

“The Fixer”

Story of fixing stuff at home. Move from small to bigger things.

But what happens when we are convinced that we need to fix the things of God? I’m serious. Maybe a tweak here or an adjustment there to meet our needs. His Word, which tells us not to do something that we see as perfectly fine? That’s not going to work. So we fix it simply by ignoring it. That’s a problem. But what gets us into serious trouble is when we want more of a fix than a tweak but a complete overhaul of God’s ways in order to meet our needs.

That seems to be the case for the chief priests and the Pharisees in our gospel lesson from Matthew 21. And Jesus calls them out on it by telling them a parable. And this one is harsh. The content alone is enough to make anyone squirm with all the beatings, murder, greed, and theft. But what makes it so uncomfortable is that the chief priests and the Pharisees knew that He was talking about them. They were the ones being compared to the wicked tenants who were trying to get between the owner and his vineyard. It belonged to the owner— he planted it. He sent workers to care for it. But the tenants had another plan. When the owner sent his servants to get the fruit, the tenants beat one, killed one, and stoned another. The owner sent more servants and they did the same to them! Finally he sent his Son, thinking surely they will respect him. But guess what? They saw him and thought, here’s our chance. We kill the Son, we get the vineyard. So that’s what they did—they killed the son thinking they could steal the inheritance. Jesus asks, “when the owner comes, what do you think he’ll do to the tenants? The chief priests answer correctly that he would put those miserable tenants to death and let out the vineyard to those who will actually give him the fruit. But then Jesus gets personal. “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” he says. “Therefore I tell **you** the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.”

This is an obvious warning from Jesus that things were going to change. Though rejected, God's appointed "stone" will bring his reign to all people. And the current leaders- the chief priests and Pharisees will be rejected and replaced. Of course this didn't sit well since they were the ones who thought they knew the ways of God best. They taught the people the Scriptures. They oversaw the sacrifices in the Temple. But in doing so, they failed to see that they were leading the people away from God's plan of redemption. The kingdom to them had become this little circle of human achievement highlighted by outward religious observances. And it all had to be done their way. I mean think about this. Time and time again their own ancestors persecuted and even murdered God's prophets for speaking the truth. And these men were no different. Even though they understood what Jesus was saying to them in the parable, it didn't matter. They were still going to fix it.

And this should be a warning for the church today. Because leaders can sometimes be determined to fix the things of God so that they can remain in control. Think about the visible church around the world. Is the good news of Jesus Christ always at the center? Is the proclamation of forgiveness in the cross of Christ the main message? Or are some guilty, at times, of trying to fix that message in order to make the church seem more relevant to a hostile society? I'm not saying we're doing that here, but we always have to be careful that we don't put ourselves and our work in the Kingdom over the work of the one who put us here in the first place.

And the same is true when we walk out those doors. Who has the ultimate authority in our lives? The culture? Our circle of friends? Our money and assets? We know as Christians the answer should be the Lord Jesus Christ. But so often we're guilty of reducing his role to more of a supporting actor in what we consider an otherwise decent script of life. But Jesus didn't come into this world to help decent people become better. He came to seek and save the lost.

Because they are the ones who would inherit his kingdom. The chief priests and Pharisees obviously didn't get that because no way did they consider themselves lost. So they went ahead with their plan. A few days later, just as the parable predicted, they would take Jesus out of the city and literally kill the Son. Bad news for those religious leaders who thought the kingdom of God was all about them. And yet for you and me, and all the baptized children of God, this news of a crucified Son is actually the

best news we will ever hear. Because in a strange twist to the parable but rooted in reality, the inheritance really was given to those who don't deserve it. Our sins, just like those of the religious leaders of the day, and all people who reject God's ways killed Jesus! The Pharisees were probably breathing a big sigh of relief that their plan actually worked. But that didn't last long because on the third day, Jesus walked out of the tomb alive. Imagine their panic. Now imagine the joy of those first witnesses who understood that his resurrection meant that life would never be the same for those with faith in him. This is the kingdom of our risen Lord Jesus Christ, my friends. So it's our joy too!

So what's stopping you from giving up all the attempts at fixing the things of God and living in the promises of his kingdom? What's holding you back from living in the freedom that you have been given as part of the body of Christ. Yes, we are sinners, and sinners have a lot of reasons to doubt if Jesus really fixed the problem for us. But he did. Jesus has taken the sin of the world to Himself and gifted that world his righteousness. Finished. Done. Forever.

And yet, we still have to live in the tension. I say that a lot. But a big part of that is the importance of seeing things through the eyes of Christ instead of through the eyes of everyone else. We act, at times, like we get that. But we also act at times like we still need to fix it when we think his eyes don't show us what we want. And when we do, I think we should remember the warning Jesus gives in the parable of the tenants. He is the cornerstone on which his kingdom is built. He has all authority. We submit to him. But we do it knowing that people still need what only he can offer each and every day. People mess up. Hope gets lost. Jesus is the fixer. It might not seem like much at times, but he moves among people who seem to have it all together, and among people who are just struggling to make it through to the next day. He collects the shamed and the oppressed. He even pours out his grace and gives his promise of sins forgiven and life eternal to suburban folks like you and me.

All of this is his work. And this work, delivered through His grace, is what holds broken people together. Live in that freedom and security. When it comes to the things of God, Jesus is the fixer. Enough said. **Amen.**