

Matthew 21:33-46

The Challenge of Discipleship Study 3: *Courage*

Focus Question: *When in your life have you needed courage?*

Word of Life

“Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.” Matthew 21:43

Read [Matthew 21:33-46](#)

This is the third parable in Matthew 20-21 in which Jesus uses the imagery of the vineyard. It closely parallels the Song of the Vineyard found in [Isaiah 5:1-7](#) with which the religious leaders to whom Jesus tells the parable would no doubt have been familiar.

God is the owner of the vineyard who lovingly and carefully digs up the soil, clears it of stones, and plants the best vines. A watchtower is made to protect the vineyard, and a wine vat is constructed for the harvest. The vineyard is Israel; Judah is the planting. But despite the owner’s loving care, only wild grapes are found.

1. *Can you relate to the vineyard owner?*
2. *Have you ever worked on a project with disappointing results? How does it feel?*

Likewise, in the parable of the wicked tenants, the same kind of loving care is depicted in the landowner’s actions. The vineyard is entrusted to tenants who refuse the owner the harvest, abuse the owner’s servants, and kill the owner’s son.

3. *What are some possible reasons why the tenants didn’t treat the heir better?*

This leads to the pronouncement of judgment and rejection. The original tenants who confuse ownership with stewardship are replaced by another people who will yield fruits of the kingdom (vs. 43) at the harvest time.

4. *How did the chief priests and the Pharisees respond to this parable? (See verses 45- 46)*
5. *How is this parable a picture of or allegory of the history of salvation?*

There are several points to note. Both the heir and Jesus are killed outside the walls. Also, note the Greek word for “time” is not *chronos* (chronological time, e.g., “What time is it?”) but *kairos* (the fullness of time, e.g., an expectant mother saying to the soon-to-be-a-father, “It’s time!”)

The message and its challenge speak to the church of every age. God lovingly, graciously calls us into the vineyard. God plants and equips the vineyard – the church – and then entrusts it to our stewardship. God’s intention is a full, rich harvest of the fruits. The harvest time will come. The question – and the challenge – for us is: “Will we have the courage to be faithful stewards, bearing fruit?”

6. *What role does courage have when it comes to bearing fruit?*
7. *What are examples of the “fruits” of the kingdom? (Look at Paul’s list of the “fruits of the Spirit” in Galatians 5:22-26.) How are those fruits reflected in our congregation?*

Prayer

O Christ, help us to be faithful and to bear good fruit!

Dig Deeper

[Galatians 5:22-27](#)

Last Word

This week, pray for courage to intentionally and boldly bear fruit.