

Breaking the Subtly Deceptive Mentality That Steals God's Harvest

Mark 12:1-12: He began to speak to them in parables. "A man planted a vineyard, and set a hedge around it, and dug a pit for the winepress, and built a tower, and rented it to vinedressers, and went to a far country. At harvest time he sent a servant to the vinedressers to receive from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. But they seized him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Then he sent another servant to them. They threw stones at him, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. Still he sent another, and they killed him. And there were many others. Some they beat, and some they killed. Having yet his one well-beloved son, he sent him last to them, saying, 'They will revere my son.' But those vinedressers said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' So they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill the vinedressers and give the vineyard to others. Have you not read this Scripture: 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?'" Then they tried to seize Him, but feared the people, for they knew that He had spoken the parable against them. So they left Him and went their way.

History has a way of being cyclical; it repeats itself, therefore, it is imperative that we learn from history in order to not repeat the things in the past that were not effective as it pertained to the advancing of the kingdom of God. As we read the gospels, it is easy to just see them as stories, but they were actually a re-configuring of ideas,

thought patterns and ways of doing life as a spiritual being. If you aren't careful, you can read the gospels and miss the messages that Jesus was telling them and that He is telling us.

In this parable, Jesus was letting us know that we were given a vineyard (a group of people, family, community), that we were invited to be a steward over a vineyard, but when it came to harvest time, He (the Father/owner) could take from His vineyard whatever He wanted. The challenge was then and is now that many who have been called to be vineyard stewards have actually become vineyard owners. In the process of stewardship, the subtle shift to ownership took place. This is understandable, for those who really want to give their best to anything need to have a sense of ownership in that thing. The challenge is, once you cross over into ownership, you now believe the vineyard is yours and the fruit of that vineyard belongs to you.

I believe we are in harvest season right now in the kingdom of God. I believe God is harvesting grapes (people) from His vineyard right now as we speak. I believe, what many see as a harvest of unbelievers coming is correct, but I think there is a harvest happening right now of believers. God, the owner of the vineyard (Psalm 24:1), is coming for His fruit, those who are mature, those who are ripe, those who are prepared to be gathered. Many leaders are wondering why so many people are leaving their churches; I believe this is why. It is harvest time. People are hearing the voice of God calling them out of the religious systems they have been in. Calling them to follow Jesus, not a church leader, calling them to discipleship with Jesus Himself. They are hearing the words of Jesus, "Follow Me!"

Just as in the parable, the workers crossed over to believing they were owners and therefore, could control the vineyard, control the temple and control those who were coming to it.

Mark 12:12 says, "for they (the temple leaders) knew that He had spoken the parable against them." The temple leaders of that time knew Jesus was speaking about them. This is how we know that leaders are the ones who have subtly shifted from being stewards of people and places to believing they are the owner; the one who decides how things are going to go; when, where and for how long. We say we want to be led by the Spirit, but our services are completely scripted. God is harvesting His people out of these systems.

Luke 4:18-19 says, "The spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Who are these people? I have heard many times they are unbelievers, outsiders, Gentiles if you will, but Jesus said, "But He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel'" (Matt. 15:24). So, is it possible, that Jesus came to preach, release, recover the sight set free and proclaim favor to those locked in a system that was not producing life? If we look at all the people Jesus encountered in the temple and in the land of Israel, we see the poor, the captives, the blind and the oppressed are those He set free. I think Luke 4:18-19 is a salvation declaration for the nation that was locked in a religious system.

So, why was He calling them out of the system? What we see in Scripture is that Jesus called them out, to reconfigure the way they think, so they could join a movement that would advance the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. He moved them out of the temple and into a kingdom, a movement, that would be quoted in Acts 17:6 as having turned the world upside down. I believe what we are seeing is not people who are weak, rebellious or unspiritual leaving churches, but rather those who are hearing Jesus say, "Come, follow Me!" The

religious leaders of Jesus' day did not like Jesus coming to reap His harvest anymore than church leaders like people leaving their church now. History is repeating itself because we have yet to learn the lesson that it is about stewardship, not ownership. {eoa}

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