

Date : 9 November 2025

Topic : The Price of Unfaithful Stewardship

Key Passage: Mark 12:1-17

Key Verse : What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. Mark 12:9

Key word : Tenants

Mark 12 presents the parable of the tenants — a narrative that reveals God's heart as the Owner and our calling as His stewards. We may know in our heads that God owns all and we are accountable to Him. But Jesus confronts something deeper: our submission to His authority. The painful issue is that we often want to treat the Owner, God, as optional.

The question is whether we acknowledge God is the Owner — and act accordingly.

Do our lives show grateful stewardship — or do we resist and rebel against His ownership?

As we examine this passage, let us consider three heart-searching questions:

- 1) What is the vineyard and who owns it?
- 2) Why do we resist His ownership?
- 3) How do tenants fail and what are the consequences before God?

1. What is the vineyard and who owns it? Mark 12:1

A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place.

a) Planting a Vineyard – God's purposeful preparation.

- **The man** of the vineyard represents **God** - the rightful **Owner**.
- **The vineyard**: A plot of land for growing grapevines to produce grapes and wine.
 - It represents **God's Kingdom resources on earth** – our lives, our time and resources entrusted to us.
- **Planting the vineyard** – Involves choosing fertile soil, clearing stones, setting boundaries, and patiently waiting for the harvest. God has provided everything necessary — **resources, time, and purpose** – for a fruitful outcome:-
A transformed life marked by righteousness, humility, faithful stewardship, service, and obedience to God.
- **He puts a protective wall around it** - The wall, as a protective boundary, keeps out wild animals and thieves. God sets boundaries through His Word and His Spirit to guard what is sacred and shield it from harm.
- **Winepress – God's provision for fruitfulness.**
A winepress is place/device to crush grapes and their juice collected, built in anticipation of a harvest. **The winepress represents God-given capacity and opportunity** to turn those resources into results that bless others.
- **The watchtower – God's vigilance over what He plants.**
The watchtower of a raised guard post to spot intruders, animals, or fire — keeping the vineyard safe. He calls His stewards to be watchful and faithful, guarding what is entrusted to them.

b) Renting the vineyard to farmers – our stewardship

- **The tenants (farmers)** represent **us** — people **entrusted** with His vineyard.
- We do not own the vineyard; we are caretakers called to steward our lives, time, and resources for God.

- God expects fruit in return, ie lives that honor Him through faithful stewardship.
- Leviticus 19:23-25 shows that the Landlord (God) allows time for the vineyard to grow, but will begin to 'collect' its fruit from the fifth year onward.

2. Why do we resist God's ownership? *Mark 12:2-8*

At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. ³ But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Then he sent another servant to them ... The tenants treated them the same way. Finally, he sent his son...they killed him."

Resisting God's ownership – the root of rebellion

- Rebellion begins in the heart when we live as though the vineyard belongs to us, forgetting God is the rightful Owner. It often shows up subtly through:
 - **Pride and Entitlement** — acting as if we own what God has given us.
 - **Self-interest** — prioritizing personal gain over God's purpose.
 - **Control** — wanting to rule our life, relationships, and resources on our own terms.
- To resist His ownership is to claim what belongs to Him as our own.

3. Stewardship and Accountability of the Tenants *Mark 12:2-8*

i) How do tenants' fail?

a) **Unfaithful Stewardship – when, as tenants, we act as if we are owners** *Mark 12:2-5*

The tenants break their covenant (rental agreement) by misusing and neglecting what has been entrusted to them. Instead of producing fruit for the Owner, they act as though the vineyard is theirs to enjoy.

Likewise, we fail in stewardship when we:

- **Fail to honor God with our life** - Our lives are entrusted to reflect God's holiness and light. Neglecting this breaks the covenant of stewardship.
- **Prioritize self-interest over God's purposes** - When we devote our time, energy, talents, and wealth primarily to personal comfort, work and the pursuit of success, pleasure or hobbies instead of serving God's kingdom purposes.
- **Neglecting God's call to use our lives, time, resources and relationships** to love, serve, and build others for His Kingdom.

b) **Open Defiance – Rejecting the Son** *Mark 12:7-8*

- The tenants' act of killing the Son represents ultimate rejection of God:
- The "Son" refers to Jesus Christ, the beloved Son of God (Mark 1:11). Unlike the prophets who came before Him, He is not merely a messenger but **the heir — the rightful owner of the vineyard**. His coming signifies God's final and fullest revelation. *Hebrews 1:1-2*.

Why rejecting Him is the height of rebellion?

- To reject the Son is to reject God Himself — His love, His authority, and His rightful rule. The tenants' murder shows our ultimate act of defiance, declaring "*We want God's blessings, but not His rule.*" It is the gravest sin, refusing the very One through whom salvation and the kingdom are offered.

Signs of Rebellion/Evidence of Defiance:

- **Wilful rejection of God's ownership**
Seizing what belongs to God—wanting His blessings without the Owner, refusing correction, insisting on self-rule.

- **No fear of God / Disregard for His authority**
 - Ignoring God's holiness and authority.
 - Rejecting Jesus as Lord in life's decision-making – finances, relationships, or mission.

ii) What are the consequences of breaking the tenancy covenant, and how serious is this before God?

What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others Mark 12:9

Breaking the covenant leads to accountability:

a) Accountability is Certain (*He will come ...*)

Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment. Hebrews 9:27

He will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. Ecclesiastes 12:14.

- **Everyone**—believers and unbelievers alike—will face God's judgment and give an account of their lives.
- **Unbelievers – those who reject God and His Son, Jesus Christ**
 - They are accountable for their sins and for rejecting Jesus Christ—the only way of salvation. Without Christ's covering, their deeds are judged before a holy God.
 - **Consequence:** *Eternal separation from God in conscious torment—the second death at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:11–15).*

b) Judgment on Believers (*He will kill ...*)

... their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. ¹⁴ If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames. 1 Corinthians 3:13-15

- God distinguishes between those who genuinely serve Him and those who refuse or fail to serve Him. *Malachi 3:18.*
- Believers entrusted with God's resources and responsibilities will be held accountable for faithfulness in stewardship.
- At the Judgment Seat of Christ, believers will receive rewards based on faithfulness and stewardship, not for salvation.
- A believer's works is tested by fire:
 - Unfaithful or careless works are "burned," while faithful works are rewarded. Works are not a means of earning salvation but serves as evidence of obedience, devotion, and faithful management of what God's has entrusted.

i) Faithful Stewards - Pass the faithfulness test

Live under Christ's Lordship, using their life, time, and resources to serve and honor God.

Outcomes:

- Commendations "*Well done, good and faithful servant*". *Matthew 25:21*
- Greater responsibilities or influence in God's kingdom. *Luke 19:17-19*
- Eternal rewards. *1 Corinthians 3:14, Revelation 22:12*

ii) Unfaithful Stewards – Fail the faithfulness test

- **Wilfully and persistently** reject Christ's Lordship, harden their hearts and seize what God entrusted as if it were their own.

Outcome:

Eternal separation from God — same judgment as unbelievers. *Mark 12:9*

Example: The one-talent servant in the parable of the talents was cast into the outer darkness, with weeping and gnashing of teeth. Matthew 25:30

- **Through laziness, fear and neglect**, they risk hearts that harden over time. This **includes lukewarm believers** who are in danger of being "spit out," (*Revelation 3:16*). Those persistently neglect their faith with hardened hearts risk eternal separation from God.

Outcome (*1 Corinthians 3:15*):

- Suffer **loss of reward**, experience **shame** and **regret** for wasted opportunities – their works are burned at the judgment seat.
- **Loss of stewardship, influence** and transfer of responsibility. Yet God's work continues (*He will give...*) —He **transfers** His vineyard to new, faithful stewards who will carry His mission and bear fruit for His glory. *Mark 12:9*

iii) Why does this matter to God?

Our Unfaithfulness breaks God's covenant, frustrates His purpose, and dishonors His authority.

- God's entrusting of His vineyard is a relationship of **trust and intimacy**, not a contract.
- Breaking the covenant damages this relationship: trust is violated.
- Ultimately, God has spoken through His Son, Jesus Christ, His exact representation.
 - We are called to receive His instructions, and respond with repentance.
 - Do not live unproductive lives.

Applications:

- 1) Are there areas in your life where you want God's blessings but not His rule – which areas?
- 2) How will knowing that God will hold you accountable for your stewardship change the way you use your time, resources, and influence?