I won't do it. But later there's repentance.

They're the ones who are the sinners in society. The ones who are opposed to God, but whose heart is changed to the point that they then do the will of father. And say what matters then is the obedience.

Those who do the will of the father, not those who say they're going to do it. So again, salvation is a heart change, not merely an expression of religious behavior, religion.

James two, 14 through 19 says the same truth. There James writes, what good is it? My brothers, if someone says he has faith, but does not have works.

[ 15 : 02 ] Can that faith save him? If a brother's sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to him, go in peace, be warm and filled without giving them the things they needed for the body.

What good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, it's dead. But someone will say, you have faith and I have works.

Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. And he goes on to say, you believe that God is one. You do well. Even the demons believe in shudder.

So James even goes so far as to make the argument that the demons know who God is, and they fear him even. But that doesn't mean they're saved, does it?

We know they're in opposition to God, and yet they know who he is. And so James is arguing, it's more than just saying something. It's more than just affirming it mentally. True faith always has a corresponding heart change.

[ 16 : 04 ] We see evidence for it in the works that you do, just like we see with the two sons. What you do speaks more or more loudly than what you say you're going to do.

Maybe another way of saying this is to say, belief in God is insufficient. Let that sink in for a second. Belief in God is insufficient if no spiritual fruit accompanies it. The evidence that belief in God is effectual is if spiritual fruit accompanies it.

So we think of, for example, the fruits of the spirit. If someone says they're a believer, but there's no fruit evidence, then can we truly believe that? Can we truly know that?

Even the demons believe and shudder. And of course, that ties in very closely with what we see in the next parable. So I went ahead and for the sermon, we want to look at both parables because I think the message is continued.

They're both connected with John the Baptist and the two sons. What matters is the fruit that's produced, the work that's done, not what they said they were going to do at the beginning. And so then we move into a parable about producing fruit, about a vineyard.

[ 17 : 21 ] And so I think there's a clear connection. So I want us to spend some time looking at the parable of the tenants. Again, this is in verses 33 through 46. We won't go back and reread those.

I thought we could start with what we know, things that I could go through really quickly that I feel like we don't have to really teach through. I think it's obvious that the master of the house is God. The vineyard that he leases out is the kingdom of God.

Look at verse 43. Therefore, I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you. It's a vineyard that's taken away. The vineyard represents the kingdom of God. That's pretty self-explanatory and given to us there.

So the master is God. The vineyard is his kingdom. The tenants are narrowly the religious leaders and more broadly all Israel. So the condemnation that he's bringing is specifically on the religious leaders of Israel.

But there's also a way in which he's judging all Israel in this. And we think about the implications of what happens in terms of who he gives the vineyard to. The inclusion of the Gentiles in some way means the rejection of Israel.

[ 18 : 21 ] And so broadly Israel narrowly the religious leaders of Israel. So some observations from the parable. First, and I may be making this term up, but this is a historical parable.

It's a parable that's actually pointing to what has already historically happened. So in the parable, it tells the history of Israel and how they received the prophets and how they have dealt with handling God's kingdom.

Other observations from the parable. Verse 33, we see that the master has prepared the vineyard with great care. And the master's God. The vineyard's his kingdom. So God with great care has prepared his kingdom for those who would receive the kingdom.

We see that he fences it around for protection. And he provides all that's necessary for it to produce fruit. He gives the protection for the vineyard. And he gives everything needed that fruit would be produced from this vineyard.

And so we see in this how God has prepared and invested in his people. We also see that he has entrusted the vineyard to other people with the expectation of a harvest of fruit.

[ 19 : 39 ] So he's protected it. He's prepared it. That it might produce fruit. And so God's full expectation is that his kingdom will be a kingdom that produces fruit for his name, for his glory.

Again, this may have more of a specific reference to the leaders of Israel, but obviously these leaders represent the state of the nation as a whole. God's people were expected to show fruits of the kingdom, to show fruit that would be glorifying to God.

And then the servants God sends to harvest fruit from his kingdom are the prophets. I've mentioned that earlier. Maybe that was pretty obvious as well. But these prophets Israel rejects, many of them are killed.

We just read this morning during Sunday school from Hebrews 11 and how it describes the end of some of the prophets. They were stoned. They were sown in two.

They were destitute, afflicted, living in caves, despised by men. So this is really what happened to the prophets that God sent to Israel. They were rejected.

[ 20 : 52 ] They were hated, stoned, put to death, even sawn in two. And yet, in spite of that, God is patient with his people. And he sends more prophets, expecting fruit.

So he keeps sending the prophet, hoping that there might be some fruit from them. And again, this is a parable. We understand God's sovereign. He knows what's going on. It's not as though he hoped and his hopes were unfulfilled.

But how it's expressed in the parable is God's expectation was that fruit would be produced. And a logical way to bring that about is by sending his prophets to call forth fruit, to call for a harvest of some fruit.

But even though God's patient and he sends more, these too he kills, or they kill and reject. So finally, we see in verse 37, God sends his own son, which is what's now taking place.

So again, if we picture this parable as an overview of Israel's history, God's made them a nation. He's protected his people. He's hedged them around and provided protection for them that they might remain.

[ 22 : 00 ] He's provided a remnant of his people even to this day. And so God has prepared them. He's protected them. He's given them all they need to produce fruit. He's given his word.

He's spoken to them. He's given them all they need that they might produce fruit for eternity, for God, for his glory. And when they did it, he sent his prophets to call them back to that.

But they rejected and killed them. So God's patient with them. And he sends more prophets and more prophets and they reject them. They kill them until finally, he sends his own son. And so Jesus has just worked through the history of Israel to today, to the moment that they're living in right now.

And what should their expectation be? It's the son. Surely they'll listen to the son. But what do we see happen?

But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, this is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance. And they took him and they threw him out of the vineyard and they killed him.

[ 23 : 10 ] And so him too, they're going to kill. Jesus prophetically here is saying, this is what's going to happen to me. I found one element very interesting in this.

And it's always hard in the parables. You can't draw a direct correlation to everything in the parable. But if you look at verse 38, but when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, this is the heir.

So interestingly, in Jesus' parable, do the tenants know that the son is the son? Yes. They know it's the son. In fact, why do they want to kill him?

Because he's the son. Now just let that sink in for a moment. If Jesus is implying that specifically with the religious leaders of the day, he's saying, this isn't a question of whether or not you truly know that I'm the son of God.

We've said already, his works have testified to that. Even the sinners are seeing this. The tax collectors or prostitutes know that John was my messenger and that I'm the son of God.

[ 24 : 18 ] It's not a question of knowledge. There's a willing rejection, even a desire to kill him because he's the son that we might take the kingdom for ourselves. Now, again, what all does that imply?

I don't want to go too far in this, but I think Jesus is at least implying that the religious leaders know him to be the son. They are so hard in their heart. They're not believers. They're not Christians.

They're not trusting even in God the Father. They say they are, but their hearts aren't there. They're whitewashed tombs that look good on the outside, but spiritually inside, they're dead. And so even when the Messiah appears, they hate the Messiah because he's messing things up.

Now, I'm going to say this hopefully in the least political way I can, but what happens is they have gained for themselves power as the religious leaders and they won't give it up.

Even when the son of God comes, the Messiah, he's going to mess things up and we won't have the power we had previously. They're going to look to him instead of us and so they hate him.

[ 25 : 24 ] Now, my least political way is to say it's not surprising how we see people wanting to hold on to power, right? There's always this desire. Whoever's in power, whoever desires power, there's this drive to want power and corruption, I think, that it breeds so often.

And I think we're seeing that even with the religious leaders in Jesus' day, that there's this desire for power that they're unwilling to give it up. And so, even to the point that they're willing to kill Jesus, the Messiah himself.

And so, look at verses 40-41. Let me just say verse 39. They took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. So again, if we imagine the vineyard as the kingdom and we think even of Jerusalem as being the center of that kingdom, that vineyard, they're going to cast Jesus out of the city, which is exactly what happens and they put him to death outside the city.

But look at verses 40-41. When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants? They said to him, he will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their season.

So what's remarkable is we know that the chief priests, the Pharisees, the religious leaders are part of this crowd if not the entire crowd. And he asks the crowd, so what's the master going to do with these tenants?

[ 26 : 51 ] And in parable form they say, he's going to get those riches out. He's going to give his vineyard to somebody else. That's obvious. That's obvious. In verse 45 we see, when the chief priests and Pharisees heard this parable, they perceived that he was speaking about them.

So it's possible that some of them even drew the right conclusion and then it clicks that, oh, that's me. And I thought maybe a very close parallel to this is David when he sins with Bathsheba.

You remember Nathan the prophet comes to him? And Nathan deals with David's sin, this man of power, he deals with his sin by giving him a parable about a man who's rich and has lots of sheep and steals the one sheep of his neighbor.

You remember David's response in 2 Samuel 12, 7? Or Nathan, what Nathan says to him? David's infuriated. Why would this guy do this?

This is wrong. He ought to be judged for that. And Nathan says what to him? You! David, you're the man! You're that guy! Almost exactly what Jesus is doing here with this parable.

[ 28 : 12 ] They see how wrong it is and then it clicks with them. He's saying that about us! We're the tenants he's speaking about. They even get so far as to call the tenants which is themselves wretches.

He says throw those wretches out! You're that wretch! And then Jesus which is almost somewhat strange Jesus transitions and he says well he tells them in answer to their comment that therefore I tell you the kingdom of God in verse 33 will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.

But right midst in with that he brings up this idea of himself being the cornerstone the chief cornerstone. So he ends the parable by quoting to them Psalm 118 and we've seen already in Matthew another reference to this.

But Jesus is the cornerstone upon which the kingdom is built that holds the kingdom together the head of the kingdom and yet he's rejected by his own people by Israel.

And so Jesus is declaring that the kingdom is truly coming to him. It's dependent upon him. The kingdom is completely dependent upon Christ as the head of that kingdom and those who reject him will be destroyed.

[ 29 : 40 ] There's no hope for any who would reject him. This is exactly what Peter will later proclaim before the rulers and the elders and the scribes and the high priest and his whole family in Acts chapter 4 when Peter said let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified whom God raised from the dead by him this man is standing before you well this Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you the builders which has become the cornerstone and there is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

So if there's any doubt Peter later proclaims Jesus is the cornerstone and that the religious leaders and he lists well Acts lists out who all that includes and it's everybody who would have been present here you're the builders who rejected the cornerstone Jesus is that cornerstone and there's salvation in no other name but in his and then Peter will deal with the implications of that concept in more detail when he writes this letter of 1 Peter in chapter 2 verse 4 here's just an excerpt from verse 4 it says as you come to him Jesus a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious he talks about how the church is being built into this holy temple a royal priesthood but here we see again Jesus is the one who is rejected by men but is chosen by God and precious now also important as we consider this is Psalm 118 he quotes



Psalm 118 about him being the chief cornerstone but Psalm 118 is a psalm if we had to say what's the theme of Psalm 118 it's a testimony that the steadfast love of the Lord endures forever and it's the same psalm that contained the hosannas that Jesus received when he entered into Jerusalem so when Jesus came in we saw that the children were crying out hosanna and I said it's from Psalm 118 that they're crying that out and Psalm 118 is one of the psalms that would have been read the week of the Passover which they're in right now and so he chooses a psalm that's familiar to them that's already been partially fulfilled through the hosannas and says there's more to the psalm that's also about me I'm the chief cornerstone that would be rejected so listen to the contents of the quote Psalm 118 beginning in verse 21 I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation that's the hosanna moving into he's now become or that

God has become his salvation verse 22 the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone this is the Lord's doing it is marvelous in our eyes this is the day that the Lord has made let us rejoice and be glad in it now my kids know that song because that's one that I like to sing every morning to them this is the day this is the day that the Lord has made let us rejoice and be glad in it but what is the day that the Lord has made what is it speaking of what is the day of the Lord in the Old Testament it's the eschaton it's the end of the age it's when the fulfillment of the coming of the Messiah it's marvelous in our sight so what is the fulfillment of the day of the Lord that great day of the Lord well it's the day when God fulfills the hope of Israel the Hosannas Lord save I praise you because you have become my salvation Jesus enters into Jerusalem he's become the salvation that they hoped for in the

Hosannas and so they proclaim Hosanna in a different way not Lord save but the Lord saves because we see our Savior coming into Jerusalem and now we come here and Jesus says but look the psalm went on it says the cornerstone is rejected by men that's what you're doing right now but understand this this is the day that the Lord has made let us rejoice and be glad in this day and so for those who will see this is the coming of the Messiah and if you'll look and hope to that day there's calls for rejoicing and so we sing each morning this is the day the Lord has made because we're looking back to what Christ has done and we realize that we're living in that day we're living in the eschaton we're living in the time in which Christ has become that chief cornerstone he's become the king he's been seated on his throne he's become or he's reigning over his kingdom and so we are to rejoice in that day and be glad in that because it's the day God has provided salvation through his son for his people and so what that means is that what we're reading and what they were living out is that day that was spoken of in the

[ 34 : 50 ] Old Testament Jesus is declaring that he's the stone that they are the builders and that this is the day of salvation that proves that the steadfast love of the Lord endures forever how do we know the steadfast love of the Lord endures forever well we ought to know from his character but it's evidence in this he's rejected he's rejected his prophets are put to death over and over again why would God continue to love his people it's not because of them is it but because his steadfast love endures forever what evidence do we have that endures forever that after sending his prophets that were put to death after he's rejected over and over again by his people Israel he sends his own son to die that he might save some and create a kingdom a vineyard that will produce fruit for his name and for his glory which connects it to the previous parable which connects it to what we saw of John the Baptist we might conclude from this parable what Jesus is teaching is it's fruit that determines true belief it's fruit you know them by their fruits what's wrong with those tenants that were so bad when God went to them expecting there ought to be fruit there was no fruit that's a problem if you own a vineyard right just imagine you're going to buy a business you're going to start a vineyard your goal is to produce some fruit and make some wine maybe but if you have a vineyard that never produces fruit that's a problem isn't it so too is someone who professes to be a believer a follower of God who produces no fruit there's a problem so it's fruit that determines true belief and so he's dealing with

Israel again broadly the religious leaders specifically neither which are producing fruit as a whole why because they're spiritually dead even the sinners the tax collectors the prostitutes are turning to God by faith but those who are the religious leaders are rejecting him so the kingdom of God will be taken away and given to whom to be taken away from those who outwardly are Israel those who are the religious leaders and instead it's going to be given to sinners the worst of the worst tax collectors prostitutes and gentiles like us the nations are going to be brought into the kingdom it's going to be given to them that they might produce fruit and again who's producing fruit it's not the religious leaders it's the sinners that produce fruit those who by faith trust in Christ who go to him knowing they have nothing in themselves to proclaim themselves righteous but they go to him looking for

Christ alone to be that righteousness so what are some applications in closing well I think much of the message is made clear God's word applied to us but here just a few one if we can draw an application from the parable and what we see the example in verse 28 what do you think a man has two sons and he went to the first and said his son go and work in the vineyard today likewise even with the tenants of the vineyard I think the first conclusion we can draw is that God has called us to work for him all of us are called to work for God and God's full expectation in both these parables is that there would be fruit that's produced that he might reap a harvest for his glory and for his kingdom and so every one of us is called to work for the

Lord then secondly what we do matters more than what we say first Samuel 16 7 man looks on the outward appearance but the Lord looks on the heart so the reality is we're going to be deceived there's going to be a lot of people who look like great Christians who aren't Christians at all there's going to be a lot of people who look like tax collectors and prostitutes who aren't and we're not going to know because we're not going to see what God's doing in their heart that brings about that change but the evidence of it will be fruit for his kingdom and so this is a warning this whole passage is a warning to those who look religious but are dead on the inside and it's a great place to say that isn't it because where are we going to find the people who look religious but are dead on the inside probably inside the church and so it's got to be a warning to some in this room it's not enough to look like a Christian if you haven't really trusted Jesus Christ and there's no fruit in your life it's a false religion that's going to end in being thrown out of the kingdom being cast out again that person is like a whitewashed tomb looks real good on the outside but inside it's dead it smells it stinks thirdly we can conclude how we finish matters more than how we start we see that with the parable of the two sons the first son foolishly says he's not going to do it but later he repents and does it there's another one who says he's going to do it but he doesn't actually do it and so

God forgives even our early folly and he welcomes us back time and again he's patient he abounds in mercy his steadfast love endures forever we have an old testament example in ezekeiel 18 21 through 24 but if a wicked person turns away from all his sins that he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right he shall surely live he shall not die none of the righteous excuse me none of the transgressions that he has committed shall be remembered against him well what a hope that is for the righteousness that he has done he shall live have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked declares the Lord God and not rather that he should turn from his way and live but when a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice and does the same abominations that the wicked person does shall he live none of the righteous deeds that he has done shall be remembered for the treachery of which he is guilty and the sin he has committed for then he shall die so it matters more how we end than how we begin now that's scary on one hand it's scary if you begin righteous it's scary if you begin by saying

[ 41 : 40 ] I'll do what you say father but then you don't actually do it it's scary for those of us who are professing believers we prayed earlier for a church that was dealing with church discipline the reality in cases of church discipline are this either a Christian has fallen into sin for which he will repent and turn back to God and be the better for or a false believer has professed faith in Christ and he's not a believer at all if the end is that he doesn't repent how much worse is this state than it was at the beginning and so it's a warning for us to finish well not that we can do that on our own but to hope in Christ to the very end and know that those who are truly his will persevere that no one can pluck us out of his hands but it's also great encouragement isn't it because we don't always start well and we fail along the way and what hope is there for us he's a God of mercy who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked but rather that they should turn away from their wickedness and live and so we're encouraged that we have a forgiving

God a God who welcomes us back fourthly we see if we're not producing fruit for the kingdom it's evidence that we're not Christians at all that fruit is the deciding factor in both these things that tell us whether someone belongs in the kingdom or not if you're not producing fruit no matter what you profess no matter what you say if there's no fruit in your life realize that you too can be cast out of the kingdom maybe a way to evaluate this is to say are our words consistent with our heart because we can deceive people with the words we say by the ways we act but is our heart consistent with the things that we're saying is it really showing forth what's there in the heart fifthly those who stand for God will be hated discouraged I mentioned earlier Hebrews 11 tells us that the prophets suffered mockings and flogging and even chains and imprisonment they were stoned they were sawn in two they were killed with a sword they went about in skins of sheep and goats destitute afflicted mistreated and I said this in

Sunday school but I love this line that falls next of whom the world was not worthy wandering about in deserts the world the world is not worthy of aren't the ones who are necessarily loved by the world are they they are hated by the world and so I hope that will be encouragement for us we don't know what the days are ahead of us I think we can gauge the times what we see happening what we've seen happen but more and more there's been a turn in our culture against Christianity to declare homosexuality to be wrong in our day and age in our culture considered insensitive and judgmental and we're now the ones who have the problem and it's going to happen more and more as we stand for what's true and what God's word sets before us but be encouraged that though we may be hated by the world it may mean to be seen in

God's eyes as those for whom I want to encourage you that God welcomes sinners a theme in that second parable is that and even what Jesus said before was that the sinners see and are turning to him Matthew 9 10 through 13 and Jesus reclined at table in the house behold many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples and when the Pharisees saw this they said to his disciples why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners but when he heard it he said those who are well have no need of a physician but those who are sick go and learn what this means I desire mercy and not sacrifice for I came not to call the righteous but sinners it ought to be a great encouragement to us that God calls sinners that Jesus came to be a doctor for those who are sick and unwell and so if we see our need then we know we have an answer we have a savior the only people probably who are in danger in this room are for those of you who have said that's not me

I'm not in that category of sinner but if you see yourself as a sinner it ought to encourage your heart to know that God welcomes sinners and that Jesus came to save sinners none of us are so bad as to be rejected by God if we will repent and turn to him even after the prophets are rejected and killed he still sent his son to suffer the same that he might die to redeem us from our sins so we can know that all who turn to him will be saved there may be some of us who think themselves too good or too righteous to be saved for if we fail to see the need of our savior and therefore reject him we are like the religious leaders in Jesus day who were cast out of the kingdom but for all who see their need for a savior he came and died for you he welcomed sinners and that ought to encourage our hearts as well let's go to

[ 47 : 26 ] God in prayer dear Heavenly Father we thank you that you are a forgiving God who is filled with steadfast love that endures forever and you've evidenced this you've proven this to us by sending your son to die for us even after those people who were called by your name would reject you would reject your son would reject your prophets would put them to death Lord we thank you that in the process of rejecting the cornerstone he was made the cornerstone in the process of putting to death Christ he atones for our sins him for our salvation and Lord we ask that you be with us even as we prepare to take the table that we would think upon that fact that Christ came knowingly to die for our sins that he might welcome sinners into his kingdom we praise you for this in Christ's name Amen