

*"Stories ~ The Wicked Tenants" [9.13.09]*

My favorite **STORIES** are laced with *adversity -- rejection -- heartache -- perseverance & [a refusal to quit]* in the face of overwhelming odds:

One such **STORY** has its roots in Perry County, Indiana;  
the **STORY** is told of a young man...

- Who @ age 22 = lost his job as a store clerk  
& **the next year** he became a partner in a small business, which eventually failed.
  - **The next year** he fell in love & dated the girl for (4) years, after which she said 'NO' to his marriage proposal. **Later** another, sweetheart died.
- @ age 37, on his 3<sup>rd</sup> try, he was elected to the state legislature,  
but (2) years later he lost the re-election.
  - @ age 40, he was rejected for a political appointment;  
in this period he also had a nervous breakdown.
  - @ age 41, his (4 yr old) son died.
  - @ age 45, he was defeated for the Senate
  - @ age 47, he was defeated for his party's nomination for vice president
  - @ age 49, he was again defeated for the Senate
- But @ age 51, he was elected **PRESIDENT** of the United States.

It's hard to imagine where our great country would be w/out the exceptional leadership skills **Abraham Lincoln** gave our nation in its most critical hour=Civil War?

**President Lincoln** was [*no stranger*] to **rejection & heartache**;  
he had multiple reasons to quietly disappear ~ but thankfully he *refused to quit!*

*REJECTION* is a common theme throughout the Bible;  
God's plan to redeem His creation is **TEAR STAINED w/REJECTION!**

Today's **PARABLE = STORY** vividly describes (1) **such rejection** that attempted to destroy God's plan of redeeming humankind.

This **STORY** has (2) concrete components; it reveals God's back-up plan after His 1<sup>st</sup> plan of redemption was **REJECTED**.

I. 1<sup>st</sup> component = **STORY of GOD'S 1<sup>st</sup> PLAN**

A. (R) **Matthew 21: 33** or p. 752 in pew Bible

1. This type of vineyard was a familiar picture in Palestine:
  - a. **The wall** was a thick set of hedges filled with thorns; designed to keep out wild animals & (2) legged creatures desiring to ravage the grapes.
  - b. Every vineyard had a **winepress** for pressing the grapes into juice.
  - c. **The tower** served a double purpose; 1<sup>st</sup> a high position to watch out for thieves & 2<sup>nd</sup> as a lodging for those tenants overseeing the grapes.
2. These **elements** were very common to Jesus' listeners; the next set of elements in the story was not common knowledge; *let's continue reading*.

B. (R) **Matthew 21: 34 ~ 41**

1. **Without their knowledge** ~ Jesus exposes the religious leaders' plot to kill Him & even warns them that their sins would be punished by God.
2. They were **CLUELESS** that Jesus' story was about them; they completely missed the important details-elements of this parable:
  - a. The landowner represents **God the Father**
  - b. The vineyard represents the **Jewish nation of Israel**.

"*The nation of Israel is the vineyard of the Lord of Heaven's armies.*" **Isaiah 5: 7**

- c. The tenant farmers represent the **Religious Leaders of Judaism**.
- d. The landowner's servants represent **O.T. priests & prophets**

*ABUSE of God's servants* = Hebrews 11: 32 – 35a or p. 927 in pew Bible

1. (R) v. 35b "*were tortured*" this particular verb in the original language indicates the certain kinds of *instruments used to inflict pain*.
2. Instruments included:
  - a. Racks [persons were stretched & beaten to death]
  - b. Bone crushers + Thumbscrews
  - c. Cat of (9) tails + list is actually endless
3. (R) vv. 36 – 37a ~ History tells us:
  - a. Zechariah + Jeremiah = prophets were stoned to death
  - b. **Amos** was clubbed to death
  - c. Prophet Isaiah was sawed in to with a wooden saw by his own countrymen for his position against idolatry ☹
4. **Legend states that** while the saw cut into his flesh that old prophet uttered no complaint & shed no tears; he had perfect communion w/the Holy Spirit!
  - Prophets came for one reason -- same reason as today;  
*TO POINT people to GOD!*
  - These servant's of the landowner -- did their very best to point people back to God!
5. (R) vv. 37b – 38 "*They were too good for this world!*"

**Back to the STORY** = (2) *more critical elements*

- e. The son represent **God's only son Jesus**
- f. The others in v. 41 represent **US = N.T. Church**

C. re(R) vv. 40 – 41

- From the early pages of the **Book of Genesis** we learn that God had been cultivating the nation of Israel to bring salvation to the world.
  - (R) Genesis 12: 1 – 3
- **However** God's plan to redeem all the families of the earth was **side-tracked** by the *wicked religious establishment* that prevailed in Israel.
  - The *RELIGIOUS LEADERS = WICKED TENANTS* not only frustrated their God-given purpose as a nation; they also **abused & killed** those who were trying to fulfill it.
  - The religious leaders were so jealous & possessive that they ignored the welfare of the very people they were *supposed to be* bringing to God ☹

God's plans for redeeming His creation might have been side-tracked momentarily;  
**BUT NOT FOREVER!**

II. 2<sup>nd</sup> component = *STORY of GOD'S BACK-UP PLAN*

A. (R) Matthew 21: 42 – 45

1. Jesus now explains the parables' purpose:
  - a. The wicked tenants will be destroyed = **re(R) v 45**
  - b. Their opportunity to gain the vineyard is taken away & given to others.
  - c. **OTHERS ~ N.T. CHURCH** = those who accept Jesus that will produce proper fruit - - changed lives.
2. The religious establishment of Israel [*had no plans*] of including the Gentiles as fellow heirs in the Kingdom of God; **hated outsiders**

- a. **HOWEVER** The PLANS of GOD are never destroyed by the wickedness of man-made agenda's.
- b. The N.T. Church -- both Gentiles & Messianic Jews who claim Jesus Christ as Lord an Savior now have the great responsibility of accomplishing God's audacious plan of redeeming His creation.
- c. **(R) Luke 2: 29 – 34** (2) books to the right

B. High price of 'REJECTING' Jesus =  
the **very cornerstone** of our faith and our church.

1. Jesus told His disciples, *"Anyone who accepts your message is also accepting me. And anyone who rejects you is rejecting me. And anyone who rejects me is rejecting God who sent me."* [Luke 10: 16]
2. Let's i.d. AUTHENTIC Christ-followers today:
  - a. People & other religions who reject Christ reject God.
  - b. [SO] is there anyway to know if other religions + other churches know the TRUE GOD?
  - c. **Here's the test:**
    - i. Do they **reject Jesus** as the only Savior for sinners who was crucified & raised by God from the dead?
    - ii. If they do, they do not know God in a saving way.
3. How about you ~ Have you accepted or rejected Jesus? Have you ever publicly confessed Jesus Christ is Lord -- **if not**, this is not a game to play!

*Rejecting Jesus = Rejecting God!*

Jesus Himself says, *"I am the way, & the truth, & the life.  
No one comes to the Father except through Me."* [John 14: 6]