

Christ the Cornerstone

Mark 12:1-12

June 28, 2026

Pastor Francis Bezzam

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. ² When the season came, he sent a servant to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. ³ And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. ⁴ Again he sent to them another servant, and they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully. ⁵ And he sent another, and him they killed. And so with many others: some they beat, and some they killed. ⁶ He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ ⁷ But those tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ ⁸ And they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. ⁹ What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. ¹⁰ Have you not read this Scripture: “‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; ¹¹ this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”

¹² 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.

Imagine your employer calls you one day and tells you that your attendance at work was impeccable but your productivity was zero last month. He tells you that you produced nothing Or, your teacher tells you that you had attending all classes but shows that you received an “F” on every single test. Or, a client or customer tells you that you had attended to every call but no actual work was done.

And when asked for a reason - you tell your employer, teacher or customer that you are you are justified by Jesus’ merit on your behalf and you don’t have to do any work or produce any results. That would be absurd!

What do you think you would receive? A dismissal!

God has made us for work. God loves for you to produce something, to contribute and be of value to others.

Spiritually, we are no different.

God has called every Christian believer to a productive life. There is no retirement age for bearing fruit. You don’t have to be in vocational ministry to make disciples because Jesus commands and expects every disciple to bear fruit.

Jesus taught you know a tree by its fruit.

And God is glorified when his disciples produce fruit.

“The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the LORD; they flourish in the courts of our God. They still bear fruit in old age” Psalm 92:12-14

Jesus warned that a tree that does not bear fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. There is only one way to bear fruit.

By abiding in Jesus.

By being connected to Jesus.

By being constantly being nourished by the teaching of Christ.

Which means a relationship with Jesus is imperative.

Jesus must be your cornerstone, your rock, your Lord and Savior.

John the Baptist told the crowd in his day, “Bear fruits in keeping with repentance”.

But here in this passage, the time had come for Jesus to pronounce an indictment, to declare that God’s patience had run out with the leaders of the temple in the first century establishment.

Why? They had failed to produce fruit.

Last week, you saw our Lord being questioned about his authority because Jesus had undertaken some very provocative actions.

He had cleansed the temple by driving out money changers and flipping tables.

When the leaders asked Jesus, “By what authority do you do these things?”. Jesus replied that he had no obligation to tell them anything. Jesus has no obligation to tell anyone anything, particularly those who are blinded by their sin and plan to sin.

I have three major observations as we navigate through this passage:

Does God’s patience lead you to repentance or resistance?

Verses 1-5

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. ² When the season came, he sent a servant to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. ³ And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. ⁴ Again he sent to them another servant, and they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully. ⁵ And he sent another, and him they killed. And so with many others: some they beat, and some they killed.

This is the last parable that Jesus will teach in the Gospel of Mark. This is a parable that is allegorical in nature.

Tenant is a farmer, vinedresser or tiller of the soil. The leaders knew what Jesus said. They knew Noah was a vinedresser (Genesis 9:20). They knew Issachar, one of the sons of Jacob, was as a farmer (Genesis 49:15). They knew Uzziah the king of Judah was a man who have loved the soil and had hired farmers and vinedressers (2 Chronicles 26:10). Jesus taught his disciples in John 15. *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser”*.

This parable is explained by looking back at Isaiah 5:1-7.

“Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. ² 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. ³ And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. ⁴ What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? ⁵ And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. ⁶ I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briers and thorns shall grow up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. ⁷ For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting; and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, an outcry!”

God’s plan of redemption began by choosing a people – the Hebrews. They were his first “vineyard”.

God rescued them from Egypt. God gave them His Law. God showed them his glory. God gave them a land of milk and honey. God gave them his Covenant. God gave them everything to make them prosperous and fruitful.

But what did they do with God’s Covenant? They violated it by turning their backs to God.

In spite of their many failings, backslidings and a failure to produce fruit, God was patient, kind and longsuffering. God sent messenger after messenger, prophet after prophet so that his people would repent and return to their God. But not only did they not produce fruit, they resisted and treated the messengers of God with contempt. They shamed, dishonored and even killed some of them.

When Joash was king of Judah, see how they treated a man of God. *“And they abandoned the house of the LORD, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols. And wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this guilt of theirs. ¹⁹ Yet he sent prophets among them to bring them back to the LORD. These testified against them, but they would not pay attention. Then the Spirit of God clothed Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the*

priest, and he stood above the people, and said to them, “Thus says God, ‘Why do you break the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has forsaken you.’”²¹ But they conspired against him, and by command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the LORD”
2 Chronicles 24:20-21

Paul wrote to the Romans “*do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?*”

Romans 2:4

As Jesus teaches through this parable, they still had an opportunity to repent. And he isn’t done with the parable.

Observation#2: Does God’s provision lead you to trust or deny His Son?

Verses 6 through 12:

⁶ He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ ⁷ But those tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ ⁸ And they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. ⁹ What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.

¹⁰ Have you not read this Scripture: “‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; ¹¹ this was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”

¹² 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.

God’s plan all along was to bring in a New Covenant. A superior and better Covenant. A Covenant where Jew and Gentile could be reconciled to God by grace not by works. The Old Covenant was a Covenant of works.

The New Covenant is a Covenant of grace.

The Old Covenant’s Law was written on stone.

The New Covenant’s Law is written on hearts.

And two thousand years ago, Jesus the Beloved Son of God came to unveil that Covenant.

And that Covenant was inaugurated by making the Old Covenant obsolete.

The Old Covenant demanded obedience. Blessing came because of obedience. Curses because of disobedience. But the New Covenant is one sided – meaning God causes the heart of stone to turn into a heart of flesh. The New Covenant gives a right standing with God because of the perfect obedience of Christ.

Now, Luke fills in some details for us.

The leaders are in denial and in anger when they hear the words of our Lord.

¹⁶ He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.” When they heard this, they said, “Surely not!” ¹⁷ But he looked directly at them and said, “What then is this that is written: “*The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone*”? ¹⁸ Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.” Luke 20:16-18

In verse 9, when Jesus says, the vineyard will be taken from them, he means the kingdom will be given to those who trust in Jesus Christ as Lord.

But the leaders are in denial. And Jesus points them to Psalm 118:22, and asks them. Then what is written in Scripture? A stone that was thought useless in the building has become the cornerstone. And it was God’s doing. And it marvelous.

What does Jesus mean?

Stones used for building were sometimes rejected. That “stone” is Jesus. He was going to be rejected, suffer and die. And yet by his resurrection Jesus will become the foundation, the temple, and the head of all who trust in him.

Buildings in ancient days had a large stone at the corner of a building’s foundation often called a foundation stone or a cornerstone.

When Peter preached his second sermon, he told the leaders of the temple “*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*” Acts 4:11-12

⁷ So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “*The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,*” and “*A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.*” 1 Peter 2:7-8

For the Pharisees, the scribes and the elders, Jesus became a rock of offense, a stumbling block, a scandal that led them from unbelief, to enmity, to envy and to murder. Jesus became a stone would eventually crush them with the judgment of God.

But to all who turn and trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord, Jesus is all that you will ever need in this life or next.

Dear friends, is Jesus Christ *your* Cornerstone?

Because, if the Lord Jesus Christ is your Cornerstone, then you have a secure defense and a strong defender.

In conclusion, hear verse one from the old hymn “O Sacred Head Now Wounded”.

O sacred Head, now wounded,
 with grief and shame weighed down,
 now scornfully surrounded
 with thorns, Thine only crown.
 O sacred Head, what glory,
 what bliss till now was Thine!
 Yet, though despised and gory,
 I joy to call Thee mine.

On June 7, 1891, Charles Spurgeon preached his final sermon. In that sermon he said
“You will find sin, self, Satan, and the world to be hard masters; but if you wear the livery (garment/badge) of Christ, you will find him so meek and lowly of heart that you will find rest unto your souls. He is the most magnanimous of captains.”

God gave His Best to the world. God gave his Only Beloved Son to save wretched hell bound sinners, who apart from Christ, would spend an awful eternity without any hope. But in Christ you are complete. Because, God gave, you can give too and produce fruit for God.

While we still have energy and strength left in our bodies, let us give our best to God. Let us produce fruit for Christ. God is glorified when we produce fruit for him.

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: Christ the Cornerstone. Mark 12:1-12

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. Why does Jesus teach this parable? How is God's kindness and patience seen in the teaching of this parable? Romans 2:4
2. HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.
 - Do you believe Christ commands and expects you to bear fruit for God and God is glorified by it? Mark 4:3-8, Matthew 21:43, John 15:1-8 Galatians 5:22-23
 - What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

3. HEART For personal reflection: What will you do to produce fruit for God?