



Lenten Devotion - Monday, February 19

Submitted by Mark Meadows

Mark 12 : 1-12

1 Jesus then began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. 2 At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. 3 But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 4 Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. 5 He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed.

6 "He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, 'They will respect my son.'

7 "But the tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' 8 So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.

9 "What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. 10 Haven't you read this passage of Scripture:

"The stone the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone;

11 the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

12 Then the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.

Have you ever been given a gift that you were unworthy of receiving? Maybe a job that you were unqualified for or grace that was unwarranted? How did you respond to such a gift? Maybe at first with gratitude and a determination to treat that gift with respect and honor. But maybe in a short time that gratitude faded. And what was once was a humble acceptance, warped into a sense of entitlement. I can imagine the farmers in the scripture felt something like this. As the Master was away they agreed amongst themselves that the opportunity that had been given them was owed. "I deserve such a gift!" they might say. After all, they were doing all the work... As the "self made" man says— "No one helped me!" Or, "Everything I have is because of what I've done!" Or as the great musician, Frank proclaimed, "I did it my way."

In the book of James we are told that every good gift comes from God (James 1:17). We are all given good gifts from our Heavenly Father, (He promised this) and He asks that we share those gifts with others—giving to others like He has given to us. Even more so, that we give back to God what is rightfully his; offerings that are simple and true, cloaked in humility. These sacrificial gifts give us a glimpse into the Spirit of Christ—the One Who Is.

Unfortunately, we often call these God-given gifts our own and we ruin ourselves, and even worse, those around us. We put up walls against our friends and shoo away our families. In claiming these gifts as our own, we give ourselves to nothingness—A daily ritual of no hope. We claim everything good as our own and everything bad as someone else's doing. Let us be weary of such sentiments that bring destruction and instead, let us hold firmly to the holy sacrifices and sufferings of our Lord that bring healing and hope to even the worst of us. Let us praise and give eternal thanks to the "Man who planted the vineyard." For Jesus sacrificed His life for us while we were still sinners. Let us repent and turn to Him, remembering that Christ died, and He rose again. Will you respond today to the life of Jesus Christ and the mission He has called you to? Will you tend to His vineyard and give back to Him what is rightfully His: our life, our work, and our talents?

A Lenten Poem - Tuesday, February 20

Submitted by Ivy Meadows, 14 yrs old, 8th grade

Matthew 22: 1-14

1 Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: 2 “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. 3 He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

4 “Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’

5 “But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. 6 The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. 7 The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

8 “Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. 9 So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ 10 So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

11 “But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 12 He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless.

13 “Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

14 “For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

A poem based on the text of the

Parable of the Wedding Banquet:

Many are called by Jesus

but few are chosen.

By our faith alone

can we be messengers

of the Lord. He is our God,

Savior of the universe

in which all the impossible is made possible.

By our faith alone

can we bestow
our praise,
singing with our voices,
dancing with our feet.

As the men who
are called by Jesus
in the parable
of a wedding feast,
if our Lord and Savior
has tables of food
prepared for us,
and we are ungrateful
for the honor,

Are we not as
poor as a man with nothing
or as weak and thirsty as a traveler
in the desert?

The Kingdom of Heaven
is prepared for us.

All of us.

Yet if we do not repent of our sins
and put on the clothes to wear
to a feast,
then our uncleanness

will consume our lives.

The Lord has a seat ready for you

at his table.

Inviting us all to his feast.

By our faith alone

we are called by him.

Dressed in garments of forgiveness.

And placed in shoes of repentance.

Good and bad alike,

we are called,

loved,

treasured

by the Lord, Jesus.

By our faith alone

shall we be glad in our calling from God.

He has slaughtered the fattened cattle

For us.

All of us.

Jesus has called us,

even if few are chosen.

Answer His call—

His outreach—

By your faith to be fully His.

For many are called,

but few are chosen.

We hear the blasting trumpets call,
we profess our faith in Jesus Christ
to our neighbor,
but do not live the life
cleansed by the blood of Christ.

Are we not, then,
as poor as a man with nothing,
or as weak and thirsty as a traveler in the desert?

To be saved,
to be washed clean,
To be promised a life forever with God
is no simple task.

Life will throw boulders,
but the followers of Jesus
will grind them down to sand
with the Lord's aid.

Many are called,
but few are chosen.