



**DAILY REFLECTIONS: 15th June 2020**

## **Unworthy Tenants?**

By Alan Akers

Not every parable Jesus told was intended to encourage and uplift. Not everyone listening to his stories had come because they wanted to follow him as a disciple. The chief priests and Pharisees were constantly looking for an opportunity to discredit Jesus and undermine his effectiveness. They were there, listening, as Jesus told this story:

*“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 moved to another place. When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. Matthew” 21:33, 34*

So far, so good. The vineyard was a well-known, traditional metaphor for Israel as a nation. All his listeners would have understood this. They may not have expected what came next.

*“The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. (35, 36)*

Most of his listeners would have been still with Jesus at this point. But alarm bells must have started ringing in the ears of the religious leaders present. Where was this story going?

*“Last of all, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said. ‘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.’ So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. (37-39)*

Outrage and disbelief would now be uppermost in his “ordinary” listeners’ minds. How could those tenants have behaved so despicably? Jesus invites those listening to participate in the judgment ahead for these unworthy tenants:

*“Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”*

*“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.” (40, 41)*

*When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them, (so) they looked for a way to arrest him ... (45, 46a)*

And of course, ultimately, they fulfilled the prophetic element in this story as they conspired to send Jesus to the cross.

Jesus’ times were unique. What does this story he told have to say to us today?

How easily genuine faith can be formalised to become dead religion! We should welcome our Messiah for who he is and what he came to do – not try to make him fit into our preconceptions or convenience.

He is the heir to the vineyard. Let’s give him all that is due to him.

**Prayer:** Thank you Father for sending us your Son, knowing that he would be so shamefully treated. Forgive us for those times when we’ve had a “what’s in it for me?” attitude to our faith. Show us how to be responsible managers of the affairs of your kingdom through these unusual times. It is our privilege to serve in your kingdom. Amen

**Song:** [How Deep the Father’s Love](#)