



Parables function as metaphors
challenging or inviting the audience
into a new or deeper experience of
God's dominion, a dominion identified
with those who are the
LAST LOST LEAST LITTLE LIFELESS



That Just Isn't Right

The Parable of the Vineyard and the Tenants
Mark 12.1-9; Matthew 21.33-46; Luke 20.9-19

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Mark 12.1-9

CONTEXT >> Mark 11.26-33:

Chief priests, scribes, elders challenge Jesus' authority

Jesus: John's baptism of heaven or of humans?

They 'don't know;' Jesus won't tell

Then he began to speak to them in parables.

Mark 12.1-9

"A person planted a vineyard..."

What other "vineyard" stories does this evoke?

- Genesis 9.20: "Noah, a farmer person, planted a vineyard..."
- 1 Kings 21: Naboth's vineyard (Ahab & Jezebel)
- Song of Solomon 8.11f.: -- Solomon's vineyard leased for 1000 shekels; keepers get 200
- Isaiah 5.1-7: Song of the Unfruitful Vineyard
- Matthew 20.1-16: Parable of laborers in the vineyard

Mark 12.1-9

"A person planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a pit for the wine press, and built a watchtower; then he leased it to tenants and went to another country.

What assumptions do you make about this person?

Why would the person build a fence and a watchtower?

Note that all the verbs in this verse of the parable are in 3rd singular.

Do you understand it literally to mean that the person alone planted, fenced, dug, and built everything?

Mark 12.1-9

"A person planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a pit for the wine press, and built a watchtower; then he leased it to tenants and went away on a journey.

What assumptions do you make about the tenants?

What might we guess about the lease agreement?

Where did the owner go?

Mark 12.1-9

When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants to collect from them his share of the produce of the vineyard...

but they seized him,
and beat him, and sent
him away empty-handed.

Why do the tenants act violently?

Why do they send the slave away?

Mark 12.1-9

And again he sent another slave to them;
this one they beat over the head (κεφαλιάω)
and insulted.

Then he sent another,
and that one they killed.
And so it was with many others;
some they beat, and others they killed.

The 'head-beating' may be an allusion to...?

*What do the tenants think they are accomplishing by
killing or beating the owner's slaves?
Are they anticipating any retribution?*

Mark 12.1-9

He had still one other, a beloved son.
Finally he sent him to them, saying,

'They will respect my son.'

Who else is described as a "beloved son" in Mark?

*Is there any (good) logic to the owner's decision
to send his son?*

Mark 12.1-9

But those tenants said to one another,
'This is the heir; come, let us kill him,
and the inheritance will be ours.'

So they seized him, killed him,
and threw him out of the vineyard.

*Is there any (good) logic to the tenants' decision
to kill the son?*

Mark 12.1-9

What then will the owner of the vineyard do?

He will come and destroy the tenants and give
the vineyard to others.

What options does the owner have?

Mark 12.1-9

What then will the owner of the vineyard do?

He will come and destroy the tenants and give
the vineyard to others.

*Is the hearer more sympathetic
to the owner or to the tenants?*

Who is more violent: the owner or the tenants?

Are the tenants ever described as "wicked"?

Gospel of Thomas 65 (Layton translation)

He said, "A **kind** man owned a vineyard, and put it in the hands of cultivators for them to cultivate, so that he might get its produce from them. Note how the owner is identified

He sent his slave so the cultivators might give the produce of the vineyard to the slave. They seized, beat, and all but killed his slave, and the slave went and spoke to its owner.

Its owner said, 'Perhaps they did not recognize it (the slave),' and he sent another slave. The cultivators beat the other slave.

Next the owner sent his son and said, 'Perhaps they will show respect for my son.'

Those cultivators, since they recognized that it was he who was heir to the vineyard, seized him and killed him.

Whoever has ears should listen!"

Note the lack of resolution!

Mark 12.10-12

Have you not read this scripture:

'The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord's doing,
and it is amazing in our eyes!'"

How is this a fitting or not conclusion to the parable?

Who rejects what in the parable?

What are the builders building?

Mark 12.10-12

Have you not read this scripture:

'The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord's doing,
and it is amazing in our eyes!'"

When they [chief priests, scribes, elders] realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowd. So they left him and went away.

*How are the authorities apparently
understanding the parable?*

Are they identifying with the landlord or the tenants?

Mark 12.1-12

*How does Mark want the reader to understand
the parable?*

Mark 12.1-12 and Reader-Response Criticism

The Self-Consuming Artifact

*Where in the parable are we led to think one thing only
to have it reversed or disappointed in the end?*

What is the true nature of the **owner**?
Is he good and gracious? Or stupid and vindictive?

How are we to understand the **tenants**?
Are they evil, lease-breaking, violent criminals?
Or are they heroic 'everymans' standing up against
oppressive authority?

Mark 12.1-12 and Reader-Response Criticism

The Resisting Reader

*Who are the most prominent "resisting readers"
of Mark 12.1-12?*

How do they resist Mark's reading?

Mark 12.1-12 and Reader-Response Criticism		
Mark, Matthew, and Luke		
What are we told about the owner?		
How are the various slaves treated?		
How is the (Beloved) Son described?		
How is the son seized / thrown out / killed ?		
How are the tenants described?		

Mark 12.1-12 and Reader-Response Criticism		
Matthew	Mark	Luke
There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a pit for the wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country.	A man planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a pit for the wine press, and built a watchtower; then he leased it to tenants and went to another country.	A man planted a vineyard, and leased it to tenants, and went to another country for a long time.


Mark 12.1-12 and Reader-Response Criticism		
Matthew	Mark	Luke
When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. ³⁵ But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶ Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way.	When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants to collect from them his share of the produce of the vineyard. ³ But they seized him, and beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. ⁴ And again he sent another slave to them; this one they beat over the head and insulted. ⁵ Then he sent another, and that one they killed. And so it was with many others; some they beat, and others they killed.	When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants in order that they might give him his share of the produce of the vineyard; but the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. ¹¹ Next he sent another slave; that one also they beat and insulted and sent away empty-handed. ¹² And he sent still a third; this one also they wounded and threw out.

Mark 12.1-12 and Reader-Response Criticism		
Matthew	Mark	Luke
Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'	⁶ He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'	¹³ Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.'

Mark 12.1-12 and Reader-Response Criticism		
Matthew	Mark	Luke
³⁸ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.' ³⁹ So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.	But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' ⁸ So they seized him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.	¹⁴ But when the tenants saw him, they discussed it among themselves and said, 'This is the heir; let us kill him so that the inheritance may be ours.' ¹⁵ So they threw him out and killed him.

Mark 12.1-12 and Reader-Response Criticism		
Matthew	Mark	Luke
What then will the owner of the vineyard do?		
They [the chief priests and elders] said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time."	He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.	He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others. When they [the people] heard this, they said, "Heaven forbid!"

Mark 12.1-12 and Reader-Response Criticism		
Matthew	Mark	Luke
rejected stone > cornerstone saying...		
Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."		Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.

Mark 12.1-12 and Reader-Response Criticism		
Matthew	Mark	Luke
chief priests and elders identify w/ landowner, but Jesus turns it back on them >> how they judged the tenants is how they will be judged	chief priests, scribes, & elders realize that Jesus has told this parable about them as the tenants	
		

Mark 12.1-12

How does Mark want the reader to understand the parable?

How does the parable ask to be understood?

Is the owner God or Israel or Jewish authorities?

Is the vineyard Israel or the Temple?

Are the tenants Jewish authorities or Rome or laypersons?

Is this a tragic story of violence or an exhortative story of hope?

Echoes of Genesis 37.20: "Come, let us kill...?"

Is the attention of the parable on the owner, the vineyard, the tenants, the son, or the inheritance?

Mark 12.1-12 and Reader-Response Criticism

The Resisting Reader

How do you function as a cooperative or resisting reader?

Is it appropriate / faithful to be a resisting reader?