

Whose Authority will you honour? (Isaiah 5:1-7 & Mark 12:1-17) 16-Nov-25

Isaiah 5:1-7

The Song of the Vineyard

5 I will sing for the one I love

a song about his vineyard:

My loved one had a vineyard

on a fertile hillside.

2 He dug it up and cleared it of stones

and planted it with the choicest vines.

He built a watchtower in it

and cut out a winepress as well.

Then he looked for a crop of good grapes,

but it yielded only bad fruit.

3 “Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and people of Judah,

judge between me and my vineyard.

4 What more could have been done for my vineyard

than I have done for it?

When I looked for good grapes,

why did it yield only bad?

5 Now I will tell you

what I am going to do to my vineyard:

I will take away its hedge,

and it will be destroyed;

I will break down its wall,

and it will be trampled.

6 I will make it a wasteland,

neither pruned nor cultivated,

and briars and thorns will grow there.

I will command the clouds

not to rain on it.”

7 The vineyard of the Lord Almighty

is the nation of Israel,

and the people of Judah

are the vines he delighted in.

And he looked for justice but saw bloodshed;

for righteousness but heard cries of distress.

Mark 12:1-17

The Parable of the Tenants

12 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 marvellous 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.

Paying the Imperial Tax to Caesar

¹³ Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. ¹⁴ They came to him and said, “Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not? ¹⁵ Should we pay or shouldn’t we?”

But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. “Why are you trying to trap me?” he asked. “Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.” ¹⁶ They brought the coin, and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?”

“Caesar’s,” they replied.

¹⁷ Then Jesus said to them, “Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.”
And they were amazed at him.

There’s a **sermon outline** for you to take **notes**. Let me **pray** first.

Let’s pray...

Context/The Vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-7)

Before we get to our NT reading from Mark 12 – 1 to 17

We need to get the **context** from our OT reading

[Slide-Context]

So please turn to Isaiah chapter 5 – verses 1 to 7

The time is approximately 700BC

V1 - Isaiah takes out his harp or lyre and sings a love song to the one he loves – namely God – and Isaiah sings about God’s Vineyard – planted on a fertile hillside

V2 – When God set up the vineyard – He dug the ground – cleared away all the stones – and planted the best vines – He built a watchtower so that watchmen could keep an eye on the vineyard (for security)

And God set up a winepress to press the grapes to produce wine

But – when God looked for a crop of good grapes – there was only bad fruit!

It turns out the vineyard is actually Israel (v7)

(pause)

And God addresses the people of Jerusalem and Judah in verse 3

And says v4 – what more could He have done for his vineyard to produce a good crop of grapes

But instead of producing good fruit – Israel had produced bad fruit!

So God decided to demolish the vineyard – Israel – vv4-6

And God's verdict is at the end of v7

God looked at His vineyard – Israel

And He looked for justice, but saw bloodshed

And He looked for righteousness but heard cries of distress

The bottom line – God's people – the nation of Israel – continually sinned and disobeyed and rebelled against God – despite warnings from God's prophets!

And so shortly after Isaiah's time – The 10 Northern tribes of Israel were exiled to Assyria – never to return

And a while later, the Southern tribes of Israel – Judah and Benjamin – were exiled to Babylon for 70 years – and then allowed to return.

We fast forward 700 years to Jesus' time – and it's about 33AD now

And in Mark 12 Jesus retells Isaiah's story of the vineyard – and Jesus throws Himself into story!

And the story is not just about the nation of Israel not bearing fruit for God – but also about obeying the **authority** of the owner of the vineyard and the owner's son – which is God and His Son, Jesus!

So now, please turn to Mark 12 – looking at verses 1 to 12

[Slide-1st point]

And our 1st point this morning is – **The Authority of Jesus, the Son, is Rejected** (vv1-12)

Look at v1 – Jesus tells a **parable**

A parable is an earthly story with a Heavenly meaning

- a) Parables were designed to help those who are humble and teachable to understand God's truth.
- b) Parables were also designed to conceal truth from the hard-hearted, proud, resistant or spiritually blind
- c) Parables invited people to think, reflect and respond. People were to ask themselves – who am I like in the parable?
- d) Parables used images and storytelling that were memorable – so that they were easy to remember and retell – and they stuck in people's minds to stir their consciences later

So in v2 – Jesus describes the vineyard – and immediately His listeners would know that the vineyard was Israel – because they would be familiar with that image from the OT.

Jesus then goes on to say how the owner of the vineyard rented it out to some farmer tenants – and then the owner moved far away

Then v3 – at harvest time – the owner sent his servant to collect the rent which was to be paid in fruit from the vineyard

But the tenants beat the servant and sent him away

V4 – the owner sent another servant – but they mistreated that servant too

V5 – then the owner sent another servant – who was killed – followed by many more – who were either beaten or killed!

V6 -finally the owner sent his son, thinking they will respect his son

But – v7 – that didn't work. The tenants thought – if they kill the owner's son - the heir of the vineyard – they can inherit the vineyard themselves!

So that's what they did – v8 – they killed the owner's son!

The owner is not happy – v9 – so He says He will come and kill those nasty tenants and give his vineyard to others!

Now remember, a **parable** has **a deeper spiritual meaning**.

In the parable:

[Slide-Parable]

The Vineyard

Represents **Israel, God's chosen people** — those God lovingly planted (cf. Isaiah 5:1–7).

The Owner

Represents **God the Father**, the one who gave them all they needed to flourish, and rightfully expects fruit (faith, justice, and obedience).

Note: **the generosity of God** – He equipped the vineyard for success.

Note: **the trust of God** – The owner went away and left the tenants to run the vineyard.

Note: **the patience of God** – Many times the owner gave the tenants a chance to pay the debt they owed. Patience they little deserved!

Tenants

Represent the **religious leaders of Israel** — the priests, scribes, and elders — who were unfaithful stewards of God's people — and neglected the spiritual care of the people!

Servants

Represent the **prophets God sent throughout Israel's history** — men like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others — including John the Baptist — who were repeatedly rejected, mistreated, or killed for calling the people back to God.

Son

Represents **Jesus – God's Son** — who is sent as the final and beloved messenger, whom the tenants reject and kill, which points to Jesus' coming crucifixion.

The **Others who are given the vineyard**

Represent those who respond faithfully to Jesus' death and resurrection. That's both **Jews/Gentiles who believe in Jesus**. This represents **the universal church (including us)!**

It's a great parable and picture of what happened in Israel in the past and was still happening in Jesus' time!

And notice there is some flawed logic in v7 – the tenants wrongly thought if they kill the heir – the son – they can inherit the vineyard for themselves – but you can only inherit, if the person making the will dies - but in the story the owner is still alive – **AND** – you can only inherit, if the person making the will nominates you as a beneficiary of the will – and that’s up to the owner – and he’s not going to make those wicked tenants beneficiaries – he’s going to give the vineyard to **others** who are worthy!

By telling this parable – Jesus is saying – **I am** the owner’s son in the parable – and **you** – the religious leaders of Israel – are going to reject and kill me – just like the son in the parable was rejected and killed.

What everyone on this planet needs to understand is:

Jesus, is God’s final messenger. There will be no other. Either people accept the message of Jesus or face certain judgment and condemnation. If people today do not repent of their sin and listen to and believe in God’s Son, Jesus, they have refused their last hope. Jesus is God’s ultimatum. No one else can be sent; heaven contains no further messenger. If Jesus is rejected, all hope is rejected. (Spurgeon paraphrased)

God cannot do any more than send His own Son!

(pause)

Look at the reaction of the religious leaders - v12 – the religious leaders looked for a way to arrest Jesus – because they knew Jesus had spoken the parable about them!

The religious leaders wanted to get rid of Jesus — to protect their power and reputation — just like the tenants got rid of the owner's son in the parable. You see - the last straw for the religious leaders was that Jesus says in verse 9 –“*The owner will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others!*”

Those **others** – meant – even **non-Jews**! And the religious leaders could not stomach that idea!

[Slide-1st point again]

The religious leaders were guilty of rejecting Jesus' authority

But we're not like that – are we?

Application

- We reject Jesus' authority when – we don't believe Jesus died on the cross for our sins to be forgiven – and when we don't believe Jesus rose from the dead after 3 days – to give us eternal life in Heaven!
- We reject Jesus' authority when – we don't obey His commands – as Jesus says “***If you love me, keep my commands***” (John 14:15)
- We reject Jesus' authority when – we continue to sin and rebel against God – and refuse to repent of our sin!
- We reject Jesus' authority when - we think we own the vineyard ourselves; not God. And when we forget that everything we have – our time, our talents, our family, our friends, our job, our possessions, even our ministry – all belong to God – and we are simply His stewards
- We reject Jesus' authority when - we resist God's Word – especially when it challenges us to 'change' or 'repent'

- We reject Jesus' authority when - we seek to control everything ourselves – and when we resist Jesus being King and Lord of our lives. You see, all our plans, ambitions, relationships, possessions and finance are under His control; not ours!
- We reject Jesus' authority when - we stop producing **spiritual fruit**: love joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control!
- We reject Jesus' authority when – we fail to be a good ambassador for Jesus and bring shame and dishonour to His Holy Name
- We reject Jesus' authority when - we ignore Jesus' Great Commission – and remain silent about our faith – when we are meant to share it!

Which brings us to our 2nd point – **The Authority of Jesus, the Son, is Vindicated** (vv10-11)

[Slide-2nd point]

Jesus goes on to explain what a terrible mistake it is to reject His authority.

In vv10-11 – He quotes from Psalm 118:22-23 and says to the religious leaders:

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 marvellous in our eyes'?"

Again, it's kind of a **parable**

The **stone that is rejected** - is **Jesus**

The **builders** are the **religious leaders of Israel**

Jesus is saying to them – the stone you see as worthless – that’s ME – but – what you don’t get is - God the Father sees me – as the **most important stone** – in fact I’m the **cornerstone or capstone**.

In building terms, the **cornerstone** is the stone that is laid first – and **all measurements for building a house are taking from this cornerstone** – otherwise the house is out of whack!

What Jesus is showing is that He is **the foundational stone** that we must build our lives on.

Application:

For us it means - we either **build our lives on Jesus as the cornerstone** of our lives or **we stumble over Jesus as the cornerstone** (1 Peter 2:8). **There’s no neutral ground with Jesus’ authority.**

If we have Jesus as the cornerstone of our lives:

- We build our life on His **teaching** (Matthew 7:24–25).
- We find **security and stability in Him** when life is difficult.
- We **measure our values and life’s direction by His truth**, not by the culture around us
- We **join others (in His Church) as “living stones” in the spiritual house** that God is building (1 Peter 2:4–6).
- We **honour the One the world rejected** by trusting and following Him

If we stumble over Jesus as the cornerstone of our lives:

- We reject His authority, **we build our lives on unstable foundations** — like **ourselves, our success, religion, our popularity or human approval.**

- And eventually, what we build cannot stand (see Matthew 7:26–27) because it's not built on the rock-solid foundation of Jesus
- And then we totally miss the very foundation God provided for us to be saved for Heaven.

Which brings us to our **3rd point** – **The Authority of Jesus, the Son, Demands a Response** (vv13-17)

[Slide-3rd point]

And **our response** comes from the next part of Mark 12 -vv13-17

Have a look at v13 – The Pharisees and the Herodians team up to try and catch Jesus in His words

The **Pharisees** were: a Jewish religious group devoted to strict obedience to the God's Law and the oral traditions. They opposed Roman rule and longed for the coming of the Messiah to restore Israel's independence.

The **Herodians** were: A **political group** who **supported King Herod (a Roman Puppet King) and his dynasty**, which was backed by **Rome**. They were **loyal to Rome's authority** and benefited from its power and stability.

Despite their differences – the Pharisees and Herodians team up – because they have a **common enemy**, Jesus!

After some flattery at the beginning of v14 – then comes the curly question:

“Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn't we?” (v.14–15)

In Jesus' day there were **three taxes**:

- i. **Ground tax**, which was 10% of all grain and 20% of all wine and fruit
- ii. **Income tax**, 1% of a man's income
- iii. **Poll [per head] tax**, a day's wages per year for men aged 12 to 65 and women aged 14 to 65

No-one likes paying taxes – even today!

The question seemed like it was a clever trap for Jesus!

If Jesus said “Yes, pay the tax,” the people of Israel would see Him as disloyal to Israel and siding with their Roman oppressors.

If Jesus said “No, don't pay the tax” Jesus could be accused of rebellion against Rome — a charge that was punishable by death.

But remember, Jesus is very smart!

Still in v15 – He knows they are trying to trap Him!

And He asks them to bring a **Roman Coin** – a **denarius** – to Him

[Slide-Coin]



The denarius coin had the image of **Tiberius** the reigning Roman Emperor. It had the inscription: “***Tiberius, the divine Augustus***” and on the reverse “***pontifex maximus***” – the ***high-priest*** of the Roman nation”

The coin was a sign of power. In the Ancient World, when an invasion happened – the first thing the invader did was to issue their own coinage. Their area of power was measured by the extent of the area that the emperor’s coins being valid currency!

To prove this point...

In our recent road trip to– we visited a secret WWII air-base in Charleville, QLD – and in the museum there - they had Japanese Currency made for Australia - in anticipation of occupying Australia!

(pause)

Now – the fact that the religious leaders had a denarius coin in their possession – shows they actually carry and use Caesar’s money, benefiting from the Roman system, yet they pretend to object to Caesar’s authority. Yet, they already live under Rome’s rule and depend on its economy!

Jesus makes the point in v16 – that it’s Caesar’s image on the coin!

[Slide-Response-Give to Caesar]

And then comes the absolute crackerjack answer to their question in v17

“Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.”

What Jesus’ reply means is

We must fulfil our responsibilities and obligations in both realms – the earthly realm and the heavenly/divine realm!

The coin has Caesar's image and belongs to him – as does any tax and respect due to him as emperor.

But we as human beings are created in **God's image** – and we are **God's image bearers** and we must give our ultimate allegiance, our worship and our obedience to God alone.

Caesar may own the coin – but God owns the whole world!

Caesar may have authority – but only because God allows it!

Ironically, as Jesus held the coin in His hand, He knew the government of Caesar would soon pierce His hands and crucify Him. Yet He still said, “pay your taxes to the Roman government.”

Application

What does it mean for us today to “***Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's***”?

It means living responsibly in both worlds:

- Respecting the laws of the land, paying our taxes, and contributing to society.
- But remembering that our ultimate loyalty is to God, not any government or earthly power.

We can serve faithfully in our nation but we can never let political or national identity replace our identity as God's people.

If the government authorities tell us to do something which contradicts God's Word, we are not obliged to obey; we obey God!

For example, as a minister – if a same sex couple asks me to marry them – I say no – because the Bible says marriage is between a man and a woman!

Another example – most states are pushing for laws that will make it illegal for Christians to tell people what the Bible says against homosexuality or gender. There may come a time, when we could be arrested for explaining or quoting what's in the Bible. If that's the case – so be it – we go to jail – but our ultimate allegiance is to God and His Word.

Conclusion

To finish up then

[Slide-Conclusion]

- The vineyard [God's people] still belongs to God.
- Even though God's Son, Jesus, was killed – He rose again – He is alive and reigns as the rightful heir!
- **His authority is not in question – He truly is Lord**
- The real question is: Will **WE** **submit** to His **authority**, or **resist** it?
- Following Jesus means **surrendering our lives to Him** and **bearing fruit that reflects God's image.**

Let's pray...

Heavenly Father, we thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, as the cornerstone of our faith. Forgive us for the times we have rejected Your authority or sought our own way. Help us to honour You in every part of our lives — with our hearts, our worship, and our resources. Teach us to give to You what rightly belongs to

You and to live faithfully in Your vineyard, bearing fruit that brings glory to Your name. May our lives reflect obedience, gratitude, and unwavering allegiance to You. In Jesus Name, we pray. Amen.

Benediction (Jude 23-24)

Now...

²⁴To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— ²⁵to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and **authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen**