

¹ He then began to speak to them in parables: "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 went away on a journey. ² 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. ⁴ Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. ⁵ He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed. ⁶ "He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, 'They will respect my son.'⁷ "But the tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.'⁸ So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. ⁹ "What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. ¹⁰ Haven't you read this scripture: " 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone ; ¹¹ the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes' ?" ¹² Then they looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.

Modern man seems desperate to assert his ownership of and authority over all creation. The myth of man's autonomy cannot be sustained as long as there is a God who is the Creator and who demands his due. It will not do to simply ignore his existence and pretend that he is not sovereign. Nothing short of establishing our ownership and sovereignty over creation will suffice. To do so we must ruthlessly eliminate any heirs that might arise to thwart our plan.

The truth is that we are but stewards of God's creation. Stewards have an owner-given function and purpose. It is also the owner who determines what the product of the tenants' work will be and how it will be distributed. To do otherwise is an act of rebellion, or worse.

It is easy for us to point our finger at the religious leaders in Jesus' day, but when we do so we need to take a very close look at ourselves in the mirror of the Bible story. Regardless of our endless debates about the meaning of a tithe in modern culture, the actual percentage that constitutes a tithe, or what the base figure is on which we calculate the tithe, the question remains, do we really give back to God what he is due? In our intellectual and cultural snobbery, do we discount and belittle God's messengers who challenge us with messages that call our attitudes into account? Likewise, in our lives do we kill the Son of God through the practical neglect of Jesus that we display in our daily lives? Do we worship our God, listen to our Jesus and live according to our truth? If so, then this parable is for us.

Father, save me from the sin of the pride of ownership. Remind me everyday that all of creation, including all I have and all I am, belongs to you. Make me thankful for the gifts you have provided and give me a grateful heart that not only looks to you as the sovereign Lord of all creation, but also seeks to provide fruit worthy of your holiness. Amen.