

Read: Matthew 21:33-43

A Warning for Those Who Don't Believe

Matthew 21:43

Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.

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

What is your favorite thing to do? Color and draw? Read a book? Play video games? When you're coloring, reading, or playing at the computer and your parents want you to do something, do you listen right away? Or do they have to call you lots of times—and even then you don't always do what they're asking? Your parents are patient with you, but their patience eventually runs out. Then there might be consequences for not listening to them.

The same thing happened in today's story from Jesus. The people who were supposed to work the land ignored all the servants the owner sent. They did worse things than that: they treated the servants badly and even killed some of them. When the owner sent his own son, they killed him too. That's when the owner's patience ran out, and he punished the people.

It's easy to read this story and think, "I would never do that! I would always listen to Jesus and never cause God's patience to run out!" But is that really true? Do you always listen to your parents during devotion time? To your pastor in church on Sunday morning? No. None of us listens to Jesus all the time, because none of us is perfect.

So what's the difference between us and the people in Jesus' story? We sin every day; we test God's patience, just like the people in Jesus' story. Should we be worried that God's patience with us will run out? God punished those people! How do we know that he isn't going to punish us too?

We know because God gave us faith. God's Word assures us that instead of punishing us for our sins, God punished Jesus instead—even for the sins that we have done over and over again. So we trust in Jesus as our Savior. With his forgiveness in our hearts and heads, we stop worrying that God is going to lose patience with us. Because the Holy Spirit created faith in our hearts, God loves and sees us as his children. He will always forgive us and is always patient with us for Jesus' sake.

Yes, we are to listen to God and do what he says. But even when we don't, his Word tells us that we can be sure that he still loves us and won't take his kingdom away from us like he did with the people in Jesus' story. What an amazing gift!!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for Younger Children

- What might make God lose patience with you?
- When you are afraid that God will punish you, of what does God's Word assure you?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Jesus told this story to the chief priests and Pharisees who deeply disliked him and wanted to arrest him. How do you think they felt when they heard this story? How should we feel?
- Before our verse Jesus says, "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." Some people reject Jesus, but we know he is the cornerstone of our faith. Why is this important?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Read the assigned text and then look at the three actions of the tenants in verse 35. What do you notice about the *intensity* of their actions? Why do their actions make the owner's actions in verse 37 even more extraordinary?
- Recount with your parents the last time their patience ran out with you. Discuss how together you can better display godly obedience and God's patience.

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us the gift of faith. Remind us that because of this gift, we can be sure that you will never lose patience with us. Amen.

Hymn: CW 431:1,2 – I Walk in Danger All the Way

I walk in danger all the way;
The thought shall never leave me
That Satan, who has marked his prey,
Is plotting to deceive me.
This foe with hidden snares
May seize me unawares
If e'er I fail to watch and pray;
I walk in danger all the way.

I pass through trials all the way,
With sin and ills contending;
In patience I must bear each day
The cross of God's own sending.
Oft in adversity
I know not where to flee
When storms of woe my soul dismay;
I pass through trials all the way.