

THE WICKED VINEDRESSERS AND TRUTH FLUNG TO THE GROUND

Ross Wills & Nathan Smith, Presbytery Word for week commencing Sunday 15 June 2025

Transcription of recording, slightly edited

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What I would like to do this morning is step through the parable of the wicked vinedressers. It is recorded in Matthew 21 and also in Mark 12 and Luke 20. I will deal with the account in Matthew 21 verse 33. I am thinking of this as a preamble to the woes that we were hearing about last weekend at our Bible school. Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees, 'Woe to you' and He made many very pertinent points regarding their ministry to the nation of Israel.

We will step through Matthew 21 from verse 33. Jesus says, 'Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard, set a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it and built a tower.' It is quite clear that the 'certain landowner' is God the Father and He has tended a vineyard. Jesus is referring to that vineyard, at that particular point, as the nation of Israel.

If we think of the nation of Israel, you can go back from Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, to their family down to Egypt. Moses brings them out of Egypt. We come up to the day in which Jesus is living and they are planted in the land that He had promised them. They are planted there. We could liken that to the nation of Israel in that day. We could also liken it to the church in our day. We could also liken it to your home. There is a certain vineyard; there are plants in your home. We could liken it to our individual life - that we are a tender plant, and we are growing up before the Lord. Jesus says, 'He planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it.' He protected Israel. He drove out the enemies. There is Israel and there is a certain amount of peace. 'And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country.'

Regarding these vinedressers, it is very clear that Jesus was speaking to the scribes and Pharisees. If you go down to verse 45, it says, 'Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking to them.' They knew He was speaking to them; Jesus knew He was speaking to them. It is very clear Jesus was speaking to the scribes and the Pharisees and the chief priests. Some say He put in tenants. I like the thought of a caretaker. The scribes and Pharisees are caretakers of the nation of Israel. They are to care for the spiritual wellbeing of the nation of Israel. They were set there for that reason.

We can think of scribes and Pharisees. We can think of church leaders who are caring for the flock that God has planted. We can think of parents, mums and dads, fathers in homes caring for godly children that they have been blessed with. We note that when parents dedicate their children, they usually express the privilege and the blessing it is to care for and nurture their children in the way of the Lord and the preciousness of the gift that God has given them. We can note this regarding our house, and we can note it regarding ourselves. We are a caretaker of the divine nature that has been birthed within us. We are looking at that.

'Now, when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers that they might receive or partake of its fruit.' I want to paint a little picture here about harvest time in rural areas. Bear with me as I paint a bit of a picture. Harvest time in rural areas is a very busy time, and it is such an important time. They are trying to get the crop off into barns or to the gin if it is cotton or whatever crop you are planting. You have to get it off and protected from the weather elements. It is very busy. You can work long hours. After

harvest is done and the crops are stored away, they will often have a harvest festival. A harvest festival is a time of great joy.

It is a long season while the crop grows. At harvest time the long season of work is over. The provision for the future (whether it is income, or whether it is seed for planting next year's crop), whatever that harvest means, there is a time of great joy and thanksgiving. Everybody from the people who planted, from the weed-chippers, everyone is invited to that party. A time of great joy and thanksgiving; a time of encouragement. It is a great time. You can understand the picture: the Father is sending servants to partake of the fruit - the harvest - the joy of the harvest in this particular vineyard.

The scribes and Pharisees would have none of this. It records that, 'Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another.' It is very clear that they did not respect the servants because further down in verse 37 He said, 'Then last of all he sent his son to them saying, "They will respect my son." ' They had no respect for his servants.

If we think of Jesus speaking this parable, sending His servants to partake of the fruit, the joy of the harvest, the joy in the vineyard, I wonder whether these servants might have been, say, the woman caught in adultery, and He is sending her. He has forgiven her, and He is sending her to partake in the joy of the vineyard, the joy of the harvest. And they stoned her. There is stoning. Stoning was the capital punishment for a sin or a misdemeanour worthy of death. Stoning was the preferred method. To go and stone them does not sound very pleasant.

Can you imagine these servants? It might have been the blind man who was healed whom they threw out of the temple. They beat him, they killed others. They would not

receive anyone other than their own cohort. Why would they not receive him? Because there was no joy. They had nothing to give. When the servants were sent to partake of the fruit, the joy of the harvest, the joy of the vintage, there was nothing to give.

I want to lift up this point of joy. We know in Matthew 25 in the parable of the talents, when Jesus spoke of the talents, He gave five, two and one. To the five talents who had gained five more, He said, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of the Lord.' To the one who gained two more, 'Well done good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of the Lord.'

With the vineyard and the caring of the vineyard, there was to be joy. It is with the church in 1 John 1 verse 1. John says, 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, that which we have handled, which we have looked upon, we declare to you... [John is declaring the message and he said] ...that you may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. These things we write to you that your joy may be full.'

In the church, there should be joy at the harvest of His people. There is joy. I was delighting this morning when we were noting that the fragrance was filling His temple. The fragrance of joy should be in our place of meeting and in our houses. If you think joy needs to be in our fellowship, then joy needs to be in our houses as we are raising our children. There needs to be joy - the joy in what the Lord is doing and what the Lord is establishing in our life.

We note that the caretakers of the vineyard had no fruit to give. Then last of all, he sent his son. 'But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, "This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance." ' We note (and I note in myself) when the word comes and I have nothing to give and there is nothing and we are empty,

then we are hesitant to receive. These vinedressers had nothing to give; there was no joy. When the servants came and then the son came, all they could do was protect their plot and be aggressive. We note that in the kingdom at large, in the world, when we have nothing to give, we have to protect ourselves and we become aggressive and push away. That is what they did.

If you think of the Pharisees, they would not stone someone for no reason; they could not just kill anyone. When they wanted to be rid of Jesus, they had to work up a charge against Him because they could not go and kill Him. They had to say, 'What is His fault? What law can we pin on Him that we can freely go and crucify Him?' Likewise, as these servants came, and as the son came, they could not go, 'Oh, we do not want them. Kill them.' No, they had to think of a reason. They justified it by their laws. It might have been the woman caught in adultery. It might have been the man born blind, because they said to him, 'This Man is a sinner who healed you.' And he says, 'I do not know whether He is a sinner or not. All I know is, I was blind, now I see, and I am overjoyed by it.' There was joy.

The scribes and the Pharisees were not free in themselves to receive the joy of the Lord, so they had to defend their patch. Reading on in verse 40, Jesus said, 'Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers? They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons." Jesus said to them, "Have you never read the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?' Therefore, I say to you the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.' '

I am wanting to highlight that the Lord comes looking for fruit. He came looking for fruit in the nation of Israel. He comes looking for fruit in the church. He comes looking for fruit in our families. He comes looking for fruit in our own lives. We note that John the Baptist said, when the scribes and Pharisees came running out to him, 'Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits of repentance.' Our life should bear fruit - 'bearing the fruits of repentance'.

It is wonderful to note Daniel, in Daniel chapter 9. We often highlight that Daniel was an exemplary fellow; his character was excellent; he prayed three times a day. We know all the things he went through. As people had dreams, he would seek the Lord and understand the interpretation. Daniel, you could not get a finer fellow. Yet when Daniel understood that the time had come to return to the land, he sought the Lord, and he turned in repentance. A sign of a godly caretaker is someone who will turn in repentance.

As the servants (and if we think messengers) are sent to us, what is our response? It is not to defend ourselves and defend our patch and say, 'I am doing well.' It is to turn in repentance. We note with Daniel, when he realised that it was time, he sought the Lord. He said, 'Then I set my face towards the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes. And I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession, and said, "O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, with those who keep His commandments, we have sinned [he is including himself] and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgements. Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name, to our kings and princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land. O Lord, righteousness belongs to

You, but to us shame of face, as it is this day.”
' Dan 9:3-7.

Can I suggest that that is the state of the church today? What belongs to us this day but 'shame of face'? We are a laughingstock in the world, and we have heard that it is time. The time is coming when the Father will take His seat and what is our response to that? It is to turn and seek the Lord and to confess our sins and to understand that to us belongs 'shame of face'. It is to turn and repent and to seek the Lord. We were hearing last week at our Bible school that we are as the Pharisees.

I will move to the first woe that we were dealing with last week. In Matthew 23 verse 13: 'Woe to you scribes and Pharisees.' We are talking about hypocrites. It is interesting that in my Bible (I only noticed this last week), after it says, 'Woe to you scribes and Pharisees', in very fine writing it has a bracket and it says, 'Insert your name here.' Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, me. I was very struck by this. 'You shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.' As caretakers of God's people (the sheep of His pasture), as caretakers of the children He has given us, as caretakers of the divine nature, how is it that we fail to enter, and how is it that we hinder those entering?

I immediately thought of being a parent. We can be a parent of young children through to young adults. I was thinking, how is it that we hinder our children? And I was thinking, we hinder our children when we, perhaps as fathers, have the last say on a matter. Our young adults might come to us, and we are hearing this and hearing that. But we adjudicate the matter according to our family. We hinder them joining the fellowship of Yahweh because we have not joined properly ourselves. In thinking of our homes, go to Colossians 3 verse 18. Paul gives a comment on the Christian home here in

these verses. 'Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.' I was looking at that: 'Husbands, do not be bitter towards them.' I was thinking that that is the opposite of good fruit. You enjoy good fruit because it is sweet and lovely to taste, but this is bitter. 'Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter.' We could say, 'Husbands, love your wives and be fruitful towards them.' Let the fruit of joy, let the fruit of peace be in your house. We note when Jesus sent out the 72, they were to find houses of peace. He did not send out the 72 with a questionnaire going, 'Okay, I come to this house. Do you read your Bible every day? How often do you pray?' It was not a checklist. It was, 'Is this a house of peace? Does a son of peace dwell there?'

Now obviously a house of peace will be in the Scriptures and will be praying; but they were looking for fruit. Christ is looking for fruit in our house. 'Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter. [Do not be the opposite of good fruit]. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.' We can discourage our children. That is what it is saying. Do not provoke them lest they become discouraged - lest they become discouraged and turn out of the way. This is when we can hinder our children. How do we discourage them? Who has not reacted impatiently or frustratingly towards our children because they are not behaving how I want them, or it is not a convenient time? My priorities and everything I am doing are first and they are annoying me. It is because I have put myself first and I have not laid down my life. We can provoke our children and cause them to turn out of the way when everything in life is about me first. I discipline in anger; I discipline in frustration. My counsel is to have my way easy. We hinder our children.

We can hinder one another. Teenagers can hinder one another. It is not real cool to be enthusiastic towards some things. We can hinder one another when we try to keep the status quo in our group. When we do not let someone be enthusiastic and enquire of parents and enquire of leaders and have a fellowship in the word. We need to take heed to ourselves. It is interesting as we note in the Scriptures, it regularly calls us to take heed to ourselves. Often as it calls us to take heed to ourselves, it is to reflect on where we have come from. To the Israelites it was saying, 'Take heed to yourself and remember where you have come from. Remember when you came into the land, you did not plant all these crops, you did not build all these houses. It was not because of your good management and your hard work that you have all this. It is the mercy of God.'

We need to remember where we have come from. We have come and we are here today because of the mercy of God, because of the forgiveness of God. We are taking heed to ourselves and so we need to take heed. Matthew 18:15 says, 'If your brother sins against you, rebuke him. If he turns, forgive him.' We are taking heed to ourselves, and we are knowing that I am here because of the mercy of God; I am not perfect; I have been forgiven much, so I turn, forgiving much and rejoicing in that. Take heed to yourself and to the way of life.

Paul says to Timothy, 'Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine [that you have heard; to the way of life] and continue in that.' 1Ti 4:16. We are taking heed to what we have heard and we are entering in, that we might be able to lay down our life for one another. We hinder one another when we live our life, and we do not lay down our life for one another. We make ourselves the predominant part of our life. We have to lay down our life. When we seek to make projections, we hinder one another. We need to continue in the way that the Lord is

encouraging us and take heed to ourselves, that we ourselves enter in as we take heed to the word that is being heard, and we do not hinder one another from entering in.

Nathan Smith

Ross and I are continuing to reflect out of the Bible school last weekend and I am picking up this theme of truth being flung to the ground. We considered up at the Sunshine Coast the question as we began, 'What *is* truth?' What is the truth? This is a question that man has been asking for thousands of years, pretty much since the beginning. What is the truth? This is one of the great philosophical questions. For us it is pretty simple. If taking notes, teenagers, you can write this down. 'What is the truth? The truth is whatever God says it is.' The truth is whatever God says. That is the truth, and He speaks His truth to us by His word. Jesus said in John 17 verse 17, 'Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.'

This is the written Scriptures, of course. It is the written word of truth. We also receive the word of present truth, which is proclaimed to us by the Holy Spirit each week as we receive that word. Then, of course, we have the truth of our name and the truth that the Father has named us to be, contained within the seed of the divine nature which has been planted in the ground of our spirit. When we are considering truth being flung to the ground, this is the truth that we are speaking about.

We will read through some verses in Romans chapter 1 and verse 18 where Paul speaks about this. He said, 'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and the unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they

are without excuse.' You will remember Vic encouraging us at Easter and talking about the seed and the seed of God's divine nature being germinated within us. This was a key theme that the men picked up at Easter. We had the homework of the cotton wool experiment to do. I know for us, we popped those seeds in, and they were looking pretty dead for quite a few days, and I began to get worried that we had bought some bad seeds or had done something wrong. They were sitting there in the cotton wool for days and days and days before anything was happening and then finally, they started to crack open, and root and the plant pops up. It was great to consider this over the last season.

From the notes that we received, the seed of the divine nature containing our name from the Father defines the truth of who we are and also the expression of our identity in the fellowship of one Spirit - all contained in the seed of the divine nature. I love the NASB translation of Romans 1 verse 20. It says, 'For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen.' That is fantastic. The divine nature has been clearly seen since the creation. The miracle of God's divine nature being placed as a seed in the ground of our spirit and then birthed and germinated within us has been clearly seen since the beginning of creation. All men are without excuse. In fact, we have been learning the truth of His Covenant purpose for mankind. Then His offering love to bring that purpose about has been manifest as a sign in all creation. This is part of what we heard at Easter.

We heard that the growth of a seed into a plant is the greatest sign in all creation - the greatest miracle God has done. The miracle of the seed tells us everything we need to know and it speaks to us every day about the love of God. The miracle of the seed is proclaimed to us in this material physical

world, and it reveals the love of God and the truth of who He has named us to be. We read there, 'All men are without excuse.' This has been revealed in this sign (this seed growing into a plant), since the beginning of creation. The seed germinates, it grows into a plant and then it grows and matures. Eventually it will bring forth more seed.

We learned that a single grain in the head of a wheat plant reveals its forebear (or you could say the wheat plant from which it came), but it can also be food and bread for another to sustain and to support them. The seed is revealing others, and it is also feeding others as well. This is the expression of God's love, all contained in the sign of a seed. Hopefully that is familiar to us. This is true of the seed of the divine nature given to us. We are revealing Christ, the Seed from which we came. This is the divine nature in us revealing Christ. Then the divine nature in us can multiply and grow to be life and food for another. We read in Romans 1 verse 20 where it said before, 'Since the beginning of creation, His eternal power [we could say the miracle of God's divine nature being placed as a seed in the ground of our spirit is then birthed and germinated in us] has been clearly seen since the beginning of creation.'

King David wrote about the purposes of God being declared to us through the creation as well. Let us read this in Psalm 8 and verse 3. We will read a few verses here. This is an amazing psalm that gives us a key for how the Lord has done this and used this. King David says in verse 3, 'When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honour. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, all the sheep and the oxen - even the beasts

of the field, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas. Oh Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!' That word 'majestic': how glorious, how famous, how renowned, how known is Your name in all the earth. We see it in all creation - the name of the Lord glorified and magnified and the truth of His Covenant purpose for us. Further to this, David is asking here in the middle of these verses, in light of all this, 'Lord, what is man? What is man that You are mindful of him?' David was really asking the Lord here, 'What is the truth of who I am? Where have I come from? What is my purpose in life?'

These are the most fundamental questions that mankind has ever pondered. These questions have belonged to mankind's musings since the beginning of creation. David recognised that the answers to these belonged in the Lord's thoughts regarding man. He said, 'You are thoughtful of him. What is man? That You are mindful of him?' David understood that God's thoughts about the origin and then the nature and then the destiny of man revealed the reason why and how He visits us. This is the answer. This is the answer - or it is revealing where we find the answer.

Let us read now in Hebrews chapter 2 verses 6 to 11 where Paul very clearly explains the answer to these questions. He quotes these verses from Psalm 8, and he says, ' "What is man that You are mindful of him or the son of man that You take care of him? [That is lovely — 'that You take care'] You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honour, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour,

that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the Author of their salvation through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one [We could say, 'of one Father'], for which reason He is not ashamed to call us His brethren.'

This is the answer to David's question in searching for the truth of what is man, who are we, what is our purpose, what are we here for? Paul was explaining that Christ's ministry and His offering as the Son of Man revealed this answer. When Jesus came into the world, He established the pathway of salvation for which we could be born from above as sons of God and glorified as sons of men. This is why all creation is revealing this - the seed of the divine nature within us, growing and maturing that we might be born again, sons of God, and then glorified as sons of men as we journey with Christ. He did all this work as the Son of Man.

In spite of this, and all creation revealing God's love and His purpose for mankind, let us jump back to Romans 1 and we will keep reading where Paul was in Romans 1 verses 21 and 22. He says, 'Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were they thankful, but became futile in their minds, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools.' Verse 25, 'They exchanged the truth of God with a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.'

In these verses, Paul was noting those in the world who are exchanging the truth of God for the lie by rejecting the truth of God as the Creator of the heavens and the earth - the whole universe - in exchange for the lie of evolution. We do certainly see now in the world many people who are worshipping and serving the creation, driven by the fear

of death to try to reverse mankind's impact upon the world and all its ecosystems, and all these things and its resources. We see all men as well worshipping and serving the creatures themselves. They worship and serve their own lusts and agendas instead of the Creator who made them.

However, let us not be too quick to distance ourselves from these ones because we too have this same propensity to fling truth to the ground in us. We do this by rejecting the truth of our name. Instead, we attempt to craft and project our own self-defined image.

We noted last weekend that Satan's first and foremost activity in the heavenly places is the propagation of false gospels. Satan's messengers claim to speak the words of God, but they are in fact speaking from their own resources. Paul addressed this in the Corinthians. They were very willingly and accountably and deliberately choosing to be deceived by the false messengers and the false gospels they were bringing. This is the rejection of their name, choosing instead to find another way and craft their own image.

Let us read this in 2 Corinthians 11 verse 3. 'I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you may well put up with it.' Down to verse 13, 'These ones are false apostles [the ones who are speaking these things are false apostles] deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light, therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.'

Instead of the gospel of the kingdom being proclaimed as the word of truth from the

Father and being declared by the messengers in the right hand of Christ from the fellowship of the presbytery, and instead of them being men who are moved upon by the Holy Spirit, these false messengers are of a different spirit. They are speaking a different gospel, and they are preaching and promoting another Jesus. I was thinking about this phrase, 'another Jesus'. What is it talking about? What is another Jesus?

As I was considering this, it is the preaching of a Jesus who is different from the One we just read about in Hebrews chapter 2, where Paul said that we see Jesus as the One made lower than the angels for the suffering of death. This Jesus emptied Himself to the bosom of the Father. This of course was while He was still God the Son. He emptied Himself to the bosom of the Father in order to reveal the Father and become His Son, be born of the Father and become the Son of God. This was Christ (or God the Son) emptying Himself. We were reading about this in the devotions this week. He further emptied or humbled Himself '...by taking the form of a slave and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man...' Php 2:7. Not only humbling to become the Son of God, but further humbling himself into the body of flesh and blood, right to the point of an embryo in the womb of Mary. Then finally, Paul noted that He humbled Himself even further by becoming 'obedient to the point of death, even the death of a cross'.

This is how we see Jesus - the One made a little lower than the angels. We also see Jesus as the One who is a son of man - flesh and blood like us, who was strengthened for His offering journey by the grace of God. This came to Him from the Holy Spirit as the power of seven Spirits. This was the ministry of *exanastasis* - resurrection life to Him as the Son of Man, as He walked His offering journey, enabling Him to complete this

journey as a man in the flesh, strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

We also see Jesus as the One who brought many sons to glory, perfecting the Author of their salvation through each of His seven wounding events. We learnt over the Easter weekend that Christ's seven wounds are seven name-developing steps. This is Him perfecting this for every one of us, whereby He brought forth the sonship name of every person by fulfilling their works. This is the Jesus whom we see. 'We see Jesus.' This is the Jesus whom we see. Another Jesus is a false gospel that denies all this. It says that we do not need to have that same attitude of emptying in ourselves like Paul who said, 'Have this attitude in you.' He emptied Himself, emptied Himself, emptied Himself all the way, pouring Himself out. Another Jesus, it is also denying that we need to be obedient to the truth of our name. We read that of Jesus; He was obedient to the point of death. Another Jesus is saying that we do not need to join Him in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings in order to be saved.

We noted before, that false messengers are of a different spirit. They are speaking from a different gospel and preaching and promoting another Jesus. And though they are claiming to speak the word of God and claiming to speak the words of righteousness, they are not properly connected to the presbytery and connected to Christ in the fellowship of His right hand. They are certainly not speaking as men moved upon by the Holy Spirit. They are speaking from their own resources.

It is helpful for us to remember when we are talking about these false messengers, that this is not always happening from behind a church pulpit. In fact, most of the time, these false gospels are being promoted by these false messengers within the congregation. Jude called them 'hidden reefs' in our *agape* meals, who 'feast with us without fear'. This is Jude 1 verse 12. It is in the *agape* meal

where we are actually going to see and hear a lot of this false gospel being spoken. It will be here; it will be in our homes as well, as we meet together. These ones are 'hidden reefs', and they are a danger for which we need to be awake, sober and on the alert. We heard that as well at Easter, that we take heed not to be deceived in this season. We need to be awake and sober on the alert in order to avoid being deceived by these false gospels.

Jude continued in verse 12 that these 'hidden reefs' in our *agape* meals care only for themselves. 'They are clouds without water.' They are not speaking the gentle rain that is coming. The word of God is coming down as gentle rain. 'They are carried along by the winds.' This is the wind of every doctrine - every wind of doctrine that they are promoting and living by. 'Autumn trees without fruit doubly dead - uprooted, wild waves of the sea casting up their own shame like foam, wandering stars for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.'

It is important for us that we are diligent to be clear in this season with regard to who the true Jesus is - the One whom Paul was saying we see. We need to know Him and know Him in this way; and we need to understand what the true gospel of sonship is and what spirit we are of.

At Easter we heard that we have been given the seed of the divine nature that has been sown into our spirit, and this defines the truth of our name and works as a son of God. But because of the fall of mankind, there are other kinds of seeds too, which the enemy can sow, and they can be planted into our spirit as well. You will remember Peter speaking about this a couple of weeks ago when he was noting that the rain comes down and it falls on the soil of our heart and whatever is in there is going to come up. There are other seeds in the thorny ground - the thorns and the thistles.

We will take a bit of time to consider this. This is Matthew 13 verse 24. 'Another

parable He put forth to them saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. [verse 26] But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared.' These become the thorns and thistles that grow in the ground of our heart. They are the bad plants that spring up from these bad seeds that the enemy is sowing into our hearts. This is the seed sown by Satan's messengers. These seeds eventually choke the life in the good sonship plant - the divine nature - this plant of new creation that is growing up in us. Eventually these will choke the life in this plant. These thorns and thistles are false gospels which have sprung up in us because we have accountably chosen to believe them and become deceived by them, like the Corinthians whose minds had been corrupted from the simplicity in Christ. They were choosing another Jesus. They were choosing this. They were choosing these men and these ones who were promoting these false gospels among them.

I was listening to last weekend's word here in Brisbane. David Thompson was ministering on this content, and he made the point that our false gospels are a lie masquerading as the truth. When we live by them, we are exchanging the truth of God for a lie. This happens when we choose to reject the truth of our name and instead cling to our religious projections as our way of life.

I was thinking that God certainly does love the name that He has given to every person. Every man ever born has been named by the Father and God loves that name and He loves and supports all those who choose to receive that name and to do the works of obedience that go along with that name as well. That is certainly not everyone. That is not everyone. The Scriptures are very clear that God hated Esau. Esau was one who did not choose the name that God had ordained or chosen for

him. God would not have hated Esau if he had chosen this name; but he did not. He did not choose this name. Where we are choosing God's predestination, we are loved by God more than we can imagine - receiving every care, comfort, blessing, support and help from Him. But because Esau chose to reject His predestination, instead naming himself and forging his own destiny, the Lord hated him for that. His righteous judgement and wrath were poured out upon Him.

This is one of the many false gospels that we need to let go of. In fact, we need to fling this to the ground. This is this 'unconditional love gospel' that we have been hearing about that says, 'God does love everyone no matter what they do.' It undermines the need to live in a sanctified way, denying the wrath of God upon our sin. It is not accepting that salvation is only ours through the process of regeneration and renewing. This gospel needs to be flung. This is the thing that should be flung to the ground - this false gospel. We need to pick back up off the ground the true gospel of God and dust it off. This is the gospel declaring the jealous love of God for us, for those who live in sanctified obedience to the predestination and the name that He has given to them.

Just like the good seed grows up into a plant bringing forth fruit, bringing forth more seeds which reveals its forebear, it can also be food for the eater. We have been considering that principle in relation to the seed of the divine nature within us, how that is revealing Christ, the Seed from which we came, but it is also then able to be life and sustenance for another.

This also applies in the negative as well. David Thompson said that if we continue living according to the lie of our self-definition and project that in order to deceive others, we are actually showing that Satan is our father. He is our forebear, not Christ,

when we are choosing our own projection and we are promoting that and living by that.

Further to this, if these false gospel seeds remain undealt with in our heart (in our soil), and they continue to grow, then they will bring forth bad fruit, thorns and thistles that are then fed to others as a false gospel. Phoebe was speaking of this in her testimony as well - about the thorns and the thistles and these responses that do come up within us. This is part of the regenerative work that the Lord is calling us to in this season. If we let them grow and if we do not give ourselves to that process in this season, then they will bring forth fruit and that fruit will be fed to others in our conversations.

This is Hebrews 6 verse 7, which we read the other week: 'For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful to those by whom it is cultivated, receives the blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.'

Let us now jump back to Romans 1 which we have been stepping through today. Paul spoke of these thorns and thistles that are being produced by those who have suppressed the truth of their name in unrighteousness. These are the ones who are choosing their own self-defined religious projection instead of bringing forth the fruit of obedience to their name. Let us have a look at what this can look like in verse 29: 'They are filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, back-biters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents [that is an interesting one, isn't it, Teens?], undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgement of God, that those who practise such things are

deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practise them.'

When we started that list we were probably thinking, 'Oh yeah, no, that is okay.' But then as the list went on, we are going, 'Yikes! I think there is a few thorns and thistles still in my soil that need to be dealt with.' Is anyone going to say 'amen' to that? There are plenty of things in that list that are still popping up. This is the process and the season of regeneration and renewing whereby this thorny ground is being cleaned up in this season.

Those who do not give themselves to this process of regeneration and renewing to see these thorns and thistles removed, then these thorns will keep growing and flourishing and they will eventually bring forth their own fruit which they will start feeding to others as a false gospel that they have embraced and chosen to live by. Inevitably they will actually become false messengers, proclaiming false gospels in the *agape* meal.

I was thinking about what Ross was sharing before in reading from Matthew 23 about that 'woe' there in verse 13. This is how we shut up the kingdom of heaven against men, neither going in ourselves nor allowing those who are entering to go in. Can you see how this is a great stumbling that we can have in our conversation together when we are not dealing with these thorns and thistles in our life?

These ones become completely deceived and they think they are speaking the words of Christ. They think they are speaking from Christ, but they are deluded and deceived, given over actually to a judgement of deception. Jesus said this in Matthew 15 verse 13. I was amazed when I read this. 'Every plant which my heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted.' These are the thorns and thistles that have continued to grow. 'Let them alone. They are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into the pit.' We see

here it is the Father who plants the seed of the divine nature into our spirit as His sons, but for those who are not dealing with the thorny ground, these ones will become completely deceived, believing in their integrity; but they are in fact blind guides speaking false gospels from their blindness. The seed of the divine nature within them will eventually die and the thorn and thistle will become uprooted and thrown into the lake of fire. If we are not careful, if we are not awake and if we are not soberly considering our fellowship together, then we will fall into the pit as well by choosing to believe and follow these false messengers with their false gospels.

I will conclude with a brief encouragement that we do not need to be worried that, 'Gee, I really hope I will not be deceived', as if it is something that is out of our control or as if it is something that we have no say in. Those who are deceived are completely, accountably and deliberately choosing another gospel. We can be encouraged that as we keep receiving the word that is coming to us, as it is breaking forth to us and walking in the light of that word, allowing it to wash us, allowing it to bring this regeneration and renewing to our soul, we can be settled. We can be confident, and we can be assured that we are abiding in that process of being cleansed and renewed and that we will not be deceived. We will be receiving a love of the truth, and we will be walking in the light of that truth. This is not something that we need to be uncertain about. We can be settled and confident about that.