

THE FIGHT FOR THE VINEYARD

Luke 20:1-19

In "**The Sound of Music**," Capt. Von Trapp, an old naval officer, is depicted as a man of strong convictions, sometimes stubborn, who doesn't always make the right choices, but who stands by his convictions.

When all of Austria opts to accept the inevitable,
he's willing to stand alone for what he believes.

The **religious leaders of Israel** take the opposite approach.

It'd be one thing if they sought truth and rejected Christ out of conviction, accepting rebuke when the multitude disagreed.

These leaders aren't interested in truth;

They're interested in maintaining their position.

**When Jesus threatens the system,
religious leaders respond to the challenge,
thus opposition develops (20- 21).**

He's popular.

Before they can stop Him, they have to discredit Him.

They send a delegation to trap Him.

They hope to expose ignorance or get Him to say something people don't like, so they'll turn against Him.

QUESTION CONCERNING HIS AUTHORITY 20:1-8

Leaders first question the source of Jesus' authority.

Their question 20:1-2 *One day as he was teaching the people in the temple courts and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, together with the elders, came up to him. 2 "Tell us by what authority you are doing these things," they said. "Who gave you this authority?"*

Why do they ask this question?

He cleanses the temple,

arousing people's interest and the leaders wrath.

He teaches people;

He preaches the gospel in the Temple, to their chagrin.

They ask who gave Him authority to oppose them.

"Who authorized you to teach?"

Where does your authority come from?"

The leaders work under the High Priest,

who claims to be operating on authority from Moses.

God authenticated that authority.

What's **YOUR** basis for opposing what they established?

Let's see your credentials!

The question's a trap.

If He has no credentials, the people lose respect.

If He *claims* credentials, they get Him for claiming rights no one recognizes, or for blasphemy.

His question 20:3-4 *"He replies, 'I will ask you a question. Tell me,⁴ John's baptism—was it from heaven, or from men?"*

Why does Jesus respond with another question?

"Where did John's authority come from?"

That answer will answer their question,
for John testified that He's Messiah.

John identifies Jesus: *"the Lamb of God,
Who takes away the sin of the world."*

If they accept his message, they accept Jesus.

If John's authority is divine, Jesus is Messiah; John says so.

If they don't believe John's prophecy of the coming kingdom,
they won't hail its presence in Jesus.

Their response 20:5-7 *They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Why didn't you believe him?' 6 But if we say, 'From men,' all the people will stone us, because they are persuaded that John was a prophet." 7 So they answered, "We don't know where it was from."*

What does Jesus reveal about them?

When they refuse to answer, He exposes their motives.

They just want to trap Him, NOT discover the truth.

Jesus' question places them in a dilemma.

They don't care about facts.

They don't believe John's message either.

Had they believed his message,
they would have followed John *and* Jesus.

There's no question how they want to answer: *"from men!"*

But they aren't honest!

The people *accept* John's authority.

How do they deny John's authority

without turning the people against them?

THEY AREN'T CONCERNED ABOUT TRUTH!

All they care about is protecting their own interests!

They don't like the prospect of being stoned!

But neither do they want Him.

They respond: *they don't know* where his authority's from.

Like many today, they don't recognize Jesus

–NOT because of lack of evidence–

but because they don't WANT to know the truth!

If they WANT to DO God's will,

they'll discover the truth about Him.

Since they don't want to obey God,

He doesn't reveal truth.

They fail to see truth because they harden themselves!

So many know
so little
about Jesus

because they refuse to submit to God's will.

His response 20:8 *Jesus said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."*

Jesus changes the essence of their answer.

It's an issue of the will.

They *refuse* to commit themselves concerning John.

So He won't commit Himself concerning *His* authority.

Until they submit to the rules they want *Him* to follow,

He won't play by them!

He discredits his enemies.

They're the authority in religious matters,
but confess they aren't competent to answer such a basic question: was John a
man of God?

From whom did John's message come? *They "don't know!"*
What good are they in providing leadership? They abdicate!
So when He goes on trial before them, He refuses to answer.
He has already demonstrated their insincerity and unbelief.

PARABLE OF THE UNJUST TENANTS 20:9-19

Based on their refusal to seek the truth, He announces God's view of their rejection, and
their resultant future.

[Answers their question. It tells them in whose authority He has come, and what He
intends to do about it!]

They're playing the role of tenant farmers
who refuse to give owner what He deserves.

The situation 9

*He went on to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some
farmers and went away for a long time.*

Again there's a long journey.

The owner (*father*) leaves his field with others.

Everyone knows absentee farm owners.

What's unusual: shameless betrayal of owner's interests.

He trusts them. They betray his trust.

They're to care for it FOR HIS benefit; send *him* profits

The tenant farmers' responsibility 10a *At harvest time he sent a servant to the
tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard.*

Owner sends for profits they're to accumulate for his benefit.

The farmers' response 10b-15a *But the tenants beat him and sent him away
empty-handed.¹¹ He sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated
shamefully and sent away empty-handed.¹² He sent still a third, and they wounded him and
threw him out.¹³ "Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my son,
whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.'¹⁴ "But when the tenants saw him, they talked
the matter over. 'This is the heir,' they said. 'Let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.'¹⁵
So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. "What then will the owner of the
vineyard do to them?*

Instead of sending profits, they mistreat servants.

They beat and send away the first

They beat, treat shamefully, and send away the second

They wound and throw out the third.

These represent prophets, God's messengers.

They call God's people to a lifestyle that glorifies God.

The people repeatedly reject the message and persecute God's messengers.

(Matt. 23:33-35).

It doesn't take much effort to find prophets who suffered:

Micaiah, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Amos, Elijah, Zechariah

God repeatedly sends warnings;

they turn on them and persecute them.

In patience God doesn't judge immediately.
 He gives opportunities; they refuse.
 Finally, He sends His son, whom He loves,
 the heir, thinking they'll respect Him.
 Instead of respecting the Son, they kill him,
 thinking they'll keep field & profits.

The results for the farmers 15b-16a

"What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them?"¹⁶ He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others."

Farmers are destroyed;
 Vineyard is given to others.

The people's response to the message 16b

When the people heard this, they said, "May this never be!"

They get the point!

What's the message of the parable?

Israel is God's vineyard (Isa. 5).
 Tenants are rulers to whom God entrusts His people.
 They're using what God gives for personal gain.
 They abuse His messengers;
 they're about to kill His Son.
 They'll be judged;
their inheritance will be given to new tenants.
 God entrusted field to Israel.
 Now they're about to lose it.
 God will take the land and destroy them.
 Fulfilled in A.D. 70.

They can't believe it!

Their inheritance can't go to others!

The application to that generation of Israel 17-18

¹⁷ *Jesus looked directly at them and asked, "Then what is the meaning of that which is written: 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone'?"¹⁸ Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."*

Ps. 118:22: They reject the One the Owner chooses to exalt.

"Cornerstone" may have been in foundation, at corner to unite two walls, shape and support the building,
 or at the top, binding it together, providing support,
 and consummating it.

Jewish tradition comments on construction of temple:

Stones are ordered pre-cut.

Builders, working 6-month shifts, find a disproportionate, useless stone.

They push it off to the abyss below.

Later, another crew, ready for stone to complete building find none.

They complain to quarry.

They're informed it was cut and sent earlier.

They piece together story, find the rejected stone,
 and bring it up the hill to the temple.

This generation has done the same

with the keystone of the true, spiritual temple.
 They reject the most important stone.
 It doesn't fit their plan.
 The one they thought least significant
 has become most significant.
 They know Ps. 118 is Messianic.
 Crowds quote it at Triumphal Entry.
 The leaders rebuke Him.
 Now He attributes it to Himself.
 He's claiming to be Messiah!
 Rather than test His claim, they reject Him.
 He'll be the cause of their destruction
 People may reject and oppose Jesus
 but it's they, not He, who will suffer.
 Anyone who continues to insist on opposing Christ
 is going to be pulverized.
 It's a fearful thing to fight God's Son (Psa. 2)

The leaders' reaction to Jesus' warning 19

The teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately, because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people.

They're playing with fire!
 Rather than repent, rejection is confirmed;
 they're determined to destroy Him.
 They know He's talking about them.
 That won't change their determination to destroy Him!
 Fear of people stops them from taking action.
 They aren't concerned about pleasing God.
 He's too far away!

WHAT ARE IMPLICATIONS OF JESUS' WARNING?

At least two main lessons stand out in passage:

1. People are not looking for the truth about Jesus.

In spite of claim to look for truth, Romans 3: "no one seeks after God." All turn away.

Reason anyone comes to Jesus: the Father draws us.
 You can be respected religious leader and not seek truth.

**Why do we give others benefit of the doubt,
when we know ourselves?**

We know we aren't as holy as we appear.
 Why do we believe the show others put on?
 People who reject Jesus don't do it based on evidence.

People reject Him because they aren't willing to give up their efforts and turn to Him.

Jesus is the Son.

In spite of evidence, people refuse to accept Him
 People aren't lost because they don't know.
 People are lost because they reject Him.

These men had abundance of light, they reject light received.

The Light of the world is standing in their midst;

they close their eyes;

they don't want to see.

They don't want to know the truth.

Thus they are justly condemned.

The fact people are religious (and even fanatical about it!) doesn't mean they're looking for truth

and want to please God.

Many religious people, like leaders of Israel,

are seeking their own exaltation and profit.

You can spend your life among God's people

and still turn your back on Jesus.

You can't go on, rejecting Light God gives you

and come out unhurt.

You can't play games with God and escape consequences.

When God Himself came to His creation,

instead of being melted by God's grace,

they're hardened.

They aren't satisfied until they nail Him on a cross!

2. Playing to the grandstands—seeking to remain popular with people—leads to destruction.

Those seeking popular approval,

end up rejecting Him; they die in judgment of A.D. 70.

They lose inheritance God promised through Abraham.

Ultimately, *they lose*. Death and destruction take their toll.

Pages of history are full of those set to destroy the gospel.

If you observe their end, you find destiny of the enemy.

Though they live in wealth and arrogance,

they die in ignominy and despair.