



King Jesus-Part 5
Living as His Expatriates
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My preaching schedule had me traveling this week, which I find always gives me more time to read news I wouldn't otherwise read, which informs me of events I wouldn't otherwise know of. Some of them I would prefer not to have learned of, I suppose this week. Like one story I read from a reputable news source that talked all about this beauty pageant. For camels. A beauty pageant for camels. Camels. Have you seen camels in person? Camels. Have you looked into the face of a camel? Camels, beauty pageant contestants.

Well, it's a big deal apparently. It wasn't happening here in Orange County, this was in Saudi Arabia and I found out there was a lot of contestants, there are many people involved, it's very prestigious. As a matter of fact, there's \$31 million awarded to the beauty pageant contestants that win this thing. So this is a big deal. That's why the article was written. It wasn't just some, you know, interest story about what weird things are doing on the other side of the planet. This was a news story about cheating in a beauty pageant. Let me read the headline for you. "Camels disqualified from beauty pageant over Botox injections."

I checked, like what is this web page I'm reading right now? It was legit. This was not satire, this was not fictional, I cross-checked it. This is a real thing going on and they're mad about it. Disqualified because of Botox. What does that mean? Lips? Ears? They're injecting their lips. And they had pictures on this page and I zoomed in to see. Does that make them look any better? I thought whatever your definition of beauty is, I don't get it. Amazing how two people can look at the same thing and come up with two radically different views on that. I mean, I just think they're disgusting animals. And they're awarding \$31 million to the most beautiful camel. Just unbelievable to me.

While I was reading extra news on the plane and all that, and, of course, at the same time I'm saying, "OK, I can get to work on the weekend sermon and I'm reading the passage that I'm dealing with this week, that we're here together to study and I couldn't help but see the connection between what I just read in this really bizarre story, and what we're reading here in our passage. Of course the context is so important and we've been in it. Jesus had had this palm branch parade. They were singing to him, he came in on the Triumphal Entry not too long ago, as we've been together studying that. He comes up, flips over the tables. He has people there gathered around wondering what in the world are you doing and other people sitting there saying we want to hear everything you have to say. And even a really weird, strange description of the devotion of the people saying, "They hung on every word that he taught" while others are scheming to have him killed. And of course we know the historic context to this. This is in the middle of the week, he's going to be crucified on Friday. You've got people who want to kill him. And then the most expressive kind of devoted examples of people praising him, people laying down their clothes in the street for him, and then that great description, the only time that Greek word is used, "They're hanging on every word that he said." You want to talk about looking at the same guy and seeing two radically different things, that's what we had going on here.

Now in light of that, Jesus tells a story. And he makes it very clear with a very familiar quotation from the Old Testament about how some people see something as gross and rejectable and despised, and the other people take that very same thing and they love it, they cherish it, they value it, it becomes the most important thing in their lives. Of course, that thing is a stone in Psalm 118, but of

course that stone represents Christ, this person.

Take a look at this parable. But before we get to reading it, it starts in verse 9, I want you to go to the end of the parable and I want to make clear what they understood and what we should understand before we even read it. Verses 9 through 18 is the parable, but start in verse 19. This is the section we'll look at next time we're together. But right now, let's just read to see what they understood this parable to mean. It says, "The scribes and the chief priests," we've already got introduced to them, and they're not excited at all about Jesus, they're ready to kill him, but they are afraid they might get stoned to death if they try to. "But the scribes and the chief priest sought to lay hands on him at that very hour." They were just seething and boiling over with anger. They wanted to lay hands on him and that's not a good phrase, that means that they want to kill him, "for they perceived that he had told this parable against them." But again, they couldn't kill him that hour, it would take them a few more days because "they feared the people." Why? Because they got a whole other group of people with a completely polarized view of Christ and they're there hanging on every word that he spoke.

Well let's read the parable, verses 9 through 18. "And he," Christ, "began to tell the people this parable." Now catch this, the people were there in the front row who hung on every word. But in the background listening were the scribes, the principal men of the city, the chief priests, the elders of the town. They were the people who were going to scheme to kill him. So he's talking to the people, which is mostly, at least in the front, if you will, no offense to the back-row people in our auditorium right now, but they were people who really wanted to hear the words of Christ. But then you had those people who hated him. So he's going to tell the story to the people, but the point of the story goes to the people there who are despising him.

Here's the story, middle of verse 9, "A man planted a vineyard and let it out," let it out, that means he leased it out. He leased "it out to tenants and he went into another country for a long while. When the time came," Time for what? Well, he leased it out and when you lease something you've got to pay for it. There's regular payments you make and in the ancient world, and even today in certain places, if you have a fertile piece of property and you're not there to work it and you're not going to work it, you lease it out, you lease it out to people who are going to work it, they'll be able to eat the fruit of the land that they work for but then, because you're the landowner, then they give you a lease payment and they do that by giving you a portion of the crop. "So, the time came, and he sent a servant," the owner did, "to the tenants, so that they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard." That's just how the arrangement goes, you lease some land, that's the payment.

"But the tenants," instead of saying, "OK, here's your bushel of wheat, here's some of the things we grew. Here, great." No, they "beat this guy up and they send him away empty handed." Now think about just the injustice of this right off the bat. It's not just, "Well, I can't really pay right now, can you wait another two weeks?" This is, "it's time for you to pay for the property that you're leasing," and they say, "Hey, here's what we think of you. Let me beat you up and you don't get any of our crop." Whoa.

What does the owner do? Verse 11. Pretty patient, pretty persistent, "He sent another servant," servant number two, and "they also beat and treated him shamefully." That's a negation in the original language, in other words, it's dishonorably, they treated him without honor. They didn't give him the honor and the respect that they should have given an emissary, a servant of the landowner. "And they sent him away empty handed." "So, we're not going to pay you." Verse 12. What's the owner gonna do? Pretty patient, pretty persistent. "He sent yet a third. This one, they



also," get a new word now, not just beat him but sent him to the hospital apparently, he's bad, he's bleeding, "he's wounded and they cast him out." Get out of here. It goes without saying that he left empty handed, he got nothing.

"Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son.'" Do you start to see the connections here? I mean, everyone knows that what he calls himself, the Son of God. That's what everyone's calling him. That's the words that were said of him even in that miraculous scene at his baptism. "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." That, I mean, everyone's catching what this is all about here. And they can start to understand who those servants are, and they start to understand who the tenants are, and they can start to piece together what the land is or what the vineyard is. And the owner thinks, "Well, if I send my son," after this long series of servants that I've sent "perhaps they will respect him. But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, 'this is the heir. Let us kill him so that the inheritance may be ours.'"

Now that's the most ridiculous logic you could possibly employ in a situation like this. You think you can kill the heir and get the land? I mean, I don't know. You see some commentators and scholars look at this text and try and figure out a way that might make sense. I just think Christ is showing the complete absurdity and irrationality of that kind of thinking. It doesn't make sense. I mean, you're waiting for that owner to come and kill you if you do that. That's crazy, but that's what they thought. That's at least how they reasoned in this parable. "Then they threw him out of the vineyard and they killed him."

It's one thing to beat someone. One thing to wound someone, he's left bleeding, but now you take the son, the son who should be respected, the most beloved son of the landowner, and they kill him and throw him out of the vineyard.

"What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them?" You see Jesus kind of popping out of this, much like when Nathan confronted David, remember that with a parable, after he had killed Uriah and had an adulterous affair with Bathsheba, and he tells that story and he gets David really angered.

Well, it's the same thing here. I mean they're like, "Whoa!" Then Jesus answers his own question. Well, that's exactly what they're going to do, exactly what you're feeling, as he's sitting there talking to the people he's teaching. "He," the landowner, "will come and destroy those tenets." Then he adds this phrase, "and give the vineyard to others."

Now they knew enough about the parallels in this story so far, that they made a connection, that they were people who occupied a vineyard that they didn't want to give up. It really tied into some other things Jesus was saying about the temple and about the Romans, about the future of the Israelites and all of that came together and they understood what that meant. More on that in a minute. But they responded with the largest, strongest, the most emphatic negation in the Greek language. The only other places it is used is in Paul's writings, when he says, often translated, "May it never be." He states an absurd statement, he says, "No, never." Well, same words here. "When they heard this, they said, 'May it never be. Surely not.'" We don't want the vineyard going to others. "But he looked directly at them..." Now he's going to employ some Scripture here, "What then is this that is written:" and he's going to quote Psalm 118 verse 22. "'the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone?'" It's not that the stone that the builders rejected just got shelved. No. The stone that the builders rejected became a very important, prominent, most valued stone for people. Not the original builders, I guess someone else took it and salvaged it and it



became the most important thing and that's the picture here of this swap that goes on. And then he says, let's talk about that destroying line in verse 16, and he elaborates in verse 18. "He will come and destroy them." What is he talking about? "Everyone," verse 18, "who falls on that stone," if you stumble over the stone, you don't want the stone, you try and toss the stone out, you "will be broken into pieces."

Now let's just flip that stone analogy on its head, pardon the pun. And he says, "When it falls on anyone," that stone, "it will crush him." Building stones, particularly in that first century world where Herod had poured so much money into Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, they knew what these giant stones were like, tons and tons and tons and tons they weighed, and they'd be put in various places. And that stone, it's one thing to stumble over it, I mean you're going to get hurt, you're no match for a stone, but if that stone were to fall on you, end of life. And that's the picture he leaves us with.

"The scribes of the chief priests," they wanted to kill him, "lay their hands at that very hour but they perceive that he told this parable against them," because he did.

Now this is hard for me as a preacher, again, because I'm stuck in a passage that is told to the people, but directed toward the people who rejected Christ. I hope I'm preaching this morning to a lot of people who do not reject Christ. Smile at me if that's you. Right?

"Well, no. I'm on Christ's team." Well, that's good. So, I don't want to preach to you as though you are the chief priest and the scribes. But just like Jesus told this story to the people, many of them hanging on Christ's every word, let me say that the people who are very favorable toward Christ, that there's a lot that we can learn about what Jesus is saying to his opponents, to the people in his day and the people, maybe in our day, as we look across the chasm to our non-Christian counterparts, what Christ thinks of those people and what he's going to do to those people, so that we might walk away from this study today and say we've learned a lot. It's motivated me a lot.

So let's go back in the first few verses here, verses 9 through 12, and let's just start with a pattern, that is lamentable, but is true historically, of the Jews in the Old Testament. By and large, not to every last person, but by and large, people did not respond well when the owner... Who's that? God, sent his messengers to the tenants. Who's that? The people of God, the covenant people of God, into a vineyard... What's that? The land that God has given them, the vineyard, and God sends his servants to the tenants to say, it's time for you to give something to the owner. That's the message you often see from the prophets bringing to the people, you should honor God, you should serve God, you should sacrifice for God. God wants you to give a portion of what he's given you back to him. There needs to be a sacrificial system, you need to praise him, you need to honor him, you need to respect him, you need to obey what he says. So, in the Old Testament they are very much use to the prophets of God coming along and saying, "Give your attention to God. Give your resources to God. Worship God, honor God, respect God." And the whole point of this is they don't respect those messengers, and clearly they don't respect the request, because they leave empty handed, they don't do what these messengers say.

Now, that was the problem and Jesus had highlighted it often. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kills the prophets," the city that kills the prophets. This was a regular pattern of them taking the words of God and going, "We don't want to hear it," and then taking the messengers of God and saying, "we don't like you." And many of them were beaten, maltreated and some were killed, martyred.



OK. Well let's put ourselves, at least, in that group, versus 9 through 12, and say, can't we learn something, at least by way of a cautionary tale, that we can see people who have not responded well to the Word of God and say, "Wait a minute, I need to make sure I respond well to the Word of God." Let's just start with that simple lesson, which will really permeate and echo throughout this morning's study.

So number one, put this down if you would. We need to "Consider Your Response to God's Word." Consider the way you've responded when God's Word encounters your life. And it may be you need to honor the Lord, you need to obey the Lord, you need to do what the Lord says, you need to stop doing those things that the Lord doesn't want you to do. He is the owner. He owns all of this. You're not the covenant people of God in the Old Testament occupying Canaan, I understand that. But as New Testament people you can recognize as Acts 17 says, that everything you have has been given to you by God. This is a world where he's allotted where you live, he's given you the times and boundaries of your habitations here on Earth, and he is giving you, as that passage says, life and breath and everything else. He is the owner, you are the steward. He's put you in his world and then he sent you servants, and those servants have brought you the Word. Historically, servants like Moses, servants like Isaiah, servants like Malachi, servants like Matthew, servants like John, and they brought the message. And then there's been other servants, servants of the servants, who teach this to you, a discipler, a parent, a pastor, a small group leader, and they bring you the truth of God. How do you respond to that?

"I respond well to that, Pastor Mike." OK. Let's make sure that you do respond well to that. And may I advise you that maybe there are some things that can creep into the way you respond to the Word that you want to carefully avoid. Let me give you four passages from the New Testament. If you're building some kind of outline, I guess you can put this A, B, C and D. We want to figure out in our lives how we can respond rightly to God's Word and never fall into the pattern that we sometimes see called out in the Bible, that we want to fully avoid. And that is that there has to be in our own thinking as Christians that, even as a new Christian, we might be able to look back and see a kind of response to the Word of God that maybe I'm not seeing now as a 5-year-old, a 15-year-old, a 35-year-old Christian. Maybe now you say, "Well, you're right. There was a time I responded better to the Word."

Well let's put some words to that, words from Scripture. Don't take time to turn to all these but at least just jot them down. Let's start with this one, First Thessalonians Chapter 2 verse 13. I'll give you four verses.

First Thessalonians Chapter 2 verse 13. Here's a passage in Scripture that gives us a sense as to how we ought to respond to the Word. And it stands in contrast to sometimes how Christians in their Christian life start responding to the Word. Whether it's someone saying to them, in a small group, "Well really, I think God's Word would have you do that," or "I think in this counseling situation, I don't think God's Word would want you to do that," or in a sermon, "this is the kind of thing that God's people should do in response to God's Word." How do you respond to that teaching, the presentation of the Word of God? Or even in the most personal setting, when you open up your Bible in the morning and you say, "OK, I'm going to learn from God's Word today." How do you respond? Is it, as it can often be, a set of words and sentences and meanings and concepts and principles that I take into my mind and kind of file them and analyze them and figure them out and I got my study Bible, I got my Bible dictionary and I kind of get more pieces of my theology put together, and kind of think through what this is about and maybe you went to Israel and where did this all happen and it's a lot of data to be analyzed. And some people, I find, live long enough in



their Christian life where Bible study, when biblical sermons, when discussions in small group settings about the Bible becomes data to be analyzed.

Instead of First Thessalonians Chapter 2 verse 13, which uses a great Greek word, I've often said it from the platform, not because I have to, I guess, but it's the word "Dechomai." There are a lot of words for receiving or accepting something and even in this verse, it talks about when they receive the Word, uses the first word "Paralambano", which is the normal word for "receive." But then it uses this word, when you got the Word, you received the Word, you were in the process of hearing the Word, it says you dechomai the Word, dechomai. And that's the word, translated elsewhere, "to welcome." Where it's that great scene when Simeon is handed the 8-day-old Jesus on the Temple Mount. It says, he welcomed him or took that baby up in his arms, embraced him.

I can hand you a lot of things on the patio: "Here, hold my iPad." "Here's my Bible." Or "Hey, hold this, you know, this backpack," or some lady can say, "Hold my purse." But if someone hands you their 8-day-old baby, you're going to take that up in a very careful way. And if you are thinking that baby is the most important baby in all the world, like Simeon did on that Temple Mount, man, you, here is how it is translated, you'd welcome that. And Paul said when you receive the word from me, paralambano, you heard it, you took it in and you took some notes on it, you dechomai the Word, you accepted it, the English Standard Version translates it. You didn't accept it like it's the word of man, you embrace that, you accepted it, you welcomed it for what it was, the Word of God.

If you love God and you know that right now you hold in your hand, it's in your device, you have it on your laptop, you have the words of the God you say you love, and you know there's been a history of people who have heard the words of God and hated them. They don't want anything to do with it or his messengers, they want it out of their life, and you say, "No, no, I'm in the group that hangs on every word." Are you hanging on every word? It starts with a kind of disposition toward the Word where it's not data to be analyzed, it's not building your theology, it's not just about your doctrine, although that's good and I'm all for it, but it's that you welcome the Word, you receive it. It's not data to be analyzed, it's words to be welcomed from the God that you love.

Psalm 40 verse 8, Letter "B". I suppose this is akin to the first one. It certainly has something to do with the first one. There's that concept that we sometimes have about Bible study, where we even take notes or we think through what we're hearing and we sit there and try and journal when we study the Bible because we'd like to remember it. We'd like to have this as a part of the way I think. We'd like to file it into categories and file cabinets in my mind and in my character, at least in terms of what I try to think about and talk about and just kind of how I define myself. It's info to be gathered and stored and classified.

As opposed to this great passage. Now you know I could quote passages in James 1, that God wants us to be doers of the word or Matthew Chapter 7, you know, you put these words into action, you'll be a wise man who builds his house on the rock. But let me give you this great passage, Psalm 40 verse 8, the psalmist says, "I," old fashioned word, "delight to do your will, O God." I delight to do your will. For, second half, this is a great line, "Your law is within my heart." In other words, just like the Thessalonians, "I welcome the Word. I've got your Word. I've got your truth in my heart. Now, I just delight to do what it says." It starts with a disposition as to how you receive it.

You can't wait to hear the message that comes from the God you say you love. And then it's like, I just take joy in doing what it says. Now if you're a real Christian I suppose there was a time in your Christian life where that was more of a passionate reality for you. And if that slipped, it's time for



us, as Jesus said to the Ephesians in Revelation Chapter 2, to return to that first love.

How about this one? Letter "C", First Peter Chapter 2 verse 2. And I got to tell you, this often happens with couples in our church who have a spouse who really is delighting to do the will of God and you find that you're not. And you would never say that out loud. But whether it's going to a small group, whether it's going through some kind of Bible study with your spouse, or whether it's sitting next to your spouse in a church like this where the sermons are going through passages and trying to extract the principles and apply them, that you really find this is a task that just has to be endured. I mean you're ready for it to be done. You're interested in moving on to lunch. There's other things you'd rather do and maybe even in your Bible study, you're at least devoted enough and disciplined enough say, when I read my Bible and you read your Bible but you can't wait to check that off and rush through those last few paragraphs, because I've got to get to my e-mail and I got someone I've got a text and I've got a job I've got to go do today. I mean it could be that it's an endurance assignment for you.

First Peter Chapter 2 verse 2 says, that like babies would crave, the word there they're longing, they desire it, they can't wait to have it, like a baby craves milk, so you too, you should crave this, you should long for the pure spiritual milk, the English Standard Version translates it. Some translators go back to the antecedent because the context is about the proclaimed Word, the pure milk of the Word, some translations translate it, because that's the context. They can't wait to hear the Word. I want to hear the Word because I delight to do it and I'm welcoming it into my brain and my ears, I welcome it, I delight to do it and, man, it's not a burden at all.

It's nourishment to my heart. Some see the truth as a lecture to be endured, others as a fuel to nourish and energize their heart, like a baby can't wait to ingest milk.

Hebrews Chapter 5, Letter "D", verse 14. Unfortunately, I find this to be true so often in folks who have been around the block a few times in their Christian life, they seem to grow weary of it all. "I know the stories, I know the stuff, I've heard the sermons, been under this pastor for a long time, heard all his jokes, all his illustrations. Now, it's like when I hear something derived from the Scripture that has some kind of onus in my life, it's some kind of pressure to do something in response, I'm getting tired of all the assignments."

"It's do, do, do, and I'm tired of all that. Matter of fact, if I can find a little theological category to dump that in so I don't have to feel all that, I'm going to call it bad, legalism, moralism, whatever I can call it, because I'm tired of all that. Matter of fact, give me more of the simple stuff. Give me the kind of easy things. Talk to me about love and affirm me in this and that, but don't give me more of those challenging things to have to go do. I don't want another thing to do this week."

Hebrews Chapter 5 verse 14 speaks of the people, who, unfortunately get stunted in an early development of their Christian life, where he compares it this way: to kids who love to drink milk but they refuse to eat the meat because they don't want to be challenged by it, because they don't have, to quote the passage, "the powers of their discernment trained by constant practice." Their muscles are wimpy. They don't eat the protein, they don't like the meat.

Some see the truth as a burden, an assignment that I got to do. It's a burden to be carried and not a challenge that they love, a challenge to be accepted. "Give me something from the Word today. Make it hard, make it high, make it tough. I can't wait to be challenged by the truth of God's Word." Consider your response to the Word.

Sometimes Peter, for instance, was confronted with a difficult word from Christ. Maybe you know the historic situation. It doesn't matter in this case but I'm just going to tell you, it was hard for him in John 21 to hear Christ say to him, "Feed my sheep, tend my lambs, feed my sheep." And Jesus knew that was hard for him to hear for a lot of different reasons in that text. But you do know the question he asked preceding that. Three times, three times. "Do you love me? Feed my sheep. Do you love me? Tend my lambs. Do you love me? Feed my sheep."

If the Bible's become data for you to analyze, information to gather and file, a lecture to be endured or is just a burden that you have to carry, and you don't find that welcoming delight to do his will, if there's not that nourishment that fuels you and, "Man, challenge me with something from the Word," then maybe you've just got to go back, as I already said, Jesus said to the Ephesians, "Where is your love for Christ?"

If you love someone and they write you a letter and they ask you to do something for them and they're coming to return from some long trip and you love them and you long to see them and they said, "Here's what I'd like you to do and I'm coming soon to see you," how do you respond to those instructions? Don't tell me you love that person, if you're not ready to say, "Feed the sheep. I'm on it. Tend the lambs. Today, I'm ready." It's an issue of your heart. Consider your response to God's Word, because it really gets down to figuring out whether or not you love the Lord. And maybe it's a challenge for us to look in our own lives and say, let's consider how we respond to the Word because I find there's not a lot of love with all my heart, soul, strength, and mind for the Christ I say is my King.

I can look across the chasm to my non-Christian counterpart who is waving his fist saying, "Crucify him," and I say, "Well, I'm not like him," but am I out here sorting out the instructions of Christ saying, "Well, I really don't like that and I don't really have time for that and that seems like a burden. Can't we put that off for another time? And I'm not sure that's even true. I mean that's not what most people think in our society today. I've got no time for this." But since this passage was all about the beating, the wounding, the shameful treatment and the casting out of the messengers, I just wonder, for just a second, how do you respond to the messenger when he brings you or she brings you a challenging aspect of God's word?

You're in a small group and someone says, "You know what? That's just really not what I think Christ would have us do." Now there's a biblical principle that's brought into it, do you feel offended because, "how dare..., who does she think she is telling me that? It was so embarrassing for her to confront me publicly in that group." What do you do with the messenger? They beat him, they treated him shamefully, no respect. There was a wounding and a casting out. I mean, I'm not here to defend my profession, but I just wonder how you treat people who bring you the Word and challenge you with the truth of God's Word. Is it a kind of critical spirit toward the preacher, the messenger?

I've been in this long enough to hear a lot of people complain about a lot of my sermons and, you know what, some of it is absolutely well-founded. And I will give you my honesty about this. I'm willing to take your complaint and look in my heart and before God and say, "Hey, is this something I need to change?" As late as this Thursday a complaint about my preaching and I had to confess it to that person, I say, "Yes, that was not the way it should have been said and I apologize." But I'll tell you most times, it's easier for me to look past the kinds of things that you're doing to maltreat me in some kind of complaint, because I recognize what you're missing here is the fact that



you really don't want to respond well to the truth that's been taught.

Well you can talk about how I delivered it, or my words, or how I didn't say it quite right, I can understand. But really the point is you can be looking at the garnish and saying I don't like how the garnish is placed because you don't want to eat that piece of meat that sitting on the plate. And you've got to rethink that. When someone tells you got mustard on your shirt, stop getting offended by the person pointing out your flaw. Go to the mirror and see whether or not that's true and respond.

Hopefully, you're not beating up preachers physically. But I'll bet you've had a barbecued pastor or two for lunch. Right? Maybe I'll just walk up behind you when you're having that conversation at that restaurant. Maybe you'll realize, "Well, it really wasn't about the preacher, it's about I'd rather have information to be analyzed or rather have stuff and data I can file, I'm burdened by all the stuff that the Word requires of me. Plus, I think he preached too long." I think you need to rethink your response to the Word.

Homework assignment, a great passage, Proverbs Chapter 9 verses 7 through 12. As this text says sometimes your response to the messenger says more about you than you're saying about him or her. So give it some thought. And recognize that this was a historical rundown of all that had happened in the Old Testament, right up to John the Baptist, when they cut his head off because they didn't like what he said.

Verses 13 through 15 get to the heart of all this and say, "Well, now the son is here. The Son of God is here. And he looks ahead three or four days and says, "I know what's going to happen to me. Let me just tell the parable here." The beloved son has shown up. And I think reasonably someone would say, "Well, clearly you would respect him. He's the son of the owner." But the tenants said, "Let's kill him." And they had some crazy thought about, "We'll be in charge if we kill him, so let's kill him."

Let us take a moment to look across the chasm to our non-Christian counterpart, the one who is sitting around doing their pregame show and, you know, they're reading the paper and they're playing golf and they're walking their dogs and they don't care about your Christ. They'd never haul off and dress to go to church on a Sunday. They don't like your Jesus. Let's just think about those people for a second.

And I want you to sense how absurd that is from God's perspective. God has sent prophets and he's validated their message by two things, predictive prophecy, which is a forever literary miracle on paper. Only God can see the end from the beginning. We've talked about that recently. God is the only one who can see the end from the beginning and he's punctuated his biblical library of 66 books with the fingerprints of only God-can-do-stuff, which is God predicts the future. Sometimes he does it 100 years in advance, sometimes he does it 500 years in advance, sometimes he does it 1,000 years in advance. But we see this 1,490-year library that we have laid out for us in the Bible and we see all this predicted prophecy.

Now within it, we see the prophets, we see Moses and Joshua, and then we see Christ and the Apostles, and we see what he did with all of them. He gave them the ability to break natural law. Now many times they were done within the providence of God, and you can say, well that's just lucky timing. But some of them were absolutely impossible. Men cannot do what these people did. And in Moses' ministry and Joshua's ministry we have ten of those, ten times of the reversal of



natural law, things that you could not say anyone can do, it's a God-thing of the first magnitude, of the first order.

Well when the prophets came along and you got the second installment of the second rash of books in God's Divine library, you had 21 suspensions of natural law, 21 of them. God is really saying, well I know Moses and Joshua, well that was just two guys, but we are all these guys coming with Elijah and Elisha and all these other guys who are going to come out of the school of the prophets, we have to really put a rash of miracles there. 21 of them.

Well then Christ came along. You want to talk about the absurdity of rejecting Christ. God couldn't have put a bigger exclamation point at the end of it. Not only was he himself the fulfillment of all these literary prophecies, that were not written after the fact, they were all written before the fact, now Jesus comes on the scene and breaks natural law. How many times? Christ and the Apostles? Here it is: 46 distinct times and that's not counting the providential miracles that you would say, "Wow, that's a God-thing because that couldn't have happened with just human timing." I'm now talking about things that do not fall into the category of a lucky timing situation. This is 46 miraculous suspensions of natural law. God is saying that if ever I made it clear that this is my spokesperson, it was with Christ and the Apostles.

Hebrews starts this way: "Long ago, many portions in many ways to our fathers, God has spoken through the prophets, but now, in these last days, he has spoken to us in his Son." The whole crescendo and argument from lesser to greater is made continually throughout the book of Hebrews and it begins with that prologue. "He's the heir of all things. He sustains the world by the word of his power. He's the exact imprint of the nature of God." He is divinity in humanity and this person, if you're ever going to listen to someone, it's him.

Now, here they were on the Temple Mount and these people were sneering and they were colluding to try and somehow crucify Jesus. And the real scene, as John tells us, going around in the background, is everyone wanted to get some time to interview Lazarus. That happened just up the hill in Bethany. I mean things like that made no sense. You're going to reject the guy who just popped people out of the grave? That's nuts. And yet the logic of your neighbor is much like the logic of these people in this parable, which is, "Listen, if we can just get Christ out of the way then we can be in charge." You? I don't understand. God is speaking, he's made it clear, Christ is the ultimate expression of God's truth. He's even called the Word of God himself, that's one of his titles, and you're rejecting him? How much proof do you need? We talked about that last week. People don't need more proof, they need to be willing to accept the proof that's already there.

Number two on your outline, we need a "Sense of the Absurdity of Rejecting Christ." I want you to think about that, not only as it relates to your neighbors, but I want you to think about it all throughout church history. It makes no sense for us to look at Christ and all that he came to do, which in this case was not just to exact us to bring tribute to the Father, honor him, sacrifice, serve. No. It was, "I'm going to lay down my life for you. I didn't come to be served. I didn't even come to ask for a lease payment. I just want you to know I'm serving you so you can be right with a living God." I mean this is an amazing arrangement. And they said, "No, we can kill him, now we can be in charge." Well this has been the theme of our series, hasn't it? I mean you got two would-be kings and you only have one crown. Who's going to be in charge?

I was out of state flying around this week to preach, I was passing by the cockpit as you do as you walk in, you know, after all the first-class people are seated. You get to walk and see what they're

doing. But first you get that... Sorry. Was there bitterness in that comment? I didn't mean for there to be. But you look inside the cockpit and there's the captain, you know, and sometimes he's there and a couple of flights I had this week, he was there and, you know, I always thank him and think it's great. Now picture the 7-year-old who was in front of me getting on, seven. Can you imagine if he took a left turn when we got to the cockpit and he looked right in the eyes of that captain and he says, "Hey, I'm going to be the captain today. Give me that hat. Get out of the way. I'll take it from here." Now if I'm behind the 7-year-old who says that I'm turning around and walking out. Right? Why? Because you're no captain, you're seven. You can barely fly an app on your phone. You can't fly this plane. I'm not going to be on this plane with you. How silly for you to think you're going to take the captain's hat, put on your head and you're going to pretend to be the captain. Why, what are your credentials? What's your proof?

If there's one thing Christ brought it was credentials. From our perspective, my neighbor has more credentials available than the people who sat there on the Temple Mount that day had, and the credential that was the ringing endorsement of Christ's divinity was his resurrection. It wasn't going to happen for a week. That's big. And for us to say, "Well, we don't need you." It's as illogical and absurd as saying, "Let's kill him and then we'll be in charge."

I always think of William Ernest Hensley's poem in this regard. *Invictus*. It's been made a movie. Clint Eastwood, and all the rest. But that old poem, 100 years old, it ends with three lines that is all about snubbing your nose at God, because really I'm not going to submit to you, I'm not going to be your servant. Matter of fact, I'm going to be my own king. And the lines read this way, the last three lines, "It matters not how strait the gate," which is a complete reference, it's an absolute reference to Christ's narrow road, small gate. "I don't care how strait your gate is or how charged with punishments the scroll," you're not going to threaten me about the Great White Throne judgment. I'm not going to sit there and stand before your Bema Seat. "It matters not how strait the gate, how charged with punishments the scroll, I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul." You've heard that?

Hensley died about 110 years ago. And I'll tell you about how it went for him. He, as the captain of his own soul and the master of his own fate, he flew his life into the cliffs of tuberculosis. He died of tuberculosis. And he spent a lot of time going to doctors trying to figure out how he can fix this problem. And he went and he tried and, you know what he wanted more than anything, he wanted to pull back on the stick of his life just to avoid something as simple as tuberculosis from God's perspective and he couldn't do it flying his own life and he crashed his life into tuberculosis and died a painful death, as the captain of his own soul.

And Hensley is saying to someone who could look at Lazarus, who was rotting and stinking in a grave, and say, "Lazarus, come forth," and Hensley's saying, "I don't want anything to do with you." And as I said last week, it's not because I've analyzed the data and said, yes it makes sense, it's because I don't want to submit to someone else.

Picture the 7-year-old grabbing the captain's hat and saying, "I'll fly this thing," and that's exactly what people think about Christ. Now, how does that help us? Well I said the theme for the morning was the first point of the sermon and that is if I can look across the chasm to my non-Christian counterpart who wants nothing to do with Christ and I come here singing songs about Jesus and saying I want to serve him, and I open up this Bible and say, "Teach me the words of God," I'm just saying how absurd would it be for me to pretend that I'm loyal to a Christ who they want nothing to do with, when I'm sitting here really picking and choosing what he says and really having a blasé



attitude toward the principal words and precepts of his truth. I just think I need to be motivated by the fact that it's absurd for someone not to recognize the King of kings and the Lord of lords when he speaks on any topic or any subject.

It's absurd. We can understand that. And it's also frightening because in verses 16 through 18 we have the answers to the last question in verse 15, which is what's the owner of the vineyard going to do if they kill the son after wounding the servant, after beating up the servant, now you're going to kill the son. What's the owner going to do? And they knew what the owner was going to do and he says exactly what they would all think, it's what you and I think. I can't imagine, if you kill my son when I come to get a lease payment, I'm coming to kill you.

The owner, who has every right, if this is a vigilante or this is through the court system in the ancient world, whatever, however you want to analyze this parable, the bottom line is he's going to come and destroy those tenants. As a matter of fact, it's the stone that's rejected by them and there's consequences, verse 18, that there are going to be broken into pieces and not only that, flip this metaphor over, pardon the pun, the rocks are going to crush him. So you've got destruction.

Let's put a label over that, number 3 on our outline, we need to "Fear the Penalties of Rebellion," that's the subtitle of the message. Right? There are consequences for insurrection. You want to say, "I don't want the King to be my king." And you're going to not only close your ears to his message but you're going to abuse the messengers, well, God says there's going to be consequences for that, there's going to be specific punishments for that. And the punishments for that begin with clear promises of retribution, which is just, it's only right.

If someone killed your son, I assume there'd be some anger there, especially if it was done in a very, not just the crime of murder itself, but in an unjust way and it sprung from a selfish, absurd proposition that I'm able to do whatever I want to do. Hebrews Chapter 10, I have no time to turn you there, but, man, you want to talk about how this really cuts to the core of the heart of God. The Word of God says, "How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved to the ones who have trampled underfoot the blood of the Son of God, and profaned his blood, the blood of the covenant, and has outrage the spirit of grace?"

You want to see something in this parable that maybe you didn't recognize and I tried to point it out as we read it. Grace. How often does the owner say, "Well, let's give him another try, let's give another try, let's give him another try." The spirit of grace. You take advantage of that grace as my neighbor. So I look across the chasm at my non-Christian counterpart and he sits there and enjoys the things that God gives, he breathes the air that God provides, he sits here and lives in the world that God has established for him and he doesn't care to bring any honor to the King. The Bible says that's an insult.

And then you take the Christ who came to die and pay for sins in this world and you reject it, you trample that underfoot, you think it's profane in your eyes.

He said, oh, we ought to fear. "We know the one who said, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge his people.' It is a fearful thing," Hebrews 10:31, "to fall into the hands of the living God." I think it's time for us to fear just a bit as we look across the chasm to our non-Christian counterpart and say, "I sit here in a church with a Bible ready to learn the Word of God and if I think about those people, man, it ought to get me even more committed to what I'm doing right now because I recognize there are great penalties for rebellion. I don't even want the smallest

root of rebellion to grow up in my heart."

Now even the people who were faithful to God, listening to Christ's every word and hanging on every word, they objected to one aspect of this parable. Verse 16. I jumped from verse 16 to verse 18, let me read now the rest of verse 16. Not only will "the owner come and destroy those tenants, but he will give the vineyard to others." Those words right there in English, "give the vineyard to others," it lit these guys up to where they said, "Surely not!" Now these are the good guys. "Surely not!" What?

Well, they had had a favored status, did they not, the people of God. The covenant people of God, he chose them, put his love on them, chose them out from all the other peoples of the earth, and said these are my covenant people and now they're getting the analogy, because they've read passages like Isaiah Chapter 8, and they know the vineyard is God's people. The vineyard is the land, it's the land of Canaan, and you're telling me now you've got all these references to the Romans and you've got the temple being destroyed and now you're saying you're going to give the vineyard to someone else. Man, we want to retain our favorite status. And he goes, "Well..." Now individually, are they going to retain their favorite status? They hang on every word, absolutely. But corporately, you were going to see the favored status of Israel, it's just a matter of 40 years and it's done. At least for many, many, many, many years.

And speaking of that, if I want to look to where God's going to restore that, I go to passages like Romans Chapter 11, and I say, "Oh, God's not done with them yet." And in that passage, though, I may miss really the emphasis of what I'm to take away from that passage and that is this: that in any situation where you have a group of people, whether it's Israel in the Old Testament, or whether it's us today as a church, or us as a family, or even us, dare I say, as a state, or maybe even us as a nation and a culture, when you've got people in there who are faithful to the Word of God, there is sanctifying effect, it's like salt, a preservative effect.

And if you don't think the entire country, if you go back to the great awakening of Jonathan Edwards' day and say there was something done to this whole group of us that spilled over from the revival in the churches, and the favored status that you have to see, not as a covenant people of God, I'm not saying that, but in America, the way that things, and I don't speak in these terms very often, but hang in there with me for a second. And we see the blessings that spilled over, even when people said, "Well, I'm not going to absolutely commit my life to Christ, but I'm going to show great respect for this God, I'm going to be a God fearing... and even to Christ. I'm going to plaster words from the Bible on the interior of the Jefferson Memorial. I'm going to put it up over the columns of our courtrooms and say, "Yes, we give deference and respect to this God." There is going to be a blessing that cascades and echoes from that.

But when God has to say through Christ in this passage, you know, if I'm not going to get that respect in this little subset of my world, as he said in Malachi 1, which I quoted a couple of weeks back, well then he'll move on.

Oh, individually, everyone stands or falls individually before God. But as a society, if you're not going to do it then shut the gates, Malachi 1 says, and I'm going to go have incense burned in a holy way, in a righteous way, somewhere else. Because from the rising of the sun to the setting, I'm going to find people. And I'm going to be honored somewhere.

You want to fear the penalties of rebellion, let's just fear it as a part of the whole, the subset of the



whole planet, the 21st century culture that we're a part of. And let's at least say, maybe we can, if we get serious within our churches and say "Listen, we're going to take God's Word seriously and we're not going to sit here in a corner and do what they say, "Keep your religion in your pew, you keep it in your home, but keep it out of the marketplace. You don't start talking to me about how we ought to reflect these kinds of values in our society." Those are the things that brought blessing to our culture. And all I'm saying is, if we can start to say, maybe if we take it seriously enough, God will say to us, much what he said to Hezekiah, "Listen, if you're willing to take this seriously, if there's going to be revival in your day and in your heart, maybe I'll bring some patience to my plan. Because I'd much rather live in Hezekiah's day than in Zedekiah's day, if you know your Old Testament history.

And God said, "Listen, I'm going to postpone some of that." Just like he did in Nineveh with Jonah's preaching. I understand that God is a God who I think, in our own time, could grant us a lot of grace and patience, if it starts with our hearts, our families, our churches and we start saying we're not going to get bullied around here to shut up or sit down when God would ask us to speak up and stand up. The penalties of rebellion will be large and he said this, "If you think just because you have some favored status in your culture because of your commitment in the past, do not rest on your laurels," and this is a big paraphrase of Romans Chapter 11. He says there is that olive bush and you were grafted in. You were the wild branch and, yes, the unbelieving branches were broken off, but he says, "Do not be proud. Do not be arrogant. Because God could just take that whole thing and break it off."

Individually I understand, we stand or fall before God. We are a covenant person of God as we stand before him in repentance and faith, as the spirit indwells our life as the down payment of our future inheritance. But I'm talking now about the way in which we affect the culture we live in. We live in two kingdoms, the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of our particular subset of the world.

And I'm just saying when I think about the stone that the builders rejected in our day, when we see our people in our culture shaking their fist at God, we ought to fear for our country, we ought to fear for our culture, we ought to fear for our county, and call on God to bring revival to the hearts of everyone who names the name of Christ, because it will have a staying effect. Fear the penalties of rebellion. I'd hate for God to say, "Well, I'll move on," because it's already starting to happen, unfortunately.

Do you know that right now we have missionaries coming from other countries to come and evangelize America? Had you told people a hundred years ago that was going to be happening, they'd go what are you talking about, what kind of dystopian future are you living in? But there are churches, in healthy parts in this world, who are saying, "That America is so messed up," and I've traveled enough around the world, I've been on the other side of the planet having people sit me down with a great concern about, "What are you guys going to do about America? Do you need our help?" And America is not used to that. Even in the ecclesiastical world. Wait a minute, WE are the ones who send missionaries to other places. Now they're saying, you guys are in bad shape.

Do you ever watch those Scared Straight! programs that used to be so popular. I think there are still some. They take these punky, rebellious teenagers and you drag them off to the penitentiary and introduce them to Leroy with all these tattoos and they yell at them for a day or whatever. They put on the orange jumpsuits and they walk around in shackles and they find out how terrible it is to be in prison. Scared Straight!



Well, I read some reports about how that affects those students. And the whole premise of the show is if you scare them about where their life is headed then they'll turn around and they won't go there. Well, I read some pretty extensive stuff this week on that one proposition and basically the answer is, in short, Scared Straight! doesn't work. It just doesn't work. They took groups of people who had similar expressions of rebellion as teenagers, and they said, OK, well this group is not going to go to the penitentiary and get yelled at, and this group is, and they're going to go through the Scared Straight! program and they brought them back and said let's compare them. Multiple surveys and reports, it was like negligible. And some even, one was as high as 30% increased chance of going to prison after a Scared Straight! program.

Scared Straight! Not really. It doesn't work. You could change the whole title of the program to just "Scared For an Afternoon." I mean, I don't know. They seem scared, they're crying, in the program, as 16-year-olds. But I'd suggest you keep the title of the program. Because while it may not work on them, it works on me. I watched the show and say, "I don't want to be Leroy's cellmate. I don't want to go there."

"Honey, have we pay the taxes this year? I want to make sure we do all that we can to stay out of prison. Look at the food they're serving. I want to go to Del Taco. I don't want to eat that. I mean, I don't want to go to jail." It works for me. And I realize the value, perhaps, of a sermon like this that's helping you look across the chasm at your non-Christian counterpart and basically, at least two thirds of the sermon is, look they're rejecting Christ and they're going to pay for it. And how horrible it is.

And I can preach it to them, but just like those rebellious teenagers, often times a rebellious heart is not going to be affected by your scare tactics. I'm not opposed to a sermon that's going to tell non-Christians what's at stake, I'm all about that, but really, trying to frighten the non-Christian, I don't know, they're going to go, "Hey, get out of my way. I don't care." And they'll continue on, most of them. But I'll tell you, I think the value of Jesus speaking to the people about those who rejected him and were absolutely solidified in their rebellion, was that it helped them. What did to help them do? Help them look back, I think, at what they were doing at that present moment, which was listening to the words of Christ and looking back in the Old Testament saying, "Man, I hope that if I heard the sermon of Jonah or if I heard the sermon of Nehemiah, or I heard the sermon of Jeremiah, man, I hope I would respond well. I need to be much more attentive to what I've heard."

That's the whole theme of Hebrews. And if there was just retribution, recompense for all of the things in the Old Testament, man, how much more carefully do we need to pay attention to what we've heard.

I hope that your response to the Word of God is much more like First Thessalonians 2, Psalms 40, First Peter 2, and Hebrews 5. I want to welcome the Word, I want to delight to do his will, I want to long for it like a baby, and I want to be challenged by the truth of God's Word. It's an important reminder for us.

May it be for us what Psalm 119:4 says. Instead of picking through our biblical knowledge like it's a smorgasbord to choose from, may we understand, as the psalmist did, that "God has commanded his precepts to be kept diligently." Then he cries out, "Oh, that my ways would be steadfast in keeping your statutes. Then I shall not be put to shame." Then I won't even incur just a little piece of the rebellion that these people are running headlong into, because "my eyes will be fixed on your commandments. I will praise you with an upright heart." That's what I want. I want less scars, I



want less guilty conscience in my life, "when I learn your righteous rules." The Word of God is fuel and food. And like Jesus in John 4, may we delight to do it to the place where we say, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me."

Let's pray. God help us in a day that doesn't give us a lot of hope but we need to have an ambitious faith about it, that our culture has turned so quickly, it seems, in the last 30-40 years, to kind of run headlong into a place where everything that smacks of Christianity, everything that smacks of the things that made the blessing of this country such a predominant reality is now being mocked and ridiculed. Messengers who speak up for what's right and what's true, they're maligned and beaten and wounded and sent away empty handed as our parable says. When we call people to honor God, the God that gives us life and breath and everything else, they are quick to respond in negative ways, not only to the truth, but to us.

But may we pray with faith, even as Hezekiah did that you might be patient with us; that you might give us grace or like Daniel did as he wept by the river bank and confess the sins of his people. And we have a care about the subset of the culture we live in, and hope that we might see an influence in our culture because churches like ours are becoming increasingly strong and bold and vocal about the truth that we know is for the good, not only of our eternal standing before you, but even here in our societies, in our schools, in our homes, in our workplaces.

So God, we want to love you enough to stand with you this week. We want to be willing to speak up for you. God I pray that would be something that would be a great motivation to us that you were teaching on that Temple Mount to people who, while they hated you, there was no hope and no reason, no logic, nothing that made that an appealing thing for the people that hung on your every word. May it be that we can't imagine people who disregard the words of the Christ who came to save us.

God help us through this challenging process of living in the 21st century, but let us not lose heart. As you told your disciples that in the world we may have tribulation but we've got to take heart because you've overcome the world. And one day, God, we know that you'll take your great authority and you'll begin to reign. We look forward to that day. God, thank you for your Word. The great advantage we have to carry it around in our phones and have them on our bedside there and get up in the mornings and read it. The great technology allows us to listen to sermons throughout the week and go to Bible studies and discuss this in small groups. Let us welcome the Word, delight to do it. May we eat it up like food, may it nourish us, may we be ready to be challenged this week by more of what you say because we love you. Help us to love you more this week.

I pray in Jesus name. Amen.