

## **Matthew 21:33-46 Parable of the Wicked Tenants**

<sup>33</sup>“Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. <sup>34</sup> When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. <sup>35</sup> But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. <sup>36</sup> Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. <sup>37</sup> Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ <sup>38</sup> But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.’ <sup>39</sup> So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. <sup>40</sup> Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” <sup>41</sup> They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.”

<sup>42</sup> 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 amazing in our eyes’?

<sup>43</sup> Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. <sup>44</sup> The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.”

<sup>45</sup> When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. <sup>46</sup> They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

**Kerra Becker English**

**“Cornerstone”**

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The Cornerstone.

Rejected by the builders.

Amazing in our eyes.

Jesus takes an already known metaphor, and pairs it with a powerful parable.

His tongue cuts like a knife – with precision and with depth.

When you see yourself as the point of a Jesus story: Watch out.

It’s going to get uncomfortable.

What? You’ve never heard about the cornerstone? He asks.

It’s foundational.

It’s formational.

Dated at the intersection of now and not yet,

Positioned at the corner where east meets west, or where left meets right.

In English – the cornerstone is something that is essential, indispensable, or absolutely basic.

Everything, and I mean every - thing, is built upon the cornerstone.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

Rejected. Rejection. Complete and utter rejection.

That’s the point where the parable meets the metaphor.

Those wicked tenants who leased the landowner’s vineyard got greedy.

Really, really greedy.

The trustees not only broke the trust, they beat and killed it.

They killed the slaves sent to reap the harvest.

They killed the landowner’s Son, thirsty for the vineyard’s blood red inheritance.

We recognize the foreshadowing.

The Son, Jesus, sent to harvest the vineyard, is executed.

His blood poured out like wine.

Jesus would tell you himself:

The more you puff up your religion to be the right one, the only one,

The more likely it is to be violent.

The more you stoke the arrogance of religious zealots,

The more you spill the blood of slaves and servants, and slaughter God's sons and daughters.

That was true then.

It is still true now.

"We give Thee but thine own," the old hymn tells us.

"All that we have is thine alone, a trust O Lord from thee."

The harvest isn't "ours" to take. It never was.

It belongs to God. It has always been God's.

Try to take and hoard the Kingdom –

and most certainly it will be given to someone else.

It will be given to those who know the fruit of the Spirit.

Fall on the cornerstone – and be broken.

Let it fall on you – and be crushed.

Nevertheless, we come to the major turn in this text.

*This is the Lord's doing.*

The Spirit of the Living God is doing this.

God anticipates our rejection.

God knows our vulnerability.

God calls out our violence,

And God lifts up those who are the victims of violence.

And then, God places the cornerstone of our now and not yet,  
building anew precisely on that spot where we have been broken or crushed.

Amazing.

Marvelous.

We can hardly believe what we see.

This is a new day.

A day God has given us to start again.

Rejoice, be glad, give thanks in it.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

God's Kingdom will always condemn the greed and arrogance of the world,

Where blood is shed for profit.

Those builders have no business with the Lord of all Creation.

The cornerstone celebration lets us know that we can start on THIS date and in THIS place

To make a difference in this old world.

The God who entered history in a man named Jesus

Continues to love and care for the world we are tenants in now.

What kind of tenants do you want to be?

Behold – the cornerstone.

Rejected by the builders.

Amazing in our eyes.