

# The Lord's Vineyard (Matt. 21:33-44)

## A Small Group Outline



### 1. Praise *(Purpose: To worship God)*

- What are you thankful for this week? *(let the group's secretary write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)*
- Song Service
  - Sing a few songs of praise to God

### 2. Pray *(Purpose: To carry each others' burdens and to seek the Lord)*

- What challenges did you have this week? *(write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)*
- Go into a season of prayer

### 3. Review *(Purpose: To learn accountability)*

- Tell us how it went with what you promised to do in last week's meeting? *(e.g. Who did your share your faith with this past week? Who did you minister to? How did actioning your I WILL STATEMENT go?)*
- Where people have failed to fulfil what they said they would, do not be harsh with them but gently encourage them to try again in the coming week. Give them more support by phoning or joining them in the week.

### 4. Give *(Purpose: To be good stewards of our monies)*

- This is the time to return tithes and offerings. If done electronically, kindly ensure that you get the bank account details of your local church from your treasurer. Don't forget to complete an envelope and to send the breakdown to him/her.

### 5. Discover *(Purpose: To learn to listen to God, and be obedient to His Word)*

- **Notes for the facilitator**
  - Read *Christ's Object Lessons (COL)*, pp. 284-306.
  - "The husbandman chooses a piece of land from the wilderness; he fences, clears, and tills it, and plants it with choice vines, expecting a rich harvest. This plot of ground, in its superiority to the uncultivated waste, he expects to do him honor by showing the results of his care and toil in its cultivation. So God had chosen a people from the world to be trained and educated by Christ.... **Upon this people God had bestowed great privileges, blessing them richly from His abundant goodness. He looked for them to honor Him by yielding fruit.** They were to reveal the principles of His kingdom. In the midst of a fallen, wicked world they were to represent the character of God" (COL 285)
  - "Through the Jewish nation it was God's purpose to impart rich blessings to all peoples. **Through Israel the way was to be prepared for the diffusion of His light to the whole world.** The nations of the world, through following corrupt practices, had lost the knowledge of God. Yet in His mercy God did not blot them out of existence. He purposed to give them opportunity for becoming acquainted with Him through His church. He designed that the principles revealed through His people should be the means of restoring the moral image of God in man" (COL 286).
  - "To [Israel] were committed the oracles of God. They were hedged about by the precepts of His law, the everlasting principles of truth, justice, and purity. Obedience to these principles was to be their protection, for it would save them from destroying themselves by sinful practices. And as the tower in the vineyard, God placed in the midst of the land His holy temple" (COL 287)
  - "**Their obedience to the law of God would make them marvels of prosperity before the nations of the world.** He who could give them wisdom and skill in all cunning work would continue to be their teacher, and would ennoble and elevate them through

obedience to His laws. **If obedient, they would be preserved from the diseases that afflicted other nations, and would be blessed with vigor of intellect.** The glory of God, His majesty and power, were to be revealed in all their prosperity. They were to be a kingdom of priests and princes. **God furnished them with every facility for becoming the greatest nation on the earth”** (COL 288). See Deut. 7:6, 9, 11-15.

- “Through disobedience to God, Adam and Eve had lost Eden, and because of sin the whole earth was cursed. But **if God's people followed His instruction, their land would be restored to fertility and beauty.** God Himself gave them directions in regard to the culture of the soil, and they were to co-operate with Him in its restoration. Thus the whole land, under God's control, would become an object lesson of spiritual truth. **As in obedience to His natural laws the earth should produce its treasures, so in obedience to His moral law the hearts of the people were to reflect the attributes of His character.** Even the heathen would recognize the superiority of those who served and worshiped the living God” (COL 289).
- “**But Israel did not fulfill God's purpose.** The Lord declared, ‘I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto Me?’ Jeremiah 2:21.... The Lord had through Moses set before His people the result of unfaithfulness. **By refusing to keep His covenant, [the nation] would cut themselves off from the life of God, and His blessing could not come upon them....** Deuteronomy 8:11-14, 17, 19, 20” (COL 291).
- “The warning [of unfaithfulness] was not heeded by the Jewish people. They forgot God, and lost sight of their high privilege as His representatives. The blessings they had received brought no blessing to the world. **All their advantages were appropriated for their own glorification. They robbed God of the service He required of them, and they robbed their fellow men of religious guidance and a holy example”** (COL 291).
- “The husbandmen who had been placed in charge of the Lord's vineyard were untrue to their trust. The priests and teachers were not faithful instructors of the people.... These husbandmen sought their own glory. They desired to appropriate the fruits of the vineyard. **It was their study to attract attention and homage to themselves”** (COL 292).
- “With a father's heart, God bore with His people. He pleaded with them by mercies given and mercies withdrawn. **Patiently He set their sins before them, and in forbearance waited for their acknowledgment.** Prophets and messengers were sent to urge God's claim upon the husbandmen; but instead of being welcomed, they were treated as enemies. The husbandmen persecuted and killed them. God sent still other messengers, but they received the same treatment as the first, only that the husbandmen showed still more determined hatred” (COL 293).
- “The Jewish rulers did not love God; therefore they cut themselves away from Him, and rejected all His overtures for a just settlement. Christ, the Beloved of God, came to assert the claims of the Owner of the vineyard; but the husbandmen treated Him with marked contempt, saying, We will not have this man to rule over us. **They envied Christ's beauty of character. His manner of teaching was far superior to theirs, and they dreaded His success.** He remonstrated with them, unveiling their hypocrisy, and showing them the sure results of their course of action. This stirred them to madness. They smarted under the rebukes they could not silence. They hated the high standard of righteousness which Christ continually presented. **They saw that His teaching was placing them where their selfishness would be uncloaked, and they determined to kill Him”** (COL 293)
- “**Christ would have averted the doom of the Jewish nation if the people had received Him.** But envy and jealousy made them implacable. They determined that they would not receive Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. They rejected the Light of the world, and thenceforth their lives were surrounded with darkness as the darkness of midnight. The doom foretold came upon the Jewish nation. Their own fierce passions, uncontrolled,

wrought their ruin. In their blind rage they destroyed one another. **Their rebellious, stubborn pride brought upon them the wrath of their Roman conquerors. Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple laid in ruins, and its site plowed like a field.** The children of Judah perished by the most horrible forms of death. Millions were sold, to serve as bondmen in heathen lands” (COL 295)

- **“As a people the Jews had failed of fulfilling God's purpose, and the vineyard was taken from them. The privileges they had abused, the work they had slighted, was entrusted to others”** (COL 296)
- **“The parable of the vineyard applies not alone to the Jewish nation. It has a lesson for us. The church in this generation has been endowed by God with great privileges and blessings, and He expects corresponding returns”** (COL 296).
- “Satan seeks to counterwork the work of God, and he is constantly urging men to accept his principles. He represents the chosen people of God as a deluded people. He is an accuser of the brethren, and his accusing power is employed against those who work righteousness. **The Lord desires through His people to answer Satan's charges by showing the results of obedience to right principles”** (COL 296).
- **“The sin of the world today is the sin that brought destruction upon Israel. Ingratitude to God, the neglect of opportunities and blessings, the selfish appropriation of God's gifts—these were comprised in the sin that brought wrath upon Israel. They are bringing ruin upon the world today”** (COL 302).
- “Men are in peril. Multitudes are perishing. But how few of the professed followers of Christ are burdened for these souls. **The destiny of a world hangs in the balance; but this hardly moves even those who claim to believe the most far-reaching truth ever given to mortals.** There is a lack of that love which led Christ to leave His heavenly home and take man's nature that humanity might touch humanity and draw humanity to divinity. **There is a stupor, a paralysis, upon the people of God, which prevents them from understanding the duty of the hour”** (COL 303).
- “In our day are not the same influences at work? Of the husbandmen of the Lord's vineyard are not many following in the steps of the Jewish leaders? Are not religious teachers turning men away from the plain requirements of the word of God? **Instead of educating them in obedience to God's law, are they not educating them in transgression? From many of the pulpits of the churches the people are taught that the law of God is not binding upon them. Human traditions, ordinances, and customs are exalted.** Pride and self-satisfaction because of the gifts of God are fostered, while the claims of God are ignored” (COL 305).
- Vs 42: **The stone the builders rejected: The prophecy of the rejected stone referred to an actual occurrence in the history of Israel, connected with the building of the first temple.** “When the temple of Solomon was erected, the immense stones for the walls and the foundation were entirely prepared at the quarry; after they were brought to the place of building, not an instrument was to be used upon them; the workmen had only to place them in position. For use in the foundation, one stone of unusual size and peculiar shape had been brought; but the workmen could find no place for it, and would not accept it. It was an annoyance to them as it lay unused in their way. Long it remained a rejected stone. But when the builders came to the laying of the corner, they searched for a long time to find a stone of sufficient size and strength, and of the proper shape, to take that particular place, and bear the great weight which would rest upon it. Should they make an unwise choice for this important place, the safety of the entire building would be endangered. They must find a stone capable of resisting the influence of the sun, of frost, and of tempest. Several stones had at different times been chosen, but under the pressure of immense weights they had crumbled to pieces. Others could not bear the test of the sudden atmospheric changes. But at last attention was called to the stone so long rejected. It had been exposed to the air, to sun and

storm, without revealing the slightest crack. The builders examined this stone. It had borne every test but one. If it could bear the test of severe pressure, they decided to accept it for the cornerstone. The trial was made. The stone was accepted, brought to its assigned position, and found to be an exact fit" (*Desire of Ages*, pp. 597-598).

- Vs 42: **Chief cornerstone** – A reference to Christ – Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20; 1 Peter 2:7. The cornerstone was a most important part of the structure, since it bound together the two walls meeting at the corner. This is a quotation from Ps 118:22-23, a Messianic passage.
- Vs 44: **Fall on this stone.** That is, submit to Christ. This was the very thing the Jewish leaders refused to do. **It shall fall.** That is, in judgment. This judgment was soon to fall upon the Jewish nation and its perversely impenitent leaders.
- *Read Matt. 21:33-44. Preferably let one person read it. Let everyone then put down their Bibles and get the group to reconstruct the passage in their own words. This teaches the group to be careful in quotation Scripture correctly and to use it as the basis of their discussions.*
- **Discussion Questions** (*use only a few*). *The notes in italics after some of the questions below are for the facilitator, and not to be read out to the group.*
  - What do all the following elements in the parable represent: the landowner; the vineyard; the tenants/farmers/husbandmen; servants; the son?
  - What are some of the blessings God gave to Israel as a nation?
  - What do you think the 'fruit' the landowner was wanting to receive (vs 34)?
  - With all the advantages it had received, what do you think Israel's responsibility was to the other nations?
  - Why do you think the tenants wanted to kill the servants, and even the son?
  - How could modern day 'tenants' (leaders) turn people away from God?
  - What does this parable tell us about God, the landowner?
  - What do you think the meaning of the two actions are in relation to the stone (vs. 44)?
  - What do you think the danger was of rejecting Christ, the Cornerstone, for Israel as a nation? What is that danger to any individual? (*ask one question at a time*)
  - What do you think is the main lesson of this parable?
- **Application Questions** (*select a few depending on your time. One has to be the I WILL STATEMENT*)
  - What personally stood out for you in this parable?
  - What are some of the blessings God has entrusted you with, to help the world get a clearly picture of His character? How do you plan to use some of them this week? (*ask one question at a time*)
  - Share a story of God's patience toward you. [*Just as He sent servants (prophets) to Israel over thousands of years, He works with our hearts over many years*]
  - I WILL STATEMENT: Formulate an I will statement in response to what you have discovered in the Word. Let the group's secretary also record these in an A4 notebook. Ensure that everyone gets a chance to give their I WILL STATEMENT. You have to be specific. E.g. "I will use the blessing of time God has given me to visit 2 of my neighbours each week for the next 2 months, and get to know them better."

## 6. Share (*Purpose: To be witnesses of our faith*)

- Do you have anyone you could share today's lesson with this week? *Be specific.*

## 7. Closing prayer

*Prepared by Shandrell Penniken / Northern Conference*