

Luke Chapter 19 v 45 - Chapter 20 v 20

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] Welcome back. We're in the Gospel of Luke once more and we're going to pick up from the very end of chapter 19 and read into chapter 20 and it's particularly verses, the first 20 or so verses of chapter 20 we're going to be interested in but the end of chapter 19 of Luke helps us set the scene. If you remember the situation, Jesus has come into Jerusalem, what we call Palm Sunday and then we pick up from verse 45 of chapter 19.

When Jesus entered the temple courts he began to drive out those who were selling. It is written, he said to them, my house will be a house of prayer but you have made it into a den of robbers. Every day he was teaching at the temple but the chief priests and the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. Yet they could not find any way to do it because all the people hung on his words. One day as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple courts and proclaiming the Gospel, the good news, the chief priests, the teachers of the law together with the elders came to him.

They said, who gave you this authority? He replied, I will ask you a question. Tell me, John's baptism, was it from heaven or of human origin? They discussed it among themselves and said, if we say from heaven, he will ask, why didn't you believe him? But if we say of human origin, all the people will stone us because they are persuaded that John was a prophet. So they answered, we don't know where it was from.

Jesus said, neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things. He went on to tell the people this parable. A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time.

At harvest time, he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. He sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed. He sent a third. They wounded him and threw him out.

[2 : 40] And the owner of the vineyard said, what shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love. Perhaps they will respect him. But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over.

This is the heir, they said. Let's kill him and inherit the vineyard for ourselves. So he threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. When the people heard this, they said, God forbid.

Jesus looked directly at them and asked, then what is the meaning of that which is written? The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces. Anyone at whom it falls will be crushed. The teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately.

[3 : 45] Because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people. What's the first question that any TV detective, worth his or her salt, asks the relatives of a person who has died in suspicious circumstances?

Did they have any enemies? The family, of course, usually reply in the same way. No, none. There was never a more kind or loving or generous or friendly person.

The family are giving the impression that this person who's died or been killed was such a good person. No one could possibly have anything against them or hate them.

Certainly not hate them enough to kill them. However, none of these qualities, love, kindness, goodness, friendliness and so on, none of these things are any guarantee against people's hatred. Just look at the life of Jesus. Could you find anybody more kind, more friendly, more loving than the Lord Jesus Christ? By any examination of his life in the four records that we have, and they are

eyewitness records, He was a person whose whole life and his work and ministry amongst the people was one constant demonstration of these qualities and more besides.

[5 : 24] There never was a better man or better woman who lived in this world. When people were ill and sick, wasn't it Jesus who was there, kindly, not only comforting but actually healing them?

When someone was a sinner, friendless, who was the only person who would actually befriend them? When a person was an outcast, unloved by all of society, who was the one who showed them true love?

It was Jesus, wasn't it? Jesus is the supreme example, the demonstration of love. He is love personified in kindness and goodness.

There has never been and never will be such a person. But what do we read here? At the end of chapter 19, the chief priests and the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him.

Jesus had enemies, real enemies, not just one but several, many enemies who not only hated him and everything that he stood for and did but who had made it their goal to end his life, to kill him, to get him out of the way at all costs.

[6 : 49] This chapter 20 that we're beginning this morning follows on from that truth, that insight into the very heart and attitude of the religious leaders of his day.

And what we find in the chapter 20 is Luke recording one after another attempt by these religious leaders to trick Jesus, to trip him up, to attack him and in any way possible to defeat him and undermine him.

Now we know that Jesus had never been particularly popular with the religious leaders, particularly the Pharisees of course. We've come upon them from time to time.

There's been minor skirmishes and disagreements between them and Jesus where they've had potshots at Jesus and called in names and sought to turn people against him. But nothing like this. This is the first time that we read of them rallying all the big guns, as it were, of the religious establishment. There they are. We're told of the chief priests, the teachers of the law, the elders.

[7 : 52] They all gang up, as it were, and they bring this full frontal attack against Jesus in public, in the temple courts. Clearly their intention is to frighten him, to intimidate him, to bully him, to back down from doing what he's doing, teaching what he's teaching.

What was he teaching? We're told he was teaching the good news, the gospel, the things of God, the truth. In their eyes, Jesus had overstepped them up by clearing the temple of those people who were cheats and thieves and con men.

You see, the temple courts, well, that was their domain. That was their ground, their manner, their patch. How dare this Galilean carpenter come waltzing into Jerusalem with all the people, as it were, partying and throw his weight around on their turf.

His actions undermined their place at the top of the food chain. People had to look up to them and give them respect. But he was undermining them.

They were not going to let him get away with it. They were going to stop it. They were going to nip it in the bud, in the buds. You see, what Jesus had done in clearing the temple, that place that should have been a place of devotion to God, a place where those who were faithful to God could come and bring their prayers and bring their needs and worship the Lord, that place had been turned into this sort of trading market where all sorts of people were there trying to make a fast buck.

[9 : 37] He shouldn't have had to clear the temple courts. These religious leaders should have done it long ago. That was their responsibility as the shepherds of God's people. They were the ones who were meant to keep on leading the people into God's truth.

They had allowed this to happen. They allowed these things to go on and they'd never stood against them. And their failure to lead God's people in truth and to make a stand for what was right was a major reason why Jesus came to Jerusalem and is really what's behind the parable that he's about to tell them.

And so here they come, this big gang, as it were, how many dozens maybe? Who knows? And they come up to Jesus in the middle of his teaching and they say, tell us by what authority you're doing these things.

Who gave you this authority? Who do you think you are? And one sense is saying to him, who gave you the authority to teach, to act as a judge, to act as someone who is in charge.

We certainly didn't give you the say so. We certainly didn't give you the authority. You haven't come to us and asked us. But Jesus knows that their intention is not genuine.

[10:46] They have no desire to really know what authority he has. They don't care whether he thinks he's the Messiah or not. Again, it's another one of their tricks, as we shall see later on.

We're told, aren't we, in verse 20, a bit later, they kept a close eye on Jesus, sent spies who pretended to be sincere, hoping to catch Jesus in something he said, so he might hand them over to the power and authority of the governor.

But Jesus was no idiot. He was no fool. He knew exactly what they were up to. In fact, we're told there, later in chapter 20, verse 23, he saw through their duplicity. In other words, their hypocrisy, their pretense, their smiles, their pathetic attempts to trick him.

So Jesus doesn't reply to them with the answer, the true answer, because he knows they have no interest in the true answer. This can be the case, perhaps, for some people that we meet. When we speak to them about the gospel of Jesus, they'll bring a question.

It's not a question they generally want to know the answer to. How did God make the world? Or if God is real, how can he allow suffering? It's simply a smoke screen. It's simply just to, as it were, give them a reason not to believe.

[12:07] There's no genuine seeking. Genuine searching. Genuine interest. So Jesus responds with a question. It's not a red herring question.

It's not him just trying to throw them off the scent. It's a question which is directly related to their question. Tell me, he says. John's baptism, was it from heaven or of human origin?

See, John's authority came from the same place that Jesus' authority came from? From heaven? From God? How are they going to answer?

Well, you can imagine and see, they discussed it. It's like a little bit of a huddle. There's a sort of a putting their arms around their shoulders or another. Let's have a discussion about this. Let's talk about what answer we can possibly give to this.

They immediately rule out the first possibility that John the Baptist's authority came from God, from heaven, because they didn't think it did. They thought he was just some strange man in the wilderness.

[13:11] So they dismiss that. But they can't really tell Jesus what they really think that John the Baptist didn't come from God because they were afraid of what the people would say.

They thought the people would be angry with them and stone them even. So they have to admit they don't know the answer. But they did.

But they were just too scared. They were just too proud. How humbling, how humiliating for these great religious intellectuals to have to turn to Jesus and say, oh, we don't know.

For the public, before their people, people as it were, and especially before Jesus, an obvious question with an obvious answer that everybody knew and yet these great brains, I don't know. Jesus' question revealed their motivation. Revealed what they really were like, that they were hypocrites. He exposes them by this question. Why should he tell them that his authority comes from heaven?

[14:27] Why should he give them ammunition, as it were, which they want to use against him? So he tells them a parable instead. In that parable he answers the question but he reveals something much more.

He reveals the state of their hearts and the state of their attitude towards God. Now for us, this parable seems a little bit strange unless you've got a vineyard but even if you did have a vineyard it would still be a little bit strange but to the people of Jesus' day this parable was crystal clear.

They understood exactly what's going on which we can see by the fact that when they heard what Jesus says in verse 16 they're astonished by it, they're shocked by it. God forbid, they say.

See in reality this little parable is a condensed history of God's dealing with his people, his relationship with his people the Israelites up unto this very day Jesus' day and in fact into the near future.

See throughout the Old Testament in many, many places the Israelite nation are likened to illustrated as a vine or a vineyard. So in Isaiah in chapter 5 verse 7 the vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the nation of Israel.

[15:42] Psalm 80 in verse 8 you, that's God transplanted a vine from Egypt. Who were the vine from Egypt? Well it's the people of God, wasn't it? Brought out of slavery.

You drove out the nations, where did he do that? In Canaan, in the land and planted it. The people planted them in the land. You cleared the ground for it and it took root and filled the land.

It's obvious to these people who were soaked in and had heard these things. They knew that the vineyard is the people of Israel and that God had planted them.

God had blessed them. That's what it's shorthand for. He put them in good soil as it were and took care of them and looked after them and nurtured them and tended them as a good vine dresser word.

And planted the vineyard. This is God. The vineyard are the people. He rented it to some farmers. In other words, they are the ones, these religious leaders, and the people as it were who God had blessed with a special relationship.

[16:46] He gives them these blessings. He gives them these good things like a vineyard to care for and to use rightly and properly. And so we find verse 10 that at harvest time he sends a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard.

That's natural. If you're a landlord you expect your rent. If you're a tenant farmer you're expected to give to the owner of that land a percentage of what you grow or earn and so on and so forth.

And so God as it were came to his people and he said to them I've blessed you with all these blessings and I'm looking for something in return. I'm expecting something as it were from them.

But what do we read? At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants but the tenants beat him and sent him away empty handed. Now that's exactly what happened in the Old Testament again and again.

God would expect from his people something in return for the blessings he'd given them. He'd look for fruit in their lives. Isaiah chapter 5 says this when God looked for a crop of good grapes it yielded only that.

[17:59] What was the fruit that God was looking for? What was it that he expected and hoped for from the people? Verse 7 tells us he looked for justice but saw bloodshed for righteousness but heard cries of distress.

God had blessed the Israelite people he'd chosen them and saved them from Egypt he'd put them in their own homeland and given them the blessings as I've said of the forgiveness of sins of a relationship with him his good laws so that they might be a light to the rest of the world of justice of how we can live in this world as God would have us to live but instead of that they became just as wicked as all the other nations in fact they turned to their gods and rejected the Lord their God they acted in greed and arrogance and pride and selfishness and evil instead of producing the good fruit of obedience to God and his laws they had produced hatred but isn't it amazing as Jesus goes through this parable how patient God was with the people and again that bears testimony through the Old Testament they sent away one servant empty handed so God sent another servant this one we're told in verse 11 they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty handed so does God say well that's enough no he sends another one a third one who are these servants they are the prophets of God the good kings that he sent and particularly those who called the people back away from their sin called them to follow God and his truth and his laws and what we find as we read the Old Testament is again and again that these prophets these servants of God are rejected and despised and hated

Isaiah Jeremiah Zechariah Amos and many others as well were all God's servants who he sent in patient loving kindness to his people to say will you not turn to me that I might bless you again sadly they would not listen sadly like the parable tells us clearly here they again and again rejected God's advances promises and his love and his patience and so finally what does God do in verse 13 he has a think what's the best way ahead how can I reach these people how can I turn them how can I how can I help them to see that the way they're going is so self-destructive how can I see them produce the sort of fruit that they were made for to be the people I saved them to be and so in his loving kindness

God sends his own son I will send he says my son whom I love I'm sure for many of you that brings to your mind that wonderful verse in John 3 16 that God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son here's their last chance as it were he is God's final outstretching of his hand as he gives his very self his own son to come into the world for them surely they'll respect him surely as he reveals and lives out this life of love as he declares the very truth and the mercy and the grace of God as he heals the sick and raises the dead surely this will be the thing that shall awaken them and turn them and quicken them and cause them to see so how do they treat the son of God as he

walks upon the face of the earth as he comes to these people to these tenant farmers with God's word and truth tenants saw him verse 14 and talked the matter over this is the air they said let's kill him see Jesus was fully aware that that is exactly what the people of Israel were going to do to him even before he left heaven even before he was born of the

Virgin Mary even before he entered into this world and began his ministry he knew that the people he would go to would reject him and despise him and hate him and kill him he still came and the amazing thing is this that the father God the father knew that even before his son came from heaven to earth even before this very moment in time that the son whom he loves who is so precious in his sight that they would still take him and crucify him and kill him but he still didn't withhold his son so we know very well don't we just a matter of days after Jesus taught this parable the crowd who many of them cried out praise to him as he entered Jerusalem were now crying out before Pilate crucify him crucify him and those religious leaders who were now ganging up against him were the same ones who gathered around the foot of the cross upon which he hung and jeered and mocked him and ridiculed him they'd got what they wanted so they thought that's not the end of the parable is it that's not the end of the story that's not where it finishes it's not just that they kill him and therefore they can just carry on as they were as if the owner of the vineyard is going to do nothing as if he's going to say oh well

[23 : 57] I'm powerless now no what do we find what will the owner of the vineyard do to them he will come and kill those tenants give the vineyard to others there's a shocking conclusion to the story and it's so horrific in the minds of Jesus' hearers that they cry out in unbelief God forbid actually the the the the the the the the the the the saying as it were is something along the lines of no way never it was just an unbelievable impossible thing in their minds that God could take the blessings of the Israelites from them and give them to another group of people they'd always been the people of God they'd always been the descendants of Abraham how could this possibly ever change they got so comfortable in thinking of themselves as superior they got so comfortable in thinking that

God will always forgive he'll always put up with us he'll never cast us aside this is a terrible terrible shock to them but you see the rest of the Bible the New Testament bears out this truth the rest of the New Testament and the whole of history tells us exactly what Jesus said would happen did happen that the blessings that had belonged to the Israelites were taken from them and given over to the Gentiles to the non-Jewish people to the church to those who believed and trusted in Jesus we've been studying that and listening to that in 1 Peter in our studies and our home groups 1 Peter 2 9 Peter says to the church not to the Jewish people not to the Israelites but to the church to the believers you are a chosen people a royal priesthood a holy nation God's special possession see it's no longer the physical children of

Abraham who possess God's promises and blessings says the Bible says the New Testament but those who have the same faith as Abraham did in the promises of God God Galatians in chapter 3 verse 9 those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham the man of faith that's why for the Christian the whole of the Old Testament is ours it's full of the promises of God to God's people now as well as then every promise of God we're told in Jesus is yes to us the response of the people was one of unbelief the reaction of the religious leaders we're told is one of greater hatred there in verse 19 the teacher of the law and the chief priest looked for a way to arrest him immediately they were enraged with what Jesus said that they could no longer be

God's people that they no longer could enjoy these blessings that somehow these things had been lost to them they looked to arrest him and kill him because they knew he was speaking about them they were the ones who beat the prophets they were the ones who threw them out they were the ones who would not listen to them they were the ones who would take the very son of God and kill him so much did they hate him and all that he stood for and yet in that very moment as Jesus brings the parable to a close we find that Jesus again offers them mercy he offers them the opportunity to turn away from the course of action they decided upon spare themselves the absolute sorrow of continuing to fight against him

Jesus Jesus quotes doesn't he in verse 17 as you probably know by the footnote in your bible he quotes from psalm 118 the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone the stone everyone everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces anyone on whom it falls will be crushed he is the stone again that's in 1 Peter we've been looking at that particularly he's the one that they have rejected but he is the chief cornerstone the cornerstone was the most important part

of the foundation as it were of the building it held everything together if you didn't have that stone that rock upon which to build then the whole edifice as it were would collapse but they've rejected Jesus they sought to build their lives on other things upon their own righteousness upon their own self importance upon their own religion they built their lives upon their pride upon greed upon all these things and therefore

[29 : 10] Jesus says you've rejected the cornerstone you've rejected the stone that you must build your life upon we know that parable the other parable of Jesus of the two men weren't they one who built his house on sand the one who built his house on the rock Jesus said the one who built his house on the sand is the one who hears my words but rejects them the one who built his house on the stone is the one who hears my words and acts upon them with faith but Jesus goes beyond that and that's why I say there's mercy here in what he has to say to these people because he says to them as long as you beat upon me as it were as you fall upon me hoping to break me to destroy me as long as you do that then you are bringing upon yourself your own brokenness everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces he says as long as you seek to undermine me as long as you seek to as it were to trip me up and cause me to fall what you'll find only is that I will fall upon you anyone on whom it falls will be crushed they will suffer greater loss in other words don't keep doing it it's the plea of

Jesus don't keep on hardening your hearts don't keep on filling them with hatred and enmity against me don't keep rejecting me that truth still stands true for today we have a saying don't we banging your head against a brick wall in other words you're not going to get anywhere by it it's a fruitless and painful exercise but how many of us dear friends are banging our heads against Jesus against God we're saying we will not have you as the Lord of our lives we will not put our faith in you we will we will keep on fighting against you until you God give in and break as I've mentioned and said many times before dear friends in a fight with God who on earth is going to be the victor if not God dear friends the people of Israel in Jesus day had opportunity after opportunity after opportunity Jesus came to them even wept over them because he saw the end result of their continued rejection of hatred of God in spite of the blessings in spite of the truth in spite of all that had been said to them all that they'd seen they would not give up their determination to be his enemies but it doesn't have to be that way with you you don't have to be God's enemy God longs and desires for you to be his friend and for him to be a friend to you Paul writes to the Christians in his letter to the Colossians in chapter 1 he reminds them of the situation they were in and yet what God has done for them this can be true of you the first part is true of you dear friend if you're not a Christian once you were alienated from God we're enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour that's how we all stand that's how we all start because within us there is a sinful desire and a determination that we will have our way and that we will do what we want and that God has no place in our lives except perhaps when we want to have a bit of a knees up at a christening or a wedding or a funeral we are enemies of God if we are not his friends we are enemies of God if we choose to break his commandments and his laws and who hasn't done that have you never ever told a lie then you've broken that commandment thou shalt not lie have you never ever looked at somebody of the opposite sex or even your own sex and lusted after them that is to break the commandment you shall not commit adultery have you ever stolen or taken something even if it is ten minutes of your boss's time because you've gone out for a fag but I'm sure it's more than that then you've broken that commandment you shall not steal and I could go on and on and on and on couldn't I and you know very well these things are true of you you've alienated yourself from God by your sin and you've become an enemy of God because you will not have him be the king of your life that's how you are that's how every person begins but says Paul to the Colossians but now he has reconciled you brought you back to himself made you friends with him by Christ's physical body through death through the cross when Jesus took the punishment that your sin and mine deserved so that you might be presented as holy in God's sight in other words forgiven and cleansed without blemish and free from accusation if you continue in your faith it begins with faith it's not about being the best person you can be not about turning over a new leaf and saying I'm going to be a nice person now and a good person now begins with faith believing what God has said that I'm a sinner and believing what God has done Jesus has died for my sin do not move from the hope held out to you in the gospel this is the gospel that you heard that's been preached to every creature under heaven you've heard this gospel you're hearing it now you've got no excuse to be able to say on that day of judgment well God

[35 : 02] I never knew God has sent you his servants his prophets again and again he sent you Christian friends and others as well to tell you to call you to draw you to say come back to me don't be his enemy there's only one end as the Jewish people found out when the Romans encircled the city and destroyed it and they were scattered to the four ends of the earth when they lost the great blessings that God had given them and wanted to give them more make peace with him sue for terms of surrender and he will forgive you and bring you into the friendship and the embrace of his grace we're going to sing a final hymn as we close now it's a hymn that reminds us that Jesus was despised and rejected and yet in that rejection

God had a purpose and a plan that he might suffer and die for our sin and that now he is the king of heaven and earth the ruler the one before whom we must all bow bless you keep you be with you this week ahead amen