A BETTER WORD

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

A Study Through the Life of King Jesus | with Pastor Nick Gatzke

A Warning About Receptivity

◆ *Mark 11:27–12:12*

THE BIG IDEA

How you respond to God's messengers, and ultimately to his Son, is the truest measure of your life.

SERMON SUMMARY

Religious leaders challenged Jesus's authority, and he countered with a question about John the Baptist they refused to answer, exposing that their real concern was never truth. Jesus responded with a parable about an owner who planted a vineyard, a well-known symbol for Israel, and leased it to tenants. But the tenants beat and killed servant after servant sent to collect fruit, finally killing the owner's own beloved son, thinking the inheritance would be theirs. It was a picture of Israel's long history of rejecting the prophets, and now the religious leaders were about to do the same to God's own Son.

The parable is ultimately about receptivity, and it isn't only a first-century problem. The real question is whether you receive God's messengers and his Son, or only call on him when it's convenient. The parable ends with a warning that rejecting the son brings judgment (Hebrews 12:25), but also with an unexpected turn: the very stone the builders rejected becomes the cornerstone (Psalm 118:22). The Son who was killed becomes the foundation of a new way for people to build a relationship with God.

DIGGING DEEPER

OBSERVATION

1. The religious leaders asked Jesus by what authority he acted, but refused to answer his question about John the Baptist's authority (11:27–33). What does their refusal reveal about their actual motive for asking?

INTERPRETATION

2. The vineyard was a well-known national symbol for Israel. Given that symbolism, who do the servants represent, and what does the tenants' escalating violence toward them tell you about Israel's history with the prophets?
3. The tenants killed the owner's "beloved son," thinking the inheritance would then be theirs. What does that reasoning reveal about what a person is functionally trying to become when they reject God's son?

THEOLOGICAL CONNECTION

4. Jesus quoted Psalm 118: "the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." How does that turn the story's ending, a killed son, into good news rather than only judgment?

5. This parable works as a grid for evaluating your life: do you receive God's messengers and his Son, or call on him only when you want something from him? Where has God been sending you a message you've been slow or unwilling to receive?

LIVING IT OUT

HEART CHECK

Pastor Nick shared a story about a man who repeated refused help while floodwaters rose, believing God would make a miraculous gesture to save him. It's easy to treat God that way, waiting for a miracle while ignoring the truck, the boat, and the helicopter God actually sent. Is there a warning or nudge from God you've been dismissing?

ACTION STEPS

— Name one message God has been sending you lately, through his word, a circumstance, or another believer.

— Take concrete steps in response today, rather than waiting for something more dramatic.

"SO WHAT?" CHALLENGE

> ***Receiving God's ordinary means is itself an act of faith. Don't wait for a miracle to obey what he's already told you.***

REFLECTION & PRAYER

KEY VERSE — TO MEMORIZE

"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone."

— Mark 12:10

PRAYER PROMPT

Ask God to soften whatever resistance keeps you from receiving his word, and thank him that the very Son who was rejected is now the foundation you can build your life on.

YOUR PRAYER