

Working in the Lord's Vineyard

Matthew 21.28-46; Mark 12.1-12; Luke 20.9-19

Hindsight is 20/20. We can see how and why things happened the way they did. That's nice, but what we need is *foresight* to see ahead, so we can live our lives *now* wisely. That's what we get from Jesus' parables. Truth is on display here, in two stories about workers in the vineyard.

Context, context, context...

- *It's Holy Week: Jesus' popularity is at an all-time high*
- *Jewish religious leaders are frantic to get rid of Jesus*

The Two Sons (Mt 21.28-32)

- *One son said "No," then went; one said "Yes," then didn't.*
- *Tax-collectors and prostitutes will get in Kingdom, not you!*
- *Don't play the 'Pharisee game' – Put your faith in Jesus.*

The Tenant Farmers (Mt 21:33-45)

- *Wicked farmers kill the owner's servants, then his son!*
- *Stewardship of the Kingdom-in-waiting will be given to others.*
- *Faithfully work in the Lord's 'vineyard': The King is coming!*



1. The historical events which prompted Jesus to tell the parables of the two sons and the tenant farmers help us to understand their meaning. Read Matt. 21:1-27. You may also want to read parallel accounts in Mark 11, and Luke 19.28-20.8. How do people view Jesus at this time? Imagine the predicament of the Jewish religious leaders: They knew who Jesus was (see John 3.2). After all, what human authority could heal the sick and cast out demons?! They envied His popularity (Pilate knew this! Mt. 27.18), which is now at an all-time high! How do they try to defeat Him? How did Jesus shut them up?
2. In the parable of the two sons (Mt. 21.28-32), contrast the response of the sons to their father's request. What is exposed by the actions of the two sons? How did the second son illustrate the response of the Jewish leaders? How did the first son illustrate the response of the tax-collectors and prostitutes? What is required for a person to get into the Kingdom of God (cf. Jn. 3.3)? What did tax-collectors and prostitutes do that the religious leaders did not do (v32)?
3. In the parable of the tenant farmers (Mt. 21.33-44), who does the landowner represent? Who do the wicked farmers represent? What does the vineyard represent (see v43)? Notice how Jesus makes the Jewish leaders describe their own judgment (v41)! Bonus question: Who are the "other vine-growers" (v41b) or "people/nation" (v43) to whom the management of the kingdom will be given?
4. Both these parables have primary application to the Jewish leaders in Jesus' day. They refused to believe in Him; for this reason, they would not enter the kingdom. Tax-collectors and prostitutes would. They put Jesus to death, and as a result God's chosen people would face defeat and be scattered like dust. But these parables also have secondary application to us today. The parable of the two sons, of course, is a call for all to believe in Jesus. How does the parable of the tenant farmers apply to Christians today? If God judged His people Israel for unfaithfulness, will He not do the same to us? For more on this, read Romans 11!