



Bible Heroes

Parable of the Bad Tenants

Teachers Story notes

Essential Teachers notes:

Some stories seem innocent enough until you get into them, this is such a parable. It wouldn't have taken long for the listeners to start switching out 'servant' with 'prophet', to wonder if the vineyard was Eden's glory or the promised holy kingdom of heaven on earth. The process was thinly veiled even by Jesus' standard, there would be no explaining this one to the apostles later. For the religious leaders, clearly painted as the worst of tenants it was a threat that couldn't be more direct if it physically slapped them, but their hands were tied by the other ears that heard. As if adding insult to injury Jesus then sets himself up as the cornerstone, the very foundation that the new kingdom would be built upon.

Tell this story or a similar one of your choice from a favourite bible translation or story book. This version is supplied for inspiration, feel free to omit or embellish to give it your personal voice.

Main Passage : Matthew 21:33-46

Jesus was telling stories - again. Stories about vineyard owners - again. And annoying the religious leaders - again!

"There was a vineyard owner" said Jesus a small smile playing on his lips "This vineyard owner bought a plot of land and planted his vineyard, he built a press, he built a fence, it was a fine vineyard. But the owner was old, the long days in the vineyard made him tired, he missed the place he used to live before he bought the vineyard and made a plan to go back there.

"Some men would look after the vineyard, they would be his tenants and once all the grapes had been harvested he would send a servant to collect his share.

"So the vineyard owner left and many months went past until the day came for him to send 3 servants. Some weeks later one of the three servants arrived back at the masters house. He was bruised and his clothes torn. He told the vineyard owner that the tenants had refused to give them anything, they had beaten him, thrown stones at the other servant and killed the third. He alone was strong enough to travel back home.

"Angry, the vineyard owner sent a bigger number of servants, but they returned with the same story. Unsure what to do to communicate with his tenants he decided to send his son, his only son, who he loved. When the tenants saw the son coming they made a plan. If they killed his son there would be nobody to take over the vineyard and they could keep it forever. So they took the vineyard owners son and killed him.

"What would the Vineyard owner do? Well he threw out those tenants and had them punished, then he gave the vineyard to other men who would share the harvest."

The crowd went quiet. They knew this wasn't really a story about vineyards and servants, it was a story about God's kingdom, about the prophets God sent to his people, how the people of God had treated God's messengers so badly. The religious leaders knew it too.

"Have you never read in the scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone'" said Jesus, that smile back on his lips again. He was teasing them. Even if they rejected him he was going to build a kingdom and right now they wouldn't be in it.

Today's heroes are the bad tenants because they shows us the gift of consequences.

