

8.5.22 am

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Good morning. And a warm welcome to the service this morning. Good to see so many out actually this morning.

And there's a good number of visitors with us as well. You're especially welcome. If you're able to stay behind at the end for tea and coffee, please do so. Intimation is just a few things to go over before we begin.

First to say the evening service is at six. All are welcome to that. And in the course of the week, ladies, Bible study, Little Fishers, Road to Recovery, Friday clubs, Jam Connect, Rooted, all on at the usual times and the usual places.

And all welcome to that. Let me just say about Wednesday evening prayer meeting in person and on Zoom. And on Wednesday evening, Pat, Wilf and Pat Urquhart, who you know from years gone by, they're on holiday here just now.

And so they're going to lead the prayer meeting or they're going to speak at the prayer meeting on Wednesday. So it would be good to see a good number on Wednesday to hear the work that they're still involved with and to give encouragement to them and be encouraged as we come around God's word.

[1 : 17] A couple more things. There will be a car wash to raise funds for a defibrillator to be based at the church. And the car wash will be from 12 till 4 this coming Saturday, I think, the 14th of May.

Cami, is Cami here? He is here. Where are you, Cami? Anything to say? Anything to add to that? I'm actually going to be with the hands. It doesn't say volunteers, but are you asking for volunteers? Yes, please, yeah. So. Yeah, but for my information, it's a long computer. I'm not a good check. So. Okay, so we're looking for volunteers for that.

So please speak to Cami if you're able to help with that on Saturday. And the other thing, we're always hearing about ladies' Bible studies and ladies' evenings, which was on Friday night, thanks to those who helped with that.

And the ladies are always organizing themselves and coming together. So we're doing a curry night, the men's curry night, this coming Saturday at 6pm.

[2 : 21] From 6 to probably about 8, I would imagine, we'll have some food. And David Chisholm, who many of you will know from Stornoway, he's involved with Road to Recovery.

He's going to share testimony at the end of the evening. So all men are welcome. Not just for those in the church. You might have friends who don't come to any church or who go to a different church. They're absolutely welcome. So if you are able to come, please do so. There is a sign-up sheet, I think, at the door, out at the front.

And there's the chance to give some food if you're able to. I think we'll allow the ladies to help us with the donations, if they feel so inclined. But I'll be making, just so nobody accuses me of anything, I'll be making a curry, but I'll identify which one it is so you can avoid it.

And two more things. Sunday School Jam Connect trip to Ness on Saturday, 21st May. Just note that date, please. We'll give more details in due course.

[3 : 31] And there's a quick Sunday School Teachers Jam Connect helpers meeting after the service in the Sunday School Room today. And that's a quick meeting as they define it, not quick as I define it.

So be encouraged to come along. And it's good to see some that we haven't seen in church for ages who've been off with the restrictions back for the first time today.

And it's excellent to come together and to worship God. So these, I think, are all the intimations. We're going to begin this time of worship and we're going to sing to God's praise.

There is one or two more there, but they've been on before the service began, so you can note that. We're going to begin this time of worship singing to God's praise from Psalm 95, verses 1 to verse 6.

Psalm 95, verses 1 to 6. So come, let us sing to the Lord. Come, let us, everyone, a joyful noise. Make to the rock of our salvation. We'll stand to sing to God's praise.

[4 : 37] O come, let us sing to the Lord.

Come, let us, everyone, a joyful noise.

Make to the rock of our salvation. Let us sing to the Lord.

Let us sing to him with grace. Let us sing to him with grace.

And make a joyful noise. For God, a great God and great thing.

[5 : 52] Above all gods he is. Deaths of the earth are in his hand.

The strength of his sins. To him, the gracious, he belongs.

For he, the same did make. The dry land also.

Let's join our hearts together in prayer. Let's pray. Almighty God, we thank you that we can come to this place this morning.

And we can come knowing that we are welcome. Knowing that you call us to come into your presence and to come into the place of worship. And we thank you that we have the confidence as we do so.

[7 : 06] To know that you will meet with us as we seek to draw near to you. That's your promise.

Those who draw near to you, you will draw near to. So we thank you that we have that belief.

That we have that understanding. That not only do we gather together in each other's presence. But we gather together in the presence of the living God.

We thank you for the psalm that we have sung. Where you speak to us. And reveal yourself to us.

We thank you that you have shown yourself to us to be our creator.

And as we look around us in the beauty of the landscape that we have been placed in. We are in awe so often of what we see.

And we thank you that we know that our awe and our worship and our thanksgiving. Is not to be directed to the universe. But the one who has made the universe.

[8 : 18] The God who is our creator. So we thank you Lord for all that we see. That surrounds us.

And we thank you that not only have you made this world.

But you have made us. You have formed us. Each of us. And we have been made in the image of God. Which means that we are valuable.

That we are precious to you. There are no small insignificant people. Because each of us have been made in your image.

And to be brought into a relationship with you. We thank you that you call us Lord. To know you. To trust you. To find salvation in you.

And we have sang of that in the psalm also. You are the rock of our salvation. And as we read these words. And sing these words. Our minds race forward.

[9 : 22] Thousands of years to Jesus. The one who lived for us. And the one who died for us. The one who rose from the dead.

And who promised us to be the rock of our salvation. If we trust him. So give us faith Lord we pray. That we would be trusting in Jesus.

All of us. Some of us are up in years. And we feel the aches and pains. That the accumulation of years brings.

Some are in the prime of life. And who may feel strong. And who may feel steady. And there are some who are just in the very earliest days of our lives.

We thank you for the babies who are here with us. Thank you especially for our little baby Evelyn.

Who is with us for the first time today. And for Mahala.

[10 : 21] And for Ian. And for Miriam. And we thank you that as we have prayed Lord. You have heard our prayers. And we praise you for the blessing. Of all these young children.

Who are beginning to fill the creche. We thank you for each of them that we see here. And that we rejoice to hear. In the building here. And in the creche next door also.

And we pray on for the little ones. That we do not yet see. But who are being formed within the womb. And we pray for their protection. And for their safe delivery.

In due course. We pray Lord for all who are gathered here. You know our hearts. You know our needs. We pray for those who have a desire to be here.

Who may be watching and listening. But who do not have sufficient health. And strength. And mobility to come. And we ask Lord that you would bless each one.

[11 : 20] That you would draw near to each of us. And meet us at the point of our need. For those who are struggling with illness. We're conscious still of so many with COVID.

And some who are feeling ill with it. And we ask that you would draw near to them. And lay hands of healing upon them. We pray for those who are grieving. We're conscious of some.

Who whose hearts are sore. Especially today. And we ask Lord for your comfort. And for your strength. We thank you that you're the God who binds up the broken hearted.

And we pray for those Lord who are anxious. The young people perhaps as they think about exams. We ask that you would give them all that they need as they approach them.

And perhaps others who are going for tests. And waiting for scans. And these kind of things that weigh heavy on our minds. We pray Lord that you would give peace to those who are anxious.

[12 : 23] And we pray for those who are healthy. Those who have nothing in this world that causes them alarm at this point. But who do not realize the fact that they are sinners.

And they are in need of Jesus to be Savior. We pray for souls that are sleeping. And we pray that you would awaken souls that have no sense of need of God.

And that you would bring them to life. And for those who may be wandering. We know that we are prone to wander. We pray that you would draw each back.

That we would have a close walk with God. To hear our prayers. Be with us in this place. We pray for our nation. We pray for a world that's so much.

In unrest. We see turmoil. We see warfare. We see so much that would trouble us. And we pray for those that you have allowed to be in authority over us.

[13 : 29] But we thank you. That over all of them. Is the sovereign God. And we bow before you. And ask Lord that you would be at work. In this place.

And across the nation. And across all nations. May many people. Even in this year day. Find. That they receive the saving grace.

Of God. And we pray all these things in Jesus name. Amen. Boys and girls. Would you like to come out please? Yes. It's great to see the wee ones.

Little F.E. Grace. And Evelyn. I didn't notice Evelyn until just. Before I began to pray. And little Joseph. And all the squad here.

You're an answer to prayer. Come a bit closer. Come a bit closer. I want to speak to you today.

[14 : 29] About. Cookies. Tell me. What are cookies? Tell me what cookies are. Where do you find cookies? Put your hand up.

If you know where cookies come from. Right. Do you want to ready? The shop. Always ready with an advert for the Darzik sewers. You get cookies in the shop.

And in the biscuit tin. So. You get these kind of cookies. So I brought a few of these with me today. Farrakhar told me. That's his favourite cookies. I think he was hinting. He's getting none of them.

So we get cookies in the biscuit tin. And in the shop. But. Where else do you find cookies? Sorry? On your mobile phone.

I think I'm going to have to ask. Corinne to come and sit down with you guys every week. Because she's always giving a louder. And a more persistent answer. Than comes over here. Where do you find cookies?

[15 : 32] Yes. The biscuit tin. Where else? In a packet. In a packet. Yeah. So there's these kind of cookies. Yeah. And there was a wee hint from over there.

But. Where else do you find cookies? Where else do you see cookies? Yeah. John Roddy. In the factory. In the factory. Yes. Keep going.

Where else do you see the word cookies? When we see cookies in the biscuit tin. But sometimes we're busy doing something. And all of a sudden. We see something about cookies.

Anyone else? Poor John Roddy. Is having to work hard this morning. Go on then. Is it when you go on the laptop? Accept all cookies?

When you go on the laptop. Or as Corrin said. When you go on the mobile phone. And if you go on a website. Then. Quite often when you go on the website.

[16:31] It will say. Before you're allowed to do anything else. It will say. What does it say? I wrote it down. I checked it. It says. It usually says. Accept all cookies.

Cookies. Which sounds lovely. Doesn't it? Because. You know. It's a great thing to have to. When we think about cookies. And somebody offers you a cookie. You don't usually say.

No. No. Take them away. You're usually saying. Oh yeah. I'll take all the cookies you can give me. So. On the websites. When you click. It says usually. Accept all cookies.

And it's not until you accept them. Can you actually go on. Now. Here's the question. What are these cookies? Because we all accept them.

Don't we? We just click. And we say yes. Usually. What are the cookies? Any idea? You guys are quiet today.

[17:26] I'll open it up a little. Any idea what the cookies are? Daniel? Not sure. But you've accepted them. Yeah? Jake? Don't know.

Any techie people here? No? No? Oh Henry. Isn't it like downloading the files or stuff? That's exactly what it is. It's.

It's little files. And when you. Say accept cookies. It downloads little files to your computer. Or your phone. And. They're little spy files.

Do you know that? They're little tracker files. I checked. I checked it out. And they. They come on. And they remember you.

And they. They recognize you. So. Cookies is a nice name. For. Something's a little bit sneaky. And I think if it's said in the box.

[18:25] Do you accept all spy files? We'd probably. Not be so keen to click. Yes. Now. Last week. Not many of you were here. But do you remember.

What I was talking about. Remember I saw in Edinburgh. Something. An animal. Lois. It's a fox. And who's the fox like? He's like.

Lois. He's like the devil. And foxes are like sneaky. Animals. The devil is sneaky. And he.

He never likes to tell us the truth. About things. So the devil will say to us. Why don't you do something? And we know. We know that it's not the right thing to do.

Why don't you do something sinful? And we might be thinking about telling lies. Or we might be thinking about. Swearing. Or we might be thinking. About taking something that we shouldn't. And he'll be whispering it into our ears.

[19:25] Saying. Oh don't worry. Just take it. Just do it. It's going to be delicious. You'll feel much better. When you do this. But the devil never tells us.

About what sin does. Does he? He doesn't tell us the truth. Now. Who tells us the truth? Yeah.

God does. We can trust God. He doesn't. Make up sneaky words. And say. Things like.

You know. Change words for cookies. From spy files. God tells us the truth. And he tells me the truth. About my heart. He tells me the truth.

About the fact that. In my heart is sin. And I need to be saved. From sin. And what did. What did God do. To make it possible. For us to be saved from sin.

[20:24] Miriam. He sent his son. To die on the cross. So that if we. Ask for forgiveness. Our sin is taken away. And we are.

We are. Saved. And we are. Made safe. Forever. So. When the devil comes along. Saying. Why don't you do this. Why don't you do that.

It will be fine. Just. Say to him. Get away from me. Can't trust you. For when. We open the bible. And when.

God speaks. Then we say. Speak oh lord. Because we want to hear. What you're saying. Because we know. That you're the truth. So let's pray. Lord we thank you.

That you. Tell us the truth. And that you are the truth. And we ask lord. That you would. Help us to. To believe. To trust you. And to listen to you.

[21:19] Today. And every day. We thank you. That you tell us the truth. About. The sin in our hearts. Not to make us sad. But. To make it possible. For us to be saved.

And we thank you. That. The lord Jesus. Came to this world. And died. On the cross. So that we can be saved. From sin. And made safe forever. If we simply ask him.

To come in. To our hearts. So lord Jesus. We pray that you would. Come in. To our hearts. That you would. Take away our sin. And that you would. You would make us. Safe forever.

Speak oh lord. We pray. To us. And we ask all this. In Jesus name. Amen. We're going to sing now. The words of that. Speak oh lord. As we come to you.

We'll stand to sing. To receive the food.

[22 : 31] Of your holy word. Take your truth. Grant it deep in us. Shape and fashion us.

in your likeness. That the light of Christ might be seen today in our acts of love and our deeds of faith.

Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us all your purposes for your glory.

Teach us, Lord, full obedience, holy reverence to humility.

Test our thoughts and our attitudes in the radios of impurity.

[23 : 39] Most are free to rise, cause our eyes to see your majestic love and authority.

Works of power that can never fail, let their truth prevail over unbelief.

Speak, O Lord, and renew our might. Help us grasp the heights of your plans for us.

To start change from the dawn of time that will echo down through eternity.

My grace will stand on your promises and my faith will walk as you walk with us.

[24 : 45] Speak, O Lord, till your church is built and the earth is filled with your glory.

Okay, boys and girls, if you head through to Sunday school. And we can turn in our Bibles to Luke chapter 20, please, as they're going.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Luke chapter 20. I never got to deal with this parable last Sunday. I was going to deal with it on Wednesday night last week, but there's more to it as I began to explore it.

So we're going to look at this today. The parable of the tenants. Luke chapter 20 and verse 9. Jesus went on to tell the people this parable.

[26 : 06] A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time. At harvest time, he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard.

But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. He sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed.

He sent a third and they wounded him and threw him out. Then the owner of the vineyard said, What shall I do? I will send my son whom I love.

Perhaps they will respect him. But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over. This is the heir, they said. Let's kill him and the inheritance will be ours.

So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.

[27 : 04] When the people heard this, they said, May this never be. Jesus looked directly at them and asked, Then what does the meaning of that which is written, The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone?

Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed. The teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately because they knew he had spoken this parable against them, but they were afraid of the people.

Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us. We're going to sing again now from the psalm there that Jesus quoted. I'm 118 and we'll sing from verses 20 to 23 as they're marked in the English.

I'll read them in English, two stanzas. We'll sing this in Gaelic and we remain seated to sing in Gaelic. But the verses in English, this is the gate of God by it the just shall enter in.

He will I praise for thou me heardst and hast my safety been. That stone is made head cornerstone which builders did despise. This is the doing of the Lord and wondrous in our eyes.

[28 : 24] These two verses in Gaelic to God's praise. If you could turn back now please to the passage that we read from Luke chapter 20.

and we'll pray as we return to it. Heavenly Father we thank you for your word, the truth of your word and we pray for the help of the Holy Spirit once more as we come to study it.

Speak into our hearts Lord we pray as we sang and help us to see our need of Jesus and to come in faith to Jesus. We pray that for ourselves in this room we pray that for the children in Sunday school and in creche that as they grow up and as these little babies grow up amongst us we pray that they would grow up to know you and to trust you.

We pray not just for ourselves we pray for the congregations around us the different denominations in this place and the surrounding villages from us. we pray for the congregations connected to us the visitors with us today the places that they come from we ask Lord that whatever the word of God is preached whatever Christ is lifted up that many would be drawn to him in salvation.

So hear our prayers help us to speak help us to listen help us to respond in a way that glorifies you. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen. I think all of us have been in a situation before where we felt that the person that we're speaking to actually in that moment knows more about us than we know about ourselves.

[30 : 23] You know maybe at the hospital we've been for tests and we're waiting for the results and we're sitting in front of a doctor and they have a file with their name on it and they're scanning through papers and they're scanning through photographs and we're shifting uncomfortably in our chair as they look at us and we realise they know more about what's going on inside than we do.

Or online. You know you can search for a new pair of trainers on Google. as I all too often do. And then you go on to Facebook or YouTube or something and what pops up in the adverts? Well the exact trainers that you were looking for that you decided not to buy.

They keep appearing in front of you for the next few weeks and you wonder how did they know?

And we realise now the way they know is through these evil cookies.

Or even when I was thinking back to university days when we sat final exams I'm so old that I can remember that the result for your final exams wasn't texted to you, it wasn't emailed to you, it was pinned on a wall and everyone in the class of 200 were all gathered round in this quadrant straining to see what our names on this list.

[31 : 55] And very often your classmates who are usually a little bit faster than you, they could see if you'd passed or failed before you knew anything.

So there's something that's very unsettling about someone else knowing you better than you know yourself. And yet that's the situation that we're in, in Luke chapter 20.

The chief priests and the teachers of the law together with the elders, the religious big shots, they were tracking Jesus.

They were actually trying to gather all the information they could about Jesus so they could use it against him. They wanted to build a case to incriminate Jesus over.

But it seems as they gather their reverence and as they try to close in on Jesus, Jesus actually seems to know more about them than they know about him.

[33 : 04] And so in this parable that we're looking at today, Jesus shows these religious leaders and he shows us our sinful hearts.

And Jesus he reaches out to these folks with the offer of salvation. And he also warns them of the prospect of judgment if they don't receive it.

She makes a lovely little noise, doesn't she? We could listen to her for another twenty minutes. So we're going to take a few minutes to look at this parable this morning.

And I have six points to warn you but there are six points that are very short so I would expect to move briskly through this just to gather our thoughts.

We see first of all a creator God and then we see a chosen people. Then we hear a call from God to be fruitful.

[34 : 10] fruitful. We see from the religious leaders the challenge of unbelief. We hear then a last call to faith and then there is the warning as you follow the verses through of the crush of judgment for those who continue to resist.

So that gives you the big picture and we'll just move through this in the timeline we have. So first of all we see a creator God, the creator God. Look at verse 9. Jesus went on to tell the people this parable and he says a man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time.

There's a lot packed into this parable but the start point here, the very big picture as we approach it is we see in this parable the creative life-giving work of God.

there is a vineyard and that vineyard it's been rented out to some farmers but notice that the farmers didn't plant it and the farmers didn't make it grow they're just placed in it they're just placed in it for a period and that's our situation that's a picture of us.

I was thinking back to when I was just a wee boy and I used to go and sit in prayer meetings and I remember when I would sit in prayer meetings and I would hear the older men pray and they used

to use a phrase that came back to me as I was reading through this parable the older men would be praying to the Lord for help with the work in quotes this part of thy vineyard and he used to say it all the time we pray for the work of the gospel in this part of thy vineyard and I didn't really know what it meant but I knew enough to understand that they were praying for the place that we were in that point in time they were praying for Stornoway that's where I was and you know we see ourselves in this parable we are in the vineyard that God has made we have been given life and it's

[36 : 40] God that's given us life we didn't bring about our own birth as we hear the we wants and as we celebrate seeing them here we didn't bring about our own birth we didn't make ourselves grow it's God that does that we've been placed in this world we didn't make this world we've been placed in this beautiful part of the world and it's God's world it's his creation it's his vineyard and so the question comes to you and I in the first instance here how will we use our lives for the time that we are placed here you know in one sense as we read in verse 9 of the owner of the vineyard who went away for a long time our creator

God in one sense he's gone away for a long time Jesus came into this world he is coming back but it seems like a long time and we're in this place and God has given us free will he's allowed us to make decisions about how we will use the time that he has given us and how we will use the resources that he has given us so like the farmers who are accountable to the one who planted the vineyard ultimately we are accountable to the creator God who's planted this world and who's placed us in it so look out the window this afternoon look around you and remember that all this we have been made by the creator

God we're here for a while soon we'll stand before him and we'll explain to him what we did with our time here but that's the first thing we see the creator God the second thing we see here is a chosen people and still in verse one I just want to zoom in for a minute on the word vineyard now if we travel back in time to the time and the place into which Jesus spoke to Israel that word vineyard it was a loaded word they understood that word was packed full of Old Testament significance it was a word that described the nation of Israel and they were in the first instance God's chosen people God chose to reach out to this small cantankerous nation he chose them and he reveals himself and his character to them and this word vineyard was a word that spoke about

Israel the people that God chose so I'm going to read a couple of verses from Isaiah 5 you can go there if you want but I'll just read through it quickly God as he speaks through this prophet Isaiah he says this I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard my loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside he dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with choiceless vines he built a watch tower in it and cut out a wine press as well then he looked for a crop of good grapes so Jesus as he speaks about this vineyard he's speaking about Israel sometimes we can be sitting and we've got our phones in our pocket and they bleep or they vibrate and we look and we can see there's a notification on our phones we've been tagged in some post somebody's written something and they've connected us to it or they've put a photograph online and they've tagged us in it and the chief priests and the teachers of the law together with the elders they knew the moment that Jesus used the word vineyard that he tagged them in the parable this was a story about them and their minds because they remember bible experts went immediately back to

Isaiah 5 and they knew they were arrested in their minds because they knew Jesus was pointing the finger at them and speaking to them one commentator Barclay says this is a parable whose meaning is crystal clear I can tell it's not crystal clear to us but it was crystal clear to them the vineyard stands for the nation of Israel Isaiah 5 the tenants are the rulers of Israel into whose hands the nation was entrusted so this was a story it was a parable about the people that were standing in front of Jesus on that day and yet this is a story this is a parable that also tags us in the Old Testament God chose to reach out to a small group a particular group of people he chose to reach out to them in love and mercy and grace and call them to himself but as we step from the

[42 : 37] Old Testament into the New Testament we hear the call of God to us the gates open the call widens and we hear Jesus saying to us come to me all who are weary come to me all who are tired who are heavy laden who feel the weight of their sin and I will give you rest see as God's word is opened as we hear it God is choosing us there might be some here who doubt that there will be some here who doubt that there's some who have enough kind of background theological knowledge to say well there's a group of people that

God chooses but I don't know if it's me don't know if he's choosing me but the fact is that you're here this morning because God has determined that you will be here and if you're still awake and

hearing this your mind's not a thousand miles away it's because God is arresting you he's speaking to you he's choosing to reach out to you he is giving you the opportunity if you trust in him to be one of his chosen people creator God overarching all and yet he is the creator God who reaches out to us he chooses us he says I want you to be one of my people third point there's a call to be fruitful verse 10 at harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard so the tenants are in this vineyard they've been there for a period harvest time has come work has been done in advance now there's a crop and it's the time to look for fruit the picture at the kind of this world level is very straightforward the owner of the vineyard who's rented this out to them is very reasonable and in full accordance with the law the terms of the contract saying there's fruit and

I'm entitled to a portion of that fruit you know some of you might have a property in some other place and somebody else is in it you've rented it out for a period when it comes to the end of the month you expect a return it's the right thing it's the reasonable thing it's the contractual thing and the owner of the vineyard in terms of the agreement is saying the harvest has now come and I'm entitled to a cup of this because it's my vineyard not yours so if we move from the picture that Jesus paints in terms of the this world meaning and think about the spiritual significance we ask the question what fruit does God expect from my life what fruit does God expect to see from his people and the answer is he expects to see the fruit of faith but as was obvious from the chief priests and the teachers of the law and the elders they were full of the leaves of religion but there was no fruit of faith in Jesus which is the call to be fruitful but there was no fruit lots of religion no fruit of faith the apostle

Paul was somebody who mixed in these circles he was a high flying Pharisee and as he reflects back on the way he had been when he was in the midst of that religious circle he describes these people as having a form of godliness but no power lots of religion lots of formation but no spiritual power and he says to Timothy when he writes to this young minister Timothy he says these people are all over the place I was one of them but I'm telling you have nothing to do with these people there's no fruit of faith in them and so as god looks into my life and as he looks into your life this morning he's looking for faith in Jesus you know there are so many people

I think the vast majority of people in this country today think in terms of if I have a high enough church attendance if I try to live my life up to a good standard and try to do nice things and not too many nasty things if I maybe have a membership certificate of some reputable denomination then god in the end he's going to look into my life and he's going to say you're okay you can come to heaven but god is not looking for that he's looking for faith in Jesus you can have a membership certificate do you do you no good in the end if there's no faith in Jesus remember the minister over in apple cross kenny barn having a having a he was telling me about a discussion between a very religious person and the minister and they were having a discussion about how we become acceptable to god and the person said well

[49 : 22] I do this and I do that and I do the next thing and my name's in the church row and the minister answered well your name may as well be in a sausage row you need to have faith in Jesus so do you and I have faith in Jesus that's the question you know as we look around at the beauty of god's creation we have been given so many reasons to have faith in god as we open the bible and we read about the god who so loved the world that he sent his son to die on a cross so that we could have eternal life we have so many reasons to put our faith in Jesus so is the fruit of faith seen in your life and mine do you believe in Jesus have we come in faith to him have we entered into relationship with him so there's the call to be fruitful that's the third point the fourth point is the challenge of unbelief now in the passage that gives us the picture of the vineyard we see we see that God he plants this vineyard and there are perfect growing conditions in this vineyard but there's no fruit that's the dilemma in the passage that we read we're going to miss her

I don't mind at all but so we have the challenge of unbelief that we see as the next point there's the Isaiah 5 passage the vineyard God plants conditions are perfect no fruit that's the situation in Isaiah 5 and verse 2 says that he God dug it up cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines he built a watch tower in it and cut out a wine press as well then he looked for a crop of good grapes but it yielded only bad fruit so faith is good fruit unbelief is bad fruit and that's what was prophesied by

Isaiah there was going to be no fruit it was going to be unbelief and that's what had been happening generation after generation after generation there had been bad fruit and Jesus tells that story in

the parable look at verses 10 to 12 at harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard but the tenants beat him and sent him away empty handed he sent another servant and that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty handed he sent a third and still they wounded him and threw him out so who are the servants he were the servants of he was those who spoke to the nation of Israel on God's behalf challenging them to believe these are the servants of

God they're challenging the people to live lives that were fruitful but the people God was reaching out to in his vineyard they would not believe and one after one prophet came and they pushed them back they sent them away they abused them they killed them they challenged God time and time again with their unbelief as the prophet spoke so then the owner of the vineyard verse 13 said what shall I do all these prophets destroyed all these messengers sent away what will I do now the owner of the vineyard said

I will send my son to my love perhaps they will respect him so who is the son well we know who the son is it's Jesus all the prophets pointed to and preceded Jesus who came from the father to a rebellious people but when the tenants saw him verse 14 they talked the matter over this is the heir they said all this belongs to him let's kill him and the inheritance will be ours so they threw him out of the vineyard verse 15 and killed him we can imagine the people listening to this story it's taking a bad bad turn it's an awful story and yet this wasn't just a story this was happening in real time even now the religious leaders were talking the problem of

[55 : 15] Jesus over amongst themselves and they had come to a decision that Jesus needed to be killed he was disrupting their religion he was challenging their hearts so he needed to be gone and in three days time they would in fact kill Jesus and Jesus is telling the people this is what's going to happen we're speaking the commentator says in this story in this parable Jesus gave his own death announcement ahead of time and we can imagine the religious leaders shifting uncomfortably they thought their plans to kill Jesus they thought it was classified information they thought this was all high confidence stuff and yet

Jesus seemed to know all about it Jesus seemed to know more about their plans than they did and yet the staggering thing was he's still reaching out to them point five the last call to faith it was in the airport last week and there was a flight to Paris I think it was and it was due to go so I was hearing on the Tannoy flight for Paris leaving at this time with all passengers proceed to the gate and then a couple of minutes later a fly to Paris leaving with all passengers proceed to the gate and then a couple of minutes later flight to Paris leaving passengers X and passengers Y please proceed to the gate and then last call for passengers X and passengers Y for the flight to Paris please proceed immediately to the gate and then

I saw this young couple looking dishevelled and stressed out charging through the airport. I don't know if they made it or not for the flight, but it was their last call.

And Jesus told this parable against the chief priests and the teachers of the law and the elders. And this parable is certainly, as far as Luke records, this is the last parable that Jesus told.

It was their last call to faith. They'd had many calls, but this was the last one. Jesus wasn't telling this parable to get one over on these people.

[58 : 05] He wasn't telling this parable as a public put-down. He's reaching out to them. He's saying to them, I know what's going on in your hearts. I know about your plans.

But if they would repent and believe at this point, they would be saved. And we might wonder about that, but it is true.

We might wonder, is it really possible that those who were plotting the death of Jesus could, if they repented, have been saved? And yet it's true. We're going to sing it in just a minute or two.

The vilest offender. Think about that. Think about the worst person you know. Maybe it's yourself. The vilest offender who truly believes that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

[59 : 17] And so this was their last call to faith. I wonder today, is it possible that it could be the last call to faith for someone? We don't know how long we've got in this world.

It could be the last call to faith for someone here. We may have another 50 years in this world.

We may sit in these chairs another thousand times and hear nothing and think only about Brussels sprouts and roast beef that are overcooking the oven.

But today if you can hear if there is an interest, there is an opportunity.

Might be your last one. Now don't hesitate. Repent. Be saved. Final point is the crush of judgment.

[60 : 26] Verse 16. Jesus says, What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.

When the people heard this, they said, May this never be. Jesus, he's been reaching out, he's been calling, and now he gives a warning as he finishes.

And he's speaking about judgment. They don't like hearing about it because when Jesus says this, they say, May this never be. We don't want to hear any of this stuff about judgment. We never do, do we?

But they needed to hear the truth about the judgment that awaited those who treated Jesus in this way. So Jesus, he spoke to them with urgency and in love, and he warns them about the truth of judgment.

It says in verse 17, Jesus looked directly at them and asked, What then is the meaning of that which is written? The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone. Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.

[61 : 35] And we sang at the beginning of the service about the rock of our salvation. That powerful image. And the rock of our salvation, the capstone, the cornerstone of our salvation, it is Jesus.

He is the Savior for all who believe in him. But I need to say that if we don't believe in him, if we reject him as they were, we will ultimately feel the crushing judgment of Jesus.

And so the question for them and the question for us is how will we respond today? Verse 19, and we're finished, the teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately.

No more of this, they said. We can't hear another word of this. They knew that he had spoken this parable against them, but they were afraid of the people.

So they have to delay a dear to more. But they are determined they will reject Jesus. And so they made a bad decision.

[63 : 05] in spite of all the privileges, in spite of all the wealth of knowledge of the Bible that they had, in spite of all the miracles that they saw Jesus perform, in spite of hearing a message from the Son of God spoken to them from heaven, against all the evidence, they refused Jesus.

They stood against him and they became all the more determined to get rid of Jesus. And that's the end of this parable.

It's not my end. It's Jesus' end. And it's serious and it's tragic. And it's there for us to learn from.

You know, there are teachers of the law and chief priests and theology professors and people who had an ocean of wealth of Bible knowledge and many years of religious experience who are crushed under the judgment of Jesus in hell today.

And they have no more opportunity to turn to Jesus. We have opportunity today.

[64 : 43] Maybe just today. So don't pass it by. Come to Jesus and seek salvation in him.

Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Lord God, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the winsome power of the gospel call. We hear Jesus reaching out even to those who were plotting to kill him.

And we know that all those who repent, no matter how dark the heart may be, no matter how far they may have gone in rebellion against God, we know that the moment they turn, the moment we turn in faith to Jesus, we have the promise of salvation.

We thank you for the wide call of Jesus to be saved. And we thank you for the clarity also that Jesus gives us when he speaks of the judgment that awaits those who will not be saved.

[66 : 09] Help us to hear this. Help us to understand that when we go from this world, there is nothing, but there is either an eternity with the Lord, or there is an eternity where we have to face the punishment of the sin that we committed against the Lord.

May there be no one here who determines to reject Christ and face judgment. Help us, we pray, to look to Jesus in faith and to be saved.

Not to harden our hearts, but to trust you while there is time. And we ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen. We'll sing to conclude To God Be the Glory, 708 in Mission Praise.

We'll stand to sing. God Be the glory, great things he has done, so loved he the one that he gave to be his son.

He healed his life and atonement for sin and opened the life gate that all may go in.

[67 : 51] Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice.

O come to the Father, to Jesus the Son, and give him the glory which things he have done.
Let take redemption the work of Christ, to every believer the promise of God, the highest surrender
who truly believes, the moment from Jesus the fire and peace is.
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the
people rejoice.

O come to the Father, to Jesus the Son, and give him the glory, great things he hath done.
[69 : 14] Great things he hath taught us, great things he hath done, and great the rejoicing to
Jesus the Son.

The pure and higher and greater will be, a wonder our action when Jesus be seen.
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let me hear his voice. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the
people rejoice.

O come to Father, to Jesus the Son, and give him the glory, great things he hath done.
Jesus I have had faith a mustondere to that man ■ son, oh, put look like and for son, we can him
and make him husband and him and his his son, and to hot can his weekend has