

**“This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and ...acquire his inheritance.”**

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

**Once upon a time**, they built a bridge called the Melrose Suspension Bridge. It spans the Niagara River, connecting the U.S. and Canada. The technique the engineers used is absolutely fascinating. First, a kite was flown across the river. Attached to the kite was a long piece of twine. To the end of the twine, they tied a rope, like a clothesline, and pulled it across the river to the other side. To the rope, they tied a light cable and pulled it across the river. To that, they tied a heavier cable. That steel cable was then used to get the rest of the bridge in place.<sup>1</sup>

The **storytelling** about the construction of the Melrose Bridge is frequently used to illustrate how great things often have humble beginnings.

**Storytelling** has been popular ever since humans learned to put words together to form sentences. Few ancient people were able to read or write. So, when they wanted to teach something important, they made up a story about it. This made the teaching not only easy to learn, but easy to remember. It was then handed down from one community (or tribe) to another, until, eventually, it was written down. This is called **Oral Tradition**.

Jesus probably told more stories than most teachers did. **His** stories are called **parables**. One could say a parable is an **“earthly story with a heavenly meaning.”** I break his parables into two kinds: **‘Window’** parables and **‘Mirror’** parables. The **Window**-kind gives a verbal window for insight into things of God/Kingdom. A **Mirror**-parable gives us an insight into... ourselves.

Today’s parable of the vineyard owner, which I just read to you from the Gospel of St. Matthew, is a good example of a **Mirror** parable. Here is an explanation of who the cast of characters represent in today’s **mirror** parable:

The **vineyard owner** is God. The **vineyard itself**, as today’s 1<sup>st</sup> reading explained, is the **people** of Israel. The **vineyard tenants** are the **leaders** of Israel, i.e., leaders of God’s people.

The **1<sup>st</sup> group of slaves**, sent by the owner, is the **early prophets** God sent to Israel. The **2<sup>nd</sup> group of slaves** is the **later prophets** God sent to Israel. The **owner’s son**, who was killed, is **Jesus**.

The **new tenant farmers**, to whom the owner leases the vineyard, are the **apostles** of Jesus. They are the **new leaders** of God’s people.

The parable’s conclusion, **NOT** included in today’s Gospel reading, says:

**“The chief priests and the Pharisees...knew that Jesus was talking about them.”**<sup>Mt.21:45</sup>

They looked into the **mirror** of the parable, saw themselves ...and refused to change!

Now, you may or may not find all this interesting, **BUT**... the really important question is:

**“Did Jesus intend this parable to have meaning only for the chief priests/Pharisees?”** you ask?

**Well, I am glad you asked that question!**

The answer is—absolutely **not**! He intended the parable to have meaning for us, also. I will now list just 4 things explaining the parable’s meaning for us.

**1<sup>st</sup>**, **it summarizes the complete biblical story of salvation**, even making clear references to the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. The 1<sup>st</sup> leasing of the vineyard refers to the Old Covenant. The 2<sup>nd</sup> leasing of the vineyard refers to the New Covenant.

**2<sup>nd</sup>**, **the parable affirms that Jesus is the Son of God**. The last person sent to the tenant farmers is not another slave. He is the vineyard owner’s own son!

**3<sup>rd</sup>**, **it affirms that Jesus’ apostles are the new leaders of God’s people**.

**4<sup>th</sup>**, the parable teaches us about God's patience with us and our accountability to God. The vineyard owner made three efforts to get the tenant farmers to change their ways. When he saw more patience was futile, he passed judgment on the tenants. He held them accountable for their actions.

It is the same way with God and us. Our heavenly father is extremely patient. **BUT**, there's that proverbial **BUT** again, the time will come when God's patience will give way to judgment. We, too, will be held accountable for our actions.

And so, as you can see, today's parable was not merely intended for the chief priests and Pharisees of Jesus' day. It was intended for us, also.

*I now close with this prayer.*

*It is paraphrased-lyrics of a song written years ago by a fellow named Richard Wilson:*

**"Jesus was the storytelling kind.  
He painted pictures in the mind.  
It was how he showed people,  
like you and me,  
The way things were supposed to be.  
"He used the sky. He used the sea.  
He used the birds. He used the tree.  
He used whatever he could see.  
"Storyteller?  
Yes, Jesus was the storyteller kind.  
He painted pictures in the mind.  
It was the way he showed people,  
like you and me,  
The way things ...were supposed to be."**

*May the Owner of the vineyard and ...all else that is, our Abba, --bless you...  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*Footnotes:*

<sup>1</sup> (See: 'Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge' on internet.)