Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



by Pat Marrin

View Author Profile
patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

June 4, 2023
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint



“What then will the owner of the vineyard do?” (Mark 12:9).

Tb 1:3; 2:1a-8; *Mk 12:1-12*

Even when confronting his opponents, Jesus seldom attacks directly, but instead tells a parable that ends in a question, so its intended audience can draw its own

conclusion.

The parable of the vineyard tenants who abuse messengers sent by the owner invokes a deep theme already in the scriptures. The Prophet Isaiah confronted the leadership in his own time with a parable of a vineyard that fails to produce a harvest (Isa 5). It is a tragic love song about lost opportunity and ingratitude.

Jesus adds to his parable a summary of the long history of God's bounty being rejected, including the many prophets who were killed for warning that failure to keep the covenant was to invite disaster. In the parable, refocused by the evangelist after the death of Jesus, even the owner's son is murdered by the tenants. The rejection of Jesus was the ultimate, tragic love story. Jesus puts the question to his audience: "What then will the owner of the vineyard do?" It is here that human logic would answer, "God will destroy his ungrateful and violent enemies. Their arrogance and selfishness deserve punishment."

Yet the essence of the Gospel is that even with the crucifixion of Jesus, God is still the God of mercy and forgiveness. It is an astonishing revelation and an overwhelming and extravagant response to human sin that God never ceases to love us. Even great evil cannot exhaust God's mercy, and sinners who repent and return to God are welcomed.

If the Gospel seems too good to be true, it is when we really need this kind of second chance that we begin to understand the depth of God's love for us in Jesus. He willingly underwent rejection and death on a cross, not just for his friends but also for his enemies, so that no one could doubt God's unconditional love.

This love is available to us at every moment of our lives, no matter what we have done or how far we have distanced ourselves from God. Imagine how rich our lives can be if instead of resisting this love we opened our hearts to it. This is the joy of the Gospel.