

## Broken or Crushed 10-16-05

Matthew 21:33-46 (NIV)

<sup>33</sup>"Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. <sup>34</sup>When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. <sup>35</sup>The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. <sup>36</sup>Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. <sup>37</sup>Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. <sup>38</sup>"But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' <sup>39</sup>So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. <sup>40</sup>"Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" <sup>41</sup>"He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time."

<sup>42</sup>Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes?'" <sup>43</sup>"Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. <sup>44</sup>He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."

<sup>45</sup>When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them. <sup>46</sup>They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.

There is an old saying, "There are none so blind as those who will not see." When I was very young, at bedtime I would call out to my mother for help in finding my pajamas. When she came in to help me, she would see me looking around on the ceiling and say something like, "Well, you're never going to find them looking up there." Sometimes we just do not want to look where we might find something. That was the case with the religious leaders of Jesus' day. They did not want to look at the miracles of Jesus with an open mind. They did not want to search their Scriptures and see if He might be the Messiah. (John 5:39-40) Our prejudices determine our interpretation of what we observe. They kept looking on the ceiling for fear of losing their power and position. (Deuteronomy 29:4) They did not want to be broken, so they refused to open their eyes to the truth. (John 8:43) It is a typical response of fallen human nature.

Jesus had just shared the tale of two sons. In the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, He was able to have those religious leaders say with their own mouths that to just say the right things was insufficient. You have to follow through with actions to be right. He immediately followed that parable with our parable for today, the parable of the tenants. Jesus said, <sup>33</sup>"Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. As in many other parables, the landowner is God and the vineyard is the earth. (Matthew 20:1) The landowner planted the vineyard, put a protective wall around it,

**Commented [notes1]:** <sup>39</sup> You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, <sup>40</sup> yet you refuse to come to me to have life. John 5:39-40 (NIV)

**Commented [notes2]:** <sup>4</sup> But to this day the LORD has not given you a mind that understands or eyes that see or ears that hear. Deuteronomy 29:4 (NIV)

**Commented [notes3]:** <sup>43</sup> Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. John 8:43 (NIV)

**Commented [notes4]:** <sup>1</sup> "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. Matthew 20:1 (NIV)

built a winepress and a watchtower. Everything that was needed was provided by the Landowner. All the renters of the vineyard need to do is prune, water, and harvest.

God has not left us without assistance or preparation, and in fact, He has done a great deal of work to see that our lives can be productive. He has planned where each of us lives. (Acts 17:26) He has given us gifts and talents. (2 Corinthians 9:8-9) He has even prepared in advance good works for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10) All we need to do is step into those opportunities and be faithful.

In Israel's case, He gave them His instructions for healthy living, social laws for order, and religious laws to keep them from spiritual bondage to evil. He had restored them from captivity and put Rome over them to keep things peaceful. With Rome in power, they did not have to worry about invaders. They were taxed, and there was some abuse, but overall they were free to pursue the God of Israel and worship Him without fear.

In a number of parables, the ruler goes for a journey. He leaves the people to invest, or maintain, or labor, and is going to return to check on the faithfulness of His servants. (Mark 13:34) The parable is referring to these religious leaders. When did God plant the vineyard? You could say at Creation. For the listeners of that day, it seemed that God had stepped away to see how faithful they would be. The application for us today is the ascension of Jesus. Jesus will return, but in the mean time, He has invested His Holy Spirit in us and expects us to be faithful in all He has prepared for us to do. (Revelation 2:10)

<sup>34</sup>When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. Tenants who rented a vineyard were expected to pay with a percentage of the harvest. So, when the time of harvest had come, the rent was due. This is a difficult concept for us, that we owe God something. (Malachi 1:6) Until we recognize that "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it..." (Psalm 24:1) we will never realize that we are indebted. None of us has anything that we did not receive. Ultimately, all things are from God. (1 Corinthians 4:7) You may have put in your 8-hour day, but who gave you the 8 hours, the strength, the health, and the ability to do your job? God did! Knock, knock, knock! The rent is due! Where is the fruit?

Just like in the parable of the withered fig, God is looking under our leaves of activity to see if there is anything of value being produced. Is there anything that will satisfy His hunger? God is not hungry for physical fruit, He is looking for a heart that desires to know Him in spirit and truth. (John 4:23) It is collection time. What did you produce with all that God has given you?

<sup>35</sup>"The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third.  
<sup>36</sup>Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way.

What a patient landowner! It is almost generosity and mercy to a fault. Is that the way you view God? Do you see His patience as being much more than you deserve? In this parable, the servants are the prophets. This is the way they were treated by Israel. Very few were loved and respected by all. Most were killed just as the servants in the parable. (Matthew 23:31) But God kept sending them. Try to comprehend the

**Commented [notes5]:** <sup>26</sup> From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. Acts 17:26 (NIV)

**Commented [notes6]:** <sup>8</sup> And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

<sup>9</sup> As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." 2 Corinthians 9:8-9 (NIV)

**Commented [notes7]:** <sup>10</sup> For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)

**Commented [notes8]:** <sup>34</sup> It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. Mark 13:34 (NIV)

**Commented [notes9]:** <sup>10</sup> Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. Revelation 2:10 (NIV)

**Commented [notes10]:** <sup>6</sup> "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?" says the LORD Almighty. "It is you, O priests, who show contempt for my name." But you ask, "How have we shown contempt for your name?" Malachi 1:6 (NIV)

**Commented [notes11]:** <sup>1</sup> The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; Psalms 24:1 (NIV)

**Commented [notes12]:** <sup>7</sup> For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? 1 Corinthians 4:7 (NIV)

**Commented [notes13]:** <sup>23</sup> Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. John 4:23 (NIV)

**Commented [notes14]:** <sup>31</sup> So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Matthew 23:31 (NIV)

love and patience of God to send more servants and watch them be treated in the same way. What are the fruits that the prophets were trying to collect? They were looking for the fruits of repentance, righteous living, justice, and faithfulness to God. (Micah 6:8) Is it any different today?

<sup>37</sup>Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. <sup>38</sup>'But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.'

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. (John 3:16) In a bold prophetic way, Jesus told them what was in their minds and hearts. Jesus is the heir of the Father. Israel is His. All things are His. (Hebrews 1:2) But the religious leaders thought it was theirs. They coveted the praise of men. (John 12:43) They delighted in the authority and prestige of being the most elevated ones in their society. They did not want to give that up to the Son. They clung to their power and position and said, "Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance."

This tells us a few things about these religious leaders. Many of them knew who Jesus was. They knew He is the heir. They knew the rent was due. But they hardened their heart and tried to defeat God who gave them everything they had.

<sup>39</sup>So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

I told you before of the tension that had to be present at the Triumphal Entry. The reception and cleansing of the temple must have given Jesus' followers confidence that it was all going to turn out all right. The cursing of the fig may have shaken them a bit, and the question of authority probably made them realize a showdown was inevitable, but this statement must have sent chills down their spines.

<sup>39</sup>So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

<sup>40</sup>"Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?"

Just as in the last parable, Jesus had them observing from the outside without realizing at first that they were the tenants. His question invited them to judge for themselves what should be done. (Matthew 21:31)

<sup>41</sup>"He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time."

By our words we will be justified, and by our words we will be condemned. (Matthew 12:37) They had uttered their own judgment. They were so used to pointing the finger at others and condemning others that they could not see the application to their own lives. But Jesus is about to help them make the connection.

<sup>42</sup>Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?" There it is again, that dreaded question of Jesus. "Have you never read?" Oh how the Pharisees hated that introduction! They knew they were about to have the word they so stringently applied to others pointed at them. The builders were the elders of Israel. They rejected Jesus as an instrumental stone in the temple of the living God. Not only was He useful, but He is the capstone, the one that fits perfectly to hold all the others in place. (1 Peter 2:7) The Lord made Him the capstone. He made the

**Commented [notes15]:** <sup>8</sup> He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8 (NIV)

**Commented [notes16]:** <sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 (NIV)

**Commented [notes17]:** <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. Hebrews 1:2 (NIV)

**Commented [notes18]:** <sup>43</sup> for they loved praise from men more than praise from God. John 12:43 (NIV)

**Commented [notes19]:** <sup>31</sup> "Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered. Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. Matthew 21:31 (NIV)

**Commented [notes20]:** <sup>37</sup> For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned." Matthew 12:37 (NIV)

**Commented [notes21]:** <sup>7</sup> Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone, 1 Peter 2:7 (NIV)

rejected one the finishing piece. How marvelous! Man, in all of his arrogant self-esteem, decided Jesus was not worth including. God vetoed man's arrogant pride and made the Messiah all-important. Jesus was saying, "Didn't you read that? Didn't you see what God was doing? Oh I thought you were scholars?"

<sup>43</sup>"Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.

And who are the people that have received the kingdom of God, the people that produce fruit pleasing to God? They are Jew and Gentile made one by the Spirit of God indwelling us. They are those are born again in Christ Jesus. (Romans 7:4) They are those that let the Spirit of God bring them to a place of brokenness and are traveling down the road of sanctification to ever-increasing glory. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

Jesus finishes that thought with a summary warning. .

<sup>44</sup>*He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.*" You can be broken or you can be crushed. It is up to you. If you stand your ground against the capstone, rejecting it, refusing to see His place, you will be crushed by it. It will fall on you. But if you fall on this stone, if you humbly cast yourself upon Him, you will be broken to pieces. You cannot stay whole. No one does. We have come up against that black and white world of the Spirit. Be broken or be crushed; fall on Him or He falls on you. The rent is due. It is owed. There is no way around it.

Many of us would like to remain unbroken. Unbroken horses are as useless to man as unbroken men are to God. They cannot be led. They will not obey. They are defiant and stubborn. Have you been broken? It is another way of asking, "Have you been born again?" Broken or crushed, born again or the second death. The choices are black and white. Jesus was a megalomaniac or this is a clear warning from God about our eternal destiny. Jesus loved those religious leaders enough to tell them the truth. He loves us enough to tell us what is coming. I see many people come and go from under the teaching of the Word of God. They come to the point where they see the choice, but want to remain unbroken. They drift away and we see them occasionally. They like our company, they just do not want to be broken. (1 John 2:19) In God's economy, broken things are the most useful things. (1 Corinthians 11:24-25)

<sup>45</sup>*When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them.* <sup>46</sup>*They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.*

They finally caught on. They knew their own words had pronounced judgment on themselves, but they would not be broken. Instead, they determined even more to silence the voice that brought conviction. Keep in mind they realize He is the Son and heir. They were intent on fulfilling the prediction in the parable. Their choices have demanded that Justice crush them. How dreadful it is to realize that without the new birth, my heart is as hard as that!

How do you fall upon the Lord? How do you avoid hardening your heart to the point of killing the Son to have it your way? How do you avoid the justice of being crushed? The ones called "sinners" knew they needed a Savior. They were willing to humble themselves. They were aware of their need for mercy, and so they came seeking it

**Commented [notes22]:** So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. Romans 7:4 (NIV)

**Commented [notes23]:** <sup>18</sup> And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV)

**Commented [notes24]:** <sup>19</sup> They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us. 1 John 2:19 (NIV)

**Commented [notes25]:** <sup>24</sup> And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. <sup>25</sup> After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. 1 Corinthians 11:24-25 (KJV)

from Jesus. Some even literally threw themselves at His feet. (Matthew 15:25) Though we cannot do that today in His physical presence, we should be doing it on a daily basis in our hearts. It is the broken and contrite spirit that is open to the Spirit of God. A revelation of the depravity of the heart of man should humble us.

**Commented [notes26]:** <sup>25</sup> The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. Matthew 15:25 (NIV)

Those of us who have been broken should be praising God for His mercy upon us that helped us to fall upon Him. We have found how wonderfully sweet brokenness can be. Those of you who have not fallen on Him should be trembling in fear that your heart could be that hard toward the One to Whom we owe everything. You cannot kill the Son and expect God not to exercise justice toward you. The rock will fall on you and you will be crushed.

Everyone will be broken or crushed. Are you standing around the rock and daring it to fall on you, defiantly saying you owe no one anything? Imagine how that sounds to the Creator who sent the perfect rock to cap off the building, the very rock you reject. Recognize your debt and fall on Him before it is too late.

We have a negative image of brokenness. Let God redefine it for you this morning. Brokenness understands that God is in charge. An unbroken colt sees a rope and harness as a restriction on its freedom. That same rope and harness that it eventually learns to yield to, is what makes its life useful. It leads it to pasture and refreshing water. It guides its path. Or take a child for an example. Strong willed children can be an absolute terror. They demand their own way to their own detriment. They are an embarrassment to their parents and everyone around them. Through strict and loving discipline the child's stubborn will is broken, not crushed. They learn that they are not the center of the universe, and that it is to their benefit to obey.

Has your spirit been broken by the Lord? Has His discipline caused you to surrender your will and ways to the One who knows what is best for you? Have you fallen upon Him or do you still demand your way? I often have Christian people come and ask me to pray for something they want. They have reasoned in their mind that it must be God's will, but in reality, they are just asking God to give them what they desire. Are you looking to God for His direction for each day, or going your own way. A broken disciple knows the mess they can make when they justify doing what they desire. They have learned the humility that comes when you realize the greatness of God and the depravity of man. In that place of brokenness, they have become an instrument in the hand of Almighty God. They do not attract attention to themselves, but always point people to the source of their strength. (Psalm 27:1)

**Commented [notes27]:** <sup>1</sup> The LORD is my light and my salvation-- whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life-- of whom shall I be afraid? Psalms 27:1 (NIV)

Broken or crushed! Jesus does not leave us middle ground to hide in. He does not soft-pedal the truth. The hardhearted Pharisees would either receive conviction and be broken, or reject it and be crushed. The same is true for us. We will be the unbroken horse holding his head high on the way to the glue factory, or the useful one that becomes a servant, the child on his way to juvenile prison, or the one that makes his or her parents proud. It is our choice. Listen to Isaiah 57:15 (NIV), *For this is what the high and lofty One says-- he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.*