

引言 INTRODUCTION

The sermon title is a Cantonese expression that describes someone or something that plays a supportive role steals the spotlight. For example, a baby who is not a major character in a movie but is remembered by viewers because he is very cute. A boss likes a new employee a lot because the person is talented and easy-going. Therefore, he puts him in a spacious corner office, while a manager is stuck in a smaller room. Our parable today talks about some renters of a field who wanted to take over the owner. This story is also record in Matthew and Mark. All three versions share many similarities. Also, the sequence of events in all three gospels are consistent. We mentioned last week that Jesus entered Jerusalem on a Sunday before He was nailed to the cross. The Jewish religious leaders had an argument with Jesus after He kicked out the merchants in the temple. Jesus was angry that they turned a place of worship into a venue for gouging profits. Those leaders questioned Jesus who gave Him the authority to do all that. In response, Jesus told three parables. Today's story is the second parable. It is quite clear what certain major elements in the story represent. God is the landowner. The vineyard is Israel. The renters are the Israelites, especially the religious leaders. The teachers in the audience were Old Testament experts. Therefore, they knew that the parable was borrowed from Isaiah 5. In the passage, God says that He established Israel like a vineyard. He expected a bountiful harvest but He got little, if anything. As a result, the Master must use stronger measures to fix the situation. Here is a lesson we can derive from the parable: a productive life shows that we have a proper relationship with God.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 租戶提反對 Objection by the Renters

In the parable, we see the objection to the rules by the renters. The setting was quite common in those days. A landowner planted a vineyard. He then leased the field to some farmers. At harvest time, the boss sent servants to collect some produce as a rent. But the renters in the story violated the agreement, to the degree that they even mistreated the servants. Some were beaten, others were humiliated. Mark paints an even more violent picture in 12:5 of his gospel: **“And he sent another, and him they killed. And so with many others: some they beat, and some they killed.”** The renters objected to the rules of the owner by killing some of his servants. Their intention was clear. They wanted to be their own bosses. Why pay the rent if they can keep the harvest for themselves? Notice that the landlord sent one after another servant to collect the crop. He was gracious and patient. Today if we forget to pay a bill, the bank will send us a few reminders. If we keep ignoring those notices, we will receive a final warning that the debt will be forwarded to a collection agency. Wise people should take action if they do not want a few muscular guys to knock on their door! However, the renters in the parable did not budge. We said earlier that they represent the Israelites, especially their religious leaders. God entrusted them the nation, and He gave them authority to lead his people. But they failed to present fruit to God, the Master. What fruits did God expect them to produce? Israel should be a microcosm of God's Kingdom in the world. His people worship a different God and they apply God's truth in life. There should be

love and peace among His people, as well as justice and righteousness. The nation should be a role-model of godliness that attracts foreigners to know God. Since the Old Testament times, God had been sending prophets to teach His people. They were represented by the servants in the parable. But people despised those messengers. Some were even killed. The most recent victim in Jesus' days was John the Baptist. Jesus was not shy to condemn people for their wickedness. In Matthew 23, Jesus lists seven "woes" to indict the religious leaders. The Lord begins with a ridicule in verses 2-3: **2 "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, 3 so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice."** Jesus asked people to follow their teachers' instructions, as long as their teaching was based on God's Word. But they should not model after their leaders' bad examples, because they did not walk the talk. How ironic! In fact, Jesus uses "hypocrites" seven times and "blind" five times in the chapter to describe those leaders. They only had a cover but there was no substance of truth. They asked people to follow their man-made rules, but they ignored God's truth. How could they lead their students if they were spiritually blind? Like the renters in the parable, those religious leaders were supposed to make a profit from the Master's property. They could also be blessed by a good harvest. However, they wanted to be the owners and not managers. We need to be careful, lest we would mix up our roles too. The moment we received Jesus as our Lord, we made ourselves His servants. You may have a successful career, and people call you boss at work. You may have a large pay-check and a fat bank account. Regardless of the size of your "harvest," you are just a steward in God's vineyard. We are only renters in the world. God is the ultimate Landlord. Indeed you enjoy God's blessings in different ways. But do not forget that you represent your Lord. A self-serving Christian is an oxymoron. It is simply anti-Bible. Rather, God calls you to serve Him and others through the resources He entrusts you. Whether it is your time and talents, your money and properties, your job and family, your hobbies and church ministries, do it all for God's glory. When your heart is right, so will your hand.

2. 兒子遭拒絕 Rejection of the Heir

The tenants displayed their objection to the landlord. But the owner continued to show patience to the uncooperative renters. There was one more person he could dispatch – his own son. He reasoned that people should respect the young man, since he carried the father's authority. But he was wrong. The tenants demonstrated their rejection to the heir of the property. Listen to verses 14-15: **"14 But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Let us kill him, so that the inheritance may be ours.' 15 And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him..."** Their logic sounds absurd. Some Jewish traditions indicate that if the landlord cannot be identified, then those who have been cultivating the field would become the rightful owner. Those wicked people might think that they could take over the land after the master passed away. It cannot be clearer that Jesus was the son in the parable. He would be killed in a matter of days. The religious leaders got the message. Verse 19 tells us: **The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him at that very hour, for they perceived that he had told this parable against them, but they feared the people.** Those teachers knew that Jesus was referring to their evil plan to get rid of Him. They thought of arresting Jesus on the spot. But they did not want to trigger any confrontation with the crowd. Therefore, they waited for a future opportunity. Jesus had disclosed His suffering and death to the disciples on multiple occasions. The first time happened right after Peter acknowledged Jesus as the Christ, namely the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament. Jesus praised Peter for his understanding of His real identity. He then seized the

opportunity and told the disciples what kind of Christ He came to be. Jesus says in Luke 9:22 – ...**“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”** The disciples had no idea about what Jesus was saying. They were shocked and saddened by His words. Like the landlord sent his son to the vineyard, Jesus was sent into the world by His Heavenly Father. The Jews, even the disciples, had expected the Messiah to be a warrior. They longed for a military leader to deliver them from the oppression of the Romans. Little did they know that their true bondage was spiritual in nature. They were burdened by their sins. They thought the Romans were their enemies. But the real enemy was the sin nature in their hearts. That was why God did not send an army. He sent His Son to convince people to return to Him. Only by receiving the Son of God into their hearts could they be liberated from sin and be reconciled with God. The religious leaders rejected such message. Therefore, they rejected Jesus the Messenger too. We see the same things happening in our world. People reject Jesus as the heir to God’s Kingdom. Some ignore the gospel and choose their preferred lifestyle. They may worship some form of deities, crave after money and success or they make themselves their own gods. They consider themselves owners and not renters in the world. More than likely, they will not stay neutral to the Christian faith because it is offensive to them. Who would like to be declared as sinners after all? Therefore, they ridicule, slander and even oppress our beliefs. Other take believers and Christian organizations to the court. Do not be surprised if people are not friendly to you when you tell them that you are a Jesus’ follower. That actually proves that we believe in the right things. The ways they reject us are similar to how people rejected Jesus 2000 years ago. We need to be bold and gentle at the same time. We stand up for the truth with courage. We call sins as sins without hesitation. But do not forget to treat people with kindness. We were ignorant and even hostile to the truth at one time like them.

3. 主人施權柄 Subjection to the Master

The renters objected the rules of the landlord. They also rejected the heir by killing him. Eventually, they must show their subjection to the master. Jesus paused and asked the audience a question in verse 15: ...**“What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them?” How should the master deal with such wicked tenants?** The Lord gives the answer in the next verse: **“He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.” When they heard this, they said, “Surely not!”** There would be consequences to those who violated the contract. A life for a life is based on the Old Testament Law. After the current renters were removed, the field would be leased to someone else who would obey the owner. But who are those people? Some Bible scholars think that Jesus was talking about the Gentiles. For example, Paul in the book of Acts was fed up with his Jewish peers because they did not accept Jesus as the Messiah. Therefore, Paul changed his focus and went to Gentile cities. However, God has never given up on the Jews despite their hardened hearts. Among Jesus’ audience, some poor and sick people and tax-collectors accepted Him. Today, there are Christian ministries whose major targets are Jews. As far as the story is concerned, Jesus gave a stern warning to His listeners that God’s blessing would be taken from them and be given to others! It gets personal when Jesus quotes from Psalm 118 in verse 17: **But he looked directly at them and said, “What then is this that is written: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone”?** The original context describes Israel as a rejected stone. It was attacked by foreign nations. But God would protect this despised rock and preserve it for a special purpose. Jesus applied the passage to Himself. He was the Rock the Father sent to lead His people. But the Lord was rejected by the religious leaders, and they

killed Him at the end. They could never imagine that God turned a tragedy into a victory. Jesus Christ, the Stone, rejected by people would become God's cornerstone. At that time, a cornerstone was a foundational rock for building a house. It supports the weight of two adjacent walls. It also serves as a reference point to the whole structure so that everything is straight and leveled. Jesus shifted the focus from Israel to Himself. But the key difference is that God's judgment is not on foreign nations, but on His own people. They would be subject to God's authority. The cornerstone would become a tool for discipline. Continue to read verse 18: **"Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."** Whether people stumble on the rock or struck by it would be crushed to pieces. Those who reject Jesus will be judged. There could be a double meaning here. Jesus might be referring to an upcoming disaster some thirty years after Him. Romans general Titus, who later became an Emperor, surrounded Jerusalem with soldiers. Eventually, many Jews were killed, the city was burned and the temple was demolished. That painful history foretells a future and universal judgment. All unbelievers will forever be separated from God. Those who do not love God cannot tolerate His authority. God is patiently waiting for sinners to repent. But one day, He will completely eradicate sin. Those who do not want to receive Jesus in this life will be separated from God in eternity. God expects to collect a harvest from His vineyard. It applies to nowadays churches too. Jesus is the Landlord and church leaders are only workers. God does not build community centers or country clubs. He establishes churches for His goals. They are supposed to be gospel hubs to equip believers and to send them out to gather lost sheep. We are not pleasing God if we are only content with weekly meetings. Let us continue to grow in our knowledge of the Lord and His truth. Do not be mere hearers but also be doers of God's Word. Always be zealous to invite seeker friends to join us too. Let us cultivate this field diligently and harvest abundant fruit for God's Kingdom.

結論 CONCLUSION

A productive life shows a proper relationship with God. The world is God's vineyard. We are only His stewards. We can have a fruitful life and present a harvest for God's glory if we submit to His terms. The religious leaders in Jesus' days questioned His authority because they thought they were the authority. Confusion about who takes charge may lead to a serious consequence. A ship was sailing in a fog at night. The captain saw a faint light at a distance. He asked a crew member to send out a message: "Alter your course 10 degrees south." Moments later a message came back: "Alter your course 10 degrees north." The captain was annoyed. Therefore, he repeated the same message: "Alter your course 10 degrees south now. I'm the captain of a battleship." The other party replied: "Alter your course 10 degrees north now. I'm the operator of a lighthouse." People should humbly submit when they recognize the true authority. Jesus is the Rock. Those who count on Him as a stepping stone will be saved. Others who disregard Him will make Him into a stumbling block.

引言 INTRODUCTION

今天信息的標題是廣東話的一句俗語，形容一個配角搶盡風頭。例如，一個嬰孩在電影中不是主角，但因為他長得很可愛而被觀眾記住。或是一個老闆很喜歡他的新員工，因為那個人很能幹而且很隨和。因此，他把新員工安排在一個寬敞的角落辦公室裡，而另一名經理則被擠在一個窄小的房間。我們今天的比喻講的是一些租客想要接管主人。這個故事也記載在馬太福音和馬可福音中。三個版本有許多相似之處。此外，三卷福音書中的事件順序都是一致的。上週我們提到耶穌在被釘在十字架上之前的那個星期日進入耶路撒冷。耶穌趕走聖殿外院的商人。耶穌很生氣，因為他們把敬拜場所變成了牟利的場所。之後，猶太宗教領袖與耶穌發生了爭執。他們質疑是誰授權給耶穌做那些事。作為回應，耶穌講了三個比喻。今天的故事是第二個比喻。故事中的主要角色代表什麼是非常清楚的。神是田主，葡萄園是以色列，租戶是以色列人，尤其是宗教領袖。聽眾中的老師都是舊約專家。因此，他們知道這個比喻是借用自以賽亞書第五章。神在那段經文中說祂培植以色列就像栽種一個葡萄園。祂期望有豐收，但結果祂得到的卻很少。因此，主人必須採取嚴厲的措施來扭轉局面。我們可以從這個比喻中得到一個教訓：豐盛的生命顯示我們與神有良好的關係。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 租戶提反對 Objection by the Renters

在比喻中，我們看到租戶對規則提出反對。那個場景在當時很普遍。一位地主種植了一個葡萄園，然後他把田地租給一些農民。每到收割季節，老闆就派僕人去收取一些農產品當租金。但故事中的租戶卻違反了協議，甚至傷害僕人。有的被毆打，有的被羞辱。馬可福音 12:5 中描繪了一幅更暴力的畫面：「又打發一個僕人去，他們就殺了他。後又打發好些僕人去，有被他們打的，有被他們殺的。」租戶反對主人的規定，甚至殺死了一些僕人。他們的企圖很明顯。他們想自己當老闆。如果他們不付租金，便可以保留所有收成。請注意，地主派了一個又一個僕人去收莊稼。他既有恩典，又有耐心。今天，如果我們忘記支付帳單，銀行會發出一些提醒。如果我們不理會這些通知，我們將收到最後的警告信，指明債務將轉交給催收機構。如果你不想幾個壯漢來敲你的門，那麼你就要趕快還債！然而，比喻中的租客並沒有讓步。我們之前說過，他們代表以色列人，特別是他們的宗教領袖。神將國家交給他們管理，並賦予他們領

導祂子民的權柄。但他們沒有將果子獻給神。神期望他們結出什麼果子？以色列應該是神國度在世上的縮影。祂的子民敬拜不同的神，並在生活中應用神的真理。祂的子民之間應當有愛與和平，以及公平與公義。子民應該活出敬虔的榜樣吸引外邦人認識神。自舊約時代以來，神就一直差派先知來教導祂的子民。比喻中的僕人代表那些先知。但人們蔑視那些使者，有些甚至被殺。耶穌時代的受害者是施洗約翰。耶穌毫不留情地責備宗教領袖的邪惡行為。在馬太福音 23 章中，耶穌列出了七個「禍」來指責他們。祂在 2-3 節嘲諷他們：2 「文士和法利賽人坐在摩西的位上，3 凡他們所吩咐你們的，你們都要謹守遵行；但不要效法他們的行為；因為他們能說，不能行。」耶穌要求人們遵守那些老師的指示，只要他們的教導是基於神的話語。但他們不應該效法宗教領袖的壞榜樣，因為他們沒有言出必行。多麼諷刺啊！事實上，耶穌在那一章中七次使用「假冒為善」，五次使用「瞎眼的人」來形容那些領袖。他們只有外表，但是卻毫無實質。他們要求人遵守他們定的規則，卻忽略了神的真理。如果他們在靈性上是盲目的，他們如何能夠帶領學生？就像比喻中的租戶一樣，那些宗教領袖應該從主人的財產中得利。這樣他們也能從豐收中得到祝福。然而，他們想成為老闆而不是管家。我們需要小心，以免我們也混淆了自己的角色。當我們接受耶穌為主的那一刻，我們便成為祂的僕人。你可能擁有成功的事業，別人在工作場所稱你為老闆。你可能有高薪和豐裕的銀行存款。無論你的「收成」有多少，你只是神葡萄園的管家。我們只是世界上的租客，神是最終的地主。你可以用不同的方式享受神的祝福，但不要忘記你是代表主人。單顧自己的基督徒是違反聖經的。神託付給你一些資源來服事祂和別人。無論是你的時間和才幹、你的金錢和財產、你的工作和家庭、你的嗜好和教會服事，一切都是為了神的榮耀。當你的心態正確時，你所做的事也會正確。

2. 兒子遭拒絕 Rejection of the Heir

租戶向園主提出反對，但主人繼續對不合作的租戶表現出忍耐。他還有最後一個可以差派的代表，就是他的兒子。他認為人們應該尊重這個年輕人，因為他帶著父親的權柄。但他錯了。他的兒子遭受到同樣的拒絕。請聽第 14-15 節：14 「不料，園戶看見他，就彼此商量說：『這是承受產業的，我們殺他吧，使產業歸於我們！』15 於是把他推出葡萄園外，殺了...。」他們的想法實在太荒謬。根據一些猶太人的傳統，如果無法確定地主，那麼一直在耕種土地的人將成為合法的繼承人。那些惡人以為主人過世後他們就能佔據產業。耶穌是比喻中的兒子，這一點再清楚不過了。幾天之後祂就會被殺。宗教領袖們明白耶穌的信息。第 19 節告訴我們：文士和祭司長看出這比喻是指著他們說的，當時就想要下手拿他，只是懼怕百姓。那些老師知道耶穌暗示他們想要用詭計除掉祂。他們想當場逮捕耶穌，但他們不想觸發群眾的對抗。因此，他們等待下一

次的機會。耶穌曾多次向門徒透露祂的受苦和死亡。第一次是發生在彼得承認耶穌是基督的時候。基督就是舊約預言的彌賽亞。耶穌稱讚彼得清楚祂的真正身份。耶穌趁那個機會，告訴門徒祂是怎樣的基督。耶穌在路加福音 9:22 說：「人子必須受許多的苦，被長老、祭司長、和文士棄絕，並且被殺，第三日復活。」門徒不知道耶穌在說什麼。他們對耶穌的話感到震驚和難過。就像地主差派他的兒子到葡萄園一樣，耶穌被天父差派到世上來。猶太人，甚至門徒，都期望彌賽亞是一名戰士。他們渴望有一位軍事領袖將他們從羅馬人的壓迫中解放出來。他們不知道他們真正的束縛是屬靈上的。他們背負著罪的重擔。他們以為羅馬人是他們的敵人，但真正的敵人是他們內心的罪性。因此神沒有派遣軍隊，祂乃是差遣祂的兒子來勸人們歸向祂。只有接受神的兒子進入心中，人們才能從罪中得到釋放，並且與神和好。宗教領袖拒絕了這樣的信息。因此，他們也拒絕了耶穌這位使者。同樣的事情也發生在今天。人們拒絕耶穌為神國的繼承人。有些人不願意聽福音並寧願選擇自己喜歡的生活型態。他們可能崇拜某些神靈，追逐金錢和成功，或者他們把自己當作神。他們認為自己是世界的老闆，而不是租戶。他們很可能不會對基督信仰保持中立，因為這個信息令人反感。誰願意被定為罪人呢？因此，他們嘲笑、誹謗甚至壓制我們的信仰。其他人則將信徒和基督徒組織告上法庭。當你告訴人們你是耶穌的跟隨者時，人們也許會對你不友善，但是不要感到驚訝。這實際上證明我們相信正確的事情。他們拒絕我們的方式與 2000 年前人們拒絕耶穌的方式類似。我們需要同時保持勇氣和溫柔。我們堅定地捍衛真理。我們毫不猶豫地稱罪為罪。但不要忘记以恩典待人。我們曾經也像他們一樣無知，甚至敵對真理。

3. 主人施壓力 Subjection to the Master

租戶反對園主的規定。他們拒絕他的兒子並殺死了他。最終，主人必須施加壓力予租戶。耶穌停了下來，在第 15 節問聽眾一個問題：「...這樣，葡萄園的主人要怎樣處治他們呢？」主在下一節給了答案：「他要來除滅這些園戶，將葡萄園轉給別人。」聽見的人說：「這是萬不可的！」違反合約的人將承擔後果。以命償命是基於舊約律法。租戶被清除之後，田地將租給其他願意守規矩的人。但那些人是誰？有些聖經學者認為耶穌說的是外邦人。例如，在使徒行傳中，保羅認為他的猶太同胞無藥可救，因為他們不接受耶穌是彌賽亞。因此，保羅改變了他的方向，前往外邦城市。然而，儘管猶太人的心剛硬，神卻從未放棄他們。在耶穌的聽眾中，一些窮人、病人和稅吏接受了祂。今天，有些基督徒事工的主要目標是猶太人。藉著這個故事，耶穌向祂的聽眾發出了嚴厲的警告，神的祝福將從他們身上奪走，轉而賜給其他人！耶穌在第 17 節引用詩篇 118 篇，將矛頭指向他們：耶穌看著他們說：「經上記著：匠人所棄的石頭已作了房角的頭塊石頭。這是什麼意思呢？」原來的上下文將以色列描述為一塊被

厭棄的石頭。它遭遇到外邦的攻擊。但神會保護這塊被遺棄的石頭，並保存它作特別的用途。耶穌將這段經文應用在自己身上。祂是天父派來帶領祂子民的磐石。但主卻被宗教領袖拒絕，最後被他們殺死。他們怎麼也想不到，神居然把悲劇變成了勝利。耶穌基督，這塊被人們拒絕的石頭，卻成為神的房角石。那時，房角石是建造房屋的基石。它支撐兩面相連牆壁的重量。它還充當整個結構的參考點，使一切都垂直和水平。耶穌將焦點從以色列轉移到祂自己身上。但關鍵的差異在於神的審判不是針對外邦人，而是針對祂的子民。他們必須順服神的權柄。房角石將成為管教的工具。繼續讀第 18 節：「**凡掉在那石頭上的，必要跌碎；那石頭掉在誰的身上，就要把誰砸得稀爛。**」人無論是被石頭絆倒，或是被石頭擊中，都會粉碎。那些拒絕耶穌的人將受到審判。這裡可能有雙重意義。耶穌可能指的是祂以後大約三十年即將到臨的災難。後來成為皇帝的羅馬將軍提多率領士兵包圍耶路撒冷。最終，許多猶太人被殺，城市被燒毀，聖殿被拆毀。這段痛苦的歷史預告未來全球的審判。所有不信的人都將永遠與神隔絕。不愛神的人自然無法容忍神的權柄。神耐心等待罪人悔改。但有一天，祂會徹底清除罪惡。那些在今生不接受耶穌的人將在永恆中與神分離。神期望從祂的葡萄園得到豐收。這一點也適用於今日的教會。耶穌是地主，教會的領袖只是工人。神不是要建立社區中心或鄉村俱樂部。神為了祂的目的建立教會。教會應該成為福音據點，裝備信徒並差派他們出去招聚迷失的羊。如果我們只滿足於每週的聚會，便沒有體貼神的心意。讓我們繼續增加對主和真理的認識。我們不要只是聽道，而且也要行道。我們要熱切地邀請福音朋友來聚會。讓我們努力耕耘這片土地，為神的國結出豐盛的果子。

結論 CONCLUSION

豐盛的生命顯示我們與神有良好的關係。世界是神的葡萄園，我們只是祂的管家。如果我們遵從神的指引，我們就能擁有豐盛的生命，並為神的榮耀帶來豐收。耶穌時代的宗教領袖質疑祂的權柄，因為他們認為自己才是權威。對權柄產生混淆可能會導致嚴重的後果。一天晚上，一艘船在霧中航。船長看到遠處有微弱的燈亮。他吩咐一名水手發信息：「請你將航線向南轉 10 度。」過了一會兒，對方回應：「請你將航線向北轉 10 度。」船長很生氣。因此，他重複了同樣的訊息：「你要馬上將航線向南轉 10 度。我是一艘軍艦的艦長。」對方回答：「你要馬上將航線向北轉 10 度。我是燈塔的操作員。」當人們意識到真正的權威時，他們必須謙卑地服從。耶穌是磐石。那些依靠祂作為踏腳石的人將會得救。那些漠視祂的人，耶穌將成為他們的絆腳石。