

## **A Vacancy in the Vineyard**

Matthew 21: 28-32

We have read a parable that Jesus spoke to the Pharisees. A parable is an earthly story with a spiritual application. This was near the end of Jesus' ministry here on earth. He has just made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, receiving the praise of the people as their awaited King, [Vv.1-11](#).

After the triumphant entry, Jesus went to the temple and drove out the moneychangers, declaring the house of God was to be a house of prayer, [Vv.12-13](#). While He was there the blind and the lame were brought to Jesus and He healed them, [V.14](#).

It didn't take long for the Pharisees to notice the Lord, rising up to confront Him for the deeds He had done, [v.15](#). It is then they began to question Jesus concerning His authority. These were the religious elite, those who wore their self-righteousness proudly. Jesus was not impressed with their display of self-righteousness and He offers a parable to confront their lack of truth and fervency for the things of God.

We are living in a day that closely resembles that time. There are many who want to publicly display their own righteousness, but have little concern or desire for the righteousness of God. We are surrounded by those who proudly display their deeds and good works, but they lack a genuine relationship with the Lord. This parable deals with those who are called to labor in the Lord's vineyard. I want to look at the [truths](#) Jesus reveals concerning working in the Lord's vineyard, as we consider: [A Vacancy in the Vineyard](#).

**I. The Request of the Father** [\(28-30\)](#) – Clearly he represents the Lord. His request was:

**A. A Personal Request** [\(28\)](#) – [Son, go work to day in my vineyard](#). The father went to each of his sons. He spoke to them directly, addressing them as Son. The father had made a personal plea to each of his sons to work in the vineyard. He hadn't sent a servant to relay the message; he spoke to them personally.

- If you are a child of God, you too have heard this request. God has a work for each of us to perform and He has called us to labor for Him. It troubles me to see those who claim to be a child of God and yet never realize they have been called to labor in the Lord's vineyard. Each of us has a work to do and we are personally responsible to fulfill that work. We are not saved to sit idly by; content to watch others labor while we do nothing. If you belong to the Lord, there is a work for you to do.

**B. A Pressing Request (28)** – *Son, go work to day in my vineyard.* The father requested that they work *today*. There was a work that needed to be done now, not later.

- There can be no doubt there is a work for each of us to do today. We cannot seek to live off of past accomplishments. The work we've completed is great, but the work remains. We cannot put off until tomorrow that which needs to be done today. Many intend to serve the Lord, but somehow never get around to it. It has been well said, "Yesterday is a spent check. Tomorrow is a promissory note. Today is cash in hand, so spend it wisely."
- There has never been a generation who was exempt from serving the Lord and we are no different. The need is greater now than I have ever known. *John 4:35 – Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. Luke 10:2 – Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.*

**C. A Particular Request** – The father was very specific about what he desired of his sons. There was a work to do in the vineyard and that is what he had asked of them. There was nothing uncertain about the task. They knew where to go and what to do when they arrived.

- The same is true for each of us. We live as if we have no idea what God expects of us. The Scriptures are clear in what God desires of us. *Mark 12:30 – And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.* When we love God as we should, there will be no problem serving Him and laboring in the harvest. *Mark 12:31 – And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.* God expects us to love one another! We can't live for God without love!
- Each of us has a particular work we are called to do. It is unique to our abilities and calling. I can't do what God has called you to do and you can't do what He has called me to do. When one of us neglects our work, that corner of the vineyard suffers. Are you laboring for the Lord?

**II. The Response of the Sons (29-30)** – The father had two sons. They each had a different perspective on life and they each responded in different ways resulting in different outcomes. Let's consider their responses.

**A. The First Son (29)** – *He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.*

**1. His Reply** – He answered and said, I will not: When the first son was asked to labor in the father's vineyard he was very emphatic in his answer. He had no intention of going to the vineyard. He made no empty promises, just a clear refusal to work for his father.

**2. His Repentance** – but afterward he repented, and went. After the son had refused to work for his father, he considered his ways. Apparently he realized his response had not pleased his father so he repented and willingly went and labored in the vineyard.

➤ There is a clear application for us in the life of this son. He pictures those who at first refused the ways of God. Before we were saved there was no desire to live for the Lord or serve Him. After we came to know Christ in repentance, we willingly began to serve Him. I praise the Lord that I have a desire in my heart to serve Him where He pleases. You will never serve the Lord if you don't know Him. There must be a love for the Lord!

**B. The Second Son (30)** – And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. His response and actions are much different.

**1. His Deceit** – And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. He told his father that he would go. He wanted his father to believe that he fully intended to labor in the vineyard. He knew how to speak the words his father wanted to hear, but he never desired to please him.

**2. His Disobedience** – And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. He had promised to labor for his father, but he never went. All that he offered was empty promises. His response had looked good on the surface, but it produced no results. He never intended to work for his father, but he wanted him to believe that he would.

➤ Once again there is application for us. Our churches are filled with those who want to appear pleasing and busy. They know how to talk the talk and look the part, but deep down there is no desire and no intention of serving the Lord. They want others to assume they are faithful, but never accomplish anything for the Lord. Their lives are spent satisfying themselves.

**III. The Rebuke of Jesus (31-32)** – I want us to keep in mind that Jesus was addressing the Pharisees, those who prided themselves in their righteousness, but never knew the Lord. Our Lord is not fooled by the show of men. He knows our hearts and our intentions.

**A. His Words (31a)** – *Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first.*

The key to this is simple: Jesus wanted them to search their own hearts. Anyone could see which son had been obedient to the will of the father. Jesus wasn't asking because He didn't know. He wanted to show them the need in their life.

- His desire has not changed. The Lord is still speaking to the hearts of men today so that they might see their need and turn to Him. We have the Word of God to lead us and provide instruction for our lives. The problem is that we are unwilling to heed. We know what God expects and yet we refuse.

**B. His Wisdom (31b)** – *Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.* The Pharisees may have thought they had fooled Jesus with their self-righteous display, but He knew their hearts. These had heard the words of John, they knew the Scriptures. They of all people should have believed, but they didn't. The worst of sinners who had repented and believed were spiritually superior to the religious elite.

- Our Lord is not fooled by the life we live. He is not impressed with the outward show of a man. He is concerned with the condition of the heart. Jesus knows those who belong to Him. Obedience to His will is a good sign that one knows the Lord. Only those who have trusted Him for salvation will enter the kingdom of God. It isn't about our works or perceived goodness.

**C. His Witness (32a)** – *For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not:*

These pitiful Pharisees thought all was well, but they were apart from the Lord. They had denied the preaching of John who was called to prepare the way of the Lord. They had heard the truth and rejected it. They were without excuse.

- Things have not changed in our day. We are without excuse. We have heard the Gospel message. We know what the Lord desires and expects and if we neglect to follow Him, then we must bear our responsibility. We can't claim ignorance. We know that we ought to live for the Lord. [James 4:17 – Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.](#)

**D. His Warning (32b)** – *but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.* Jesus warned of the consequences of their unbelief. They had witnessed the truth, but chose to reject it. Those who deny the Lord will not be found among the kingdom of God.

- The same is true for us today. There is only one way to life eternal and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ. There is only one course of action for the believer and that is complete obedience to the will of God. We are to labor for Him.

**Conclusion:** There is a vacancy in the vineyard today. Many have not heeded the call of God to labor in the harvest. Some have never trusted Him in salvation. You can't work for the Lord if you don't know Him. Others belong to the Lord but they are not fulfilling their obligations. Are you in your place today? If you have never been saved, there is a place reserved for you. Why not come as the Lord leads?