



## THE BLACKLIST | THE TENANTS | Week 1 March 10, 2019

### Matthew 21:23-27; Matthew 21:33-46

**Opening:** During the Lenten season we are reflecting on the opposition, the foes, that Jesus encounters on the way to the cross. It's extremely helpful for our own spiritual formation to understand what motivated their hostilities, perhaps what blinded them, from the very Truth in their midst. And once we understand we can prayerfully ask, "Are we doing anything like that?"

**Context:** The human psyche is complicated. We are self-centered, we don't like change, we rationalize, we work at success and we see things through the eyes of the beholder. *Share a story when you thought you had all the answers but were really wrong because you missed an important detail or ignored an alternative perspective. There's a tricky moment when you're wrong, it's when you realize you are wrong. Talk about a time this was true for you.*

**Composite Authority:** The Chief Priests and the Pharisees form a combination of authority that's hard for us to imagine. We don't live with the idea of any single authority front and center. To imagine a national religious authority in cahoots with a national leader with authority to set laws by edict is outside of our experience. *What problems do you see arising from this? Where in the world today is something like this happening?*

**Convenient Cooperation:** The Priests ran the religious side of Israel and the Pharisees ran the legal side of civil law, all under the watchful eye of the Romans. Maintaining peaceful, ordered life protected the Jewish nation from harsh Roman enforcement. *What rationalizations can you imagine from these educated leaders to move against Jesus? Was there a justification of "for the sake of the people" that motivated these leaders? Why would Jesus be the "enemy?"*

**An Inconvenient Truth:** The Chief Priests and Pharisees were trained in the faith. They knew the scripture written 400 years earlier. Now they had a system that worked. They were managing the Jewish nation and the Romans and everybody was on-board. Things were going smoothly. But there was this one person who seemed intent on upsetting the program. Read Matt 21:23-27. *What did the Pharisees want to know about? Why? What was their worldview? Has power and control ever blinded you to an inconvenient truth? Share an example.*

**The Wonder of Grace Given:** Pastor Dan vividly describes the gift of a vineyard (Matthew 21:33). A beautiful gesture for the small price of some of the fruit at the end of the season. By analogy Pastor Dan also described the grace of a weekend stay at a home provided to a group of Pastors. *How does grace apply to the Chief Priests and Pharisees to whom Jesus is speaking? What grace had they been given? Did they see it as grace or accomplishment?*



**The Horror of Grace Abused? Unseen? Exploited?:** Read Matthew 21:34-46. We struggle with the perverse “wrongness” of what we read here. We may question the landowners judgement—why does the land owner continue to expect a good response with the background of **abuse** so apparent? Does the land owner consider that the tenants may have misunderstood and the grace is **unseen** to them? Is there not clear evidence that the tenants’ greed has blinded them to the grace and that is how they can **exploit** it so blatantly? *Do you focus on the landowner or the tenants? What message does the story tell from the landowner’s view? From the tenant’s view?*

**What the Owner Deserves:** The application of the parable to the audience is clear. The Chief Priests and Pharisees were unwilling to let go. Power, control, success, system was theirs and they were going to keep it. God, the landowner, however would have justice. *The implication of the parable, as Pastor Dan described it, was confronting for us:*

- *We have been given much (knowledge, talent, resources), are we using it as the Owner deserves?*
- *Are we wasting the grace given by passively withholding the fruit of the Giver?*

*What strikes your heart as you remember Pastor Dan’s words? What examples do you remember? (Roosevelt Road (Resilient), giving, kids Sunday School, daily devotions, Small Groups.) Take a moment as a group, be silent for 30 sec over this list and your memory of the sermon. What comes up in you? Are you prompted to something new? Can you share it with the group?*

### **Practice of the Week: Reflection on “an inconvenient truth”**

Each evening as you drive home or before you go to bed review your day. Were there ways you lived in power and control because that’s what your system is? How could that have been different? Ask the Holy Spirit to open you to any truth you might be missing or unable to see. What is it? Write it in your journal.

### **Family Formation: Gratitude for Grace**

What can we pray about? Ask your kids what they are thankful for? Hopefully, you’ll get around to Mommy and Daddy and a warm bed and food to eat. The path to get there might be interesting too. You might learn something about your child’s world that you don’t know! But the point of the conversation is to give you the chance to talk about what you are grateful for and the grace God has shown to you personally. If the kids see you humbly and thankfully accepting God’s grace it will teach them that’s where it comes from.

**Additional Resources:** You can find some helpful Lenten resources by downloading our Lenten Journey Guide by going to [ChristChurch.us/lentdevo19](http://ChristChurch.us/lentdevo19).

We’d love to hear from you! If you have thoughts questions, comments, ideas on how to make these study guides more meaningful for you and your group, please let us know.

We also enjoy hearing how God is using these scriptures and study guides in your lives.

Roger Peer: [contact through Eric](mailto:contactthrougheric@gmail.com) \* Eric Haskins: [ehaskins@christchurch.us](mailto:ehaskins@christchurch.us)