

# Luke 20:1-26

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now the smallest sermon is very, very simple. And even the smallest child can get the main point.! And the main point of these three passages that we read from Luke 20 verses 1 to 26 is this.

! God owns you. God owns you. And we are his tenants. We are his tenants. Now I've done some research this week on tenants.

Tenants, people say, tenants from hell. And I've come across some great stories, isn't it? People have turned a rented lounge into a wildlife sanctuary in London. One tenant ran a motorcycle mechanic store from a basement in rental accommodation.

In fact, a couple of friends of mine, two friends of mine, the tenants in the place where they lived before were growing marijuana plants all through the flat. And in the end they got evicted.

And I should say that my two friends after they moved in for the first six months were completely different people. They were very, very chilled out indeed. And we know, don't we, about terrible tenants.

[ 1 : 04 ] We've all got tales about them. Well the parable that Jesus tells in the middle of this story is the story of the world. It's the story of the whole creation.

That God makes a garden. And God places us in a garden. And he is the owner and we are his creatures. And we have this irrational, inbuilt hostility to the fact that God is our owner.

It's something that is bizarre about us as human beings. And so we treat God shabbily and shamefully. And we pretend you're not the owner. I am the owner.

I'm the owner of myself. And I refuse God to let you be the owner. And that is why Jesus came.

That was at the heart of what we're looking at in Luke's gospel.

Do you remember? Jesus is on this journey. This is a travel narrative. Luke is telling us Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. And we found out last week if you were here that Jesus rode in.

[ 2 : 09 ] And the crowds hailed him as God's king. Here is God's Messiah. And Jesus goes straight to the temple. And he kicks out the flea market with the bric-a-brac. And then he starts to preach the gospel in this chapter.

Here is the king of God. The son of God. The one who can raise the dead. The one who touches lepers. The one who forgives sins. The one who preaches about heaven.

Who invites us into his kingdom. And so here he is. Here he is reclaiming the house of God. For what its purpose was. That salvation will flow from the house of God.

To all nations. To all people. To the Gentiles. It is wonderful. And yet at that same time. He is deeply hated. By the religious authorities.

Here he is offering forgiveness. And freedom. And invites to the feast of God. As it ought to be. And what do they do in verses 47. Of chapter 19.

[ 3 : 07 ] They seek to destroy. They want to tear him apart. Here is a group of men. Whose whole identity. And status. Is caught up.

By maintaining. A religious system. Their whole view of themselves. Where they were. In this hierarchical. Institutional.

Religious system. And yes. The system had to do with God. It did. But gradually. The mechanisms. Of that system. The visible.

The outside. Mechanisms. Of the system. Have become far. Far more important to them. Than God. And when God comes to his temple. They want to kill him.

They don't like the fact. That he is the owner. And I think even that. Is a lesson to us. Because churches. Are prone to this. And Presbyterian churches.

[ 4 : 03 ] Are prone to this. And we as Christians. Are prone to this. So we join a church. We sense the reality of God. And we want to grow.

We want to grow. To know the Lord Jesus. And gradually. We come to see. That the scriptures teach. A form of church government. And we become invested.

In those structures. And programs. And those visible. External mechanisms. Which are good. But slowly. Begin to displace God.

And as time goes on. We worship those. Those structures. Particularly those. In church leadership. Because they are the things. Which give us our justification. And they give us our sense of status. And our sense of importance. And when God reasserts. His ownership. That he is the owner. Our first reaction. Is often hostility. And I think you just look at churches.

[ 5 : 00 ] All around the world. And through history. And you see that. A few sections. 1 to 8. 9 to 19. The parable. And then the Caesar passage. So. And all the three sections. Have got to do with ownership.

So verses 1 to 8. See false ownership. Chapter 20. Look down at verse 2. They come to him. The chief priests. And the scribes. And the elders. And verse 2.

And they say. Tell us by what authority. You do these things. And who is it. That gave you his authority. The scribes. And the chief priests. And the elders. They barge right into. A middle of Jesus sermon. And they interrupt him.

And they say. Who gave you the authority. Who do you think you are Jesus. To say the things that you say. And to do the things that you do. Show us your license. Where's your ordination certificate Jesus.

This is our jurisdiction. And of course. They are acting out there. As if they are the owners of Israel. They are the owners of the temple. And the first question of anyone.

[ 6 : 00 ] Who takes. Their meaning. And their identity. From a religious institution. Is this. It's what is your jurisdiction. Where's your license. They don't come up to Jesus.

And say. Could it be that what you are doing. Is from God. Is it true. Does it fit with the rest. Of what God says. You know they say. Where is your official permit. And how does Jesus deal with it.

In verse 3. Well very wonderfully. Doesn't he. He says. Let me ask you a question. He says. You are talking about authority. Aren't you. And you can't even recognize.

The authority of God. In the flesh. Staring you in the flesh. So what about John the Baptist. What about John the Baptist. The last prophet. Whom God sent. Can you look at verse 4. Was the baptism of John.

From heaven. Or from man. Was he speaking the words of God. Did he have an official permit. Or was he a self made man. And verse 5. They writhe.

[ 6 : 57 ] And they squirm like snakes. And we are allowed to hear. Their deliberator. They say. Don't they. If we say. John the Baptist is from heaven. Jesus is going to know.

That we're liars. Liars. Liars. Because we didn't get his baptism. But if we say. John the Baptist came from men. Well that is going to make us. Massively unpopular. So instead. The religious leaders.

Opt to look like fools. And they say. We don't know. We are challenging you.

On your authority. But actually. We're not competent. To judge John the Baptist. And we'll have to set up. Another committee. And it is wonderful. Isn't it.

And I think. I've only begun to really see this. This week. That Jesus. Through Luke. Exposes. That their real fear. Is disapproval. You see. Every single one of you here.

[ 7 : 51 ] Every single one of us. In this world. Knows that we are not. The real owner of ourselves. And I think. When we are exposed. By the word of God. That we are not.

The real owner. By the person. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. We become pretty insecure. And so what happens. Is we have a choice. That either our religion.

Becomes the way. That we impress others. Or we give it up. Either we let. Christ Jesus. Justify us. Or we. Busily get.

Justifying ourselves. And so. I become very frightened. Of your opinion of me. And you become. Very frightened. About my opinion of you. And we become slaves.

And fearful. And frightened. And if you look at. Anyone on the treadmill. Of respectability. And religious. Is institutionalism. Deep down. There is fear.

[ 8 : 47 ] And insecurity. So that is false ownership. Verses 9 to 19. Let's see. True ownership. Now the lovely thing. About this passage.

I know about you. I often find. The Lord Jesus parables. Very very puzzling. I can study them. For a week. And I can preach them. And then somebody. Will come up to me. And say. Have you thought about this?

At the end of the service. And I realise. Yeah. I haven't really understood. This parable at all. And there are always. These elements. Of Jesus parable. That. That you're not sure.

What they mean. And that is deliberate. They are there. To draw you in. But I love this one.

Because it's so obvious. Because at the end of it. Even those who are hostile.

Look at verse 19. Even his enemies. Can you see them? Look at verse 19. They're not the brightest people. In the bunch. They want to lay hands on him. For they perceived. That he told this parable.

[ 9 : 41 ] Against them. They felt that he told. This parable against them. And this is probably. The clearest. Of all Jesus' parables. And it is Jesus.

Interpreting Jesus. And in this parable. He tells us who God is. He tells us who we are. He tells us why he's come. And the way he does that. Is by going back.

To the Old Testament. And he takes us. To a little story. From Isaiah chapter 5. It's a lovely chapter. Isaiah chapter 5. Where God pictures himself.

As the owner of a vineyard. Who develops a vineyard. And he digs it. And he cares for it. And he cares for it. And he cares for it. And God wants fruit. From the vineyard. But there's nothing.

And in Isaiah 5. God says. What more. Was there to do. For my vineyard. Than I have not done. It's an amazing thing. I want to say to you.

[ 10 : 36 ] If you have got rebellious children. If you have got children. That have gone away. From the Lord. From the Lord. God understands that. Isaiah chapter 5. Is a remarkable chapter.

Because Isaiah 5. God says. What more could I have done. For my children. God. Says. What more could I have done. For my children. Isn't that remarkable. And they rebelled. God doesn't know.

About his children. Isaiah 5. tells us. He looked for justice. And behold. Bloodshed. For righteousness. But behold. And I'll cry. And what Jesus does. What Jesus so often does.

He takes Isaiah 5. And he just twists him a little bit. He makes it a little bit more pointed. And he says. The relationship between those who belong to God. And God is the owner.

And we are the tenants. And we are meant to have good fruit. And as soon as I say that. That God is the owner. And we are the tenants. And we are to produce fruit. I think hostility in our hearts kicks in.

[ 11 : 32 ] From beginning to the end of the Bible. The Bible assumes. We are not our own. We did not make ourselves. We did not make our world.

It is God who made us. It is God's vineyard. Your life is God's life. Your body is God's body. The mind that you use it is God's mind.

Your life. Your abilities. Are a gift from God. And you are. You and I are tenants. And we owe to God everything. It's the same for every human being. That has huge implications.

It means that you are accountable to God. For everything that he gives you. Think about this. Every time you use your mind creatively. You are using the resources of God.

Whatever you do with your body. You are actually using something. That belongs to God. It belongs to us in a way. It belongs to me in a way. It is on loan isn't it?

[ 12 : 33 ] Perhaps. But everything that I have. My real estate. My money. It is all from God. My time. My finances. My sexuality. Is fundamentally God's.

You are not your own. And what God does. Is God doesn't just start the show. And say it's all over to you. Crack on. No what does God do?

God sends messenger. After messenger. After messenger. To remind you. You are his tenants. So in the parable. He sends a servant. To collect fruit.

And what do the tenants do? Well they beat him. And they send him away. They resent. The implication. That they are not. Completely.

In control. And the story. Should have finished there. Shouldn't it? When they reject. The messengers. What should God have done? He don't have moved in. And kicked the tenants out. But he doesn't.

[13:30] God sends a second servant. And this one. They treat even worse. What does the owner do? He sends a third. And they treat him shamefully. These are the tenants from hell.

And then we come to this amazing moment. In verse 13. I don't know whether you noticed it. When it was read. It is a solid moment. Because the owner.

Deliberates with himself. It's got echoes. Isn't it? Genesis 1 and 2. It's like the creation account. Where God stops.

And he deliberates with himself. Let us. Verse 13. Can you see it? Then the owner of the vineyard said.

What shall I do? I will send my beloved son. Perhaps they will respect him. Any real owner would be fed up to the back chief.

[14:27] Wouldn't he with this? Any owner. Any real owner. Would march in. With every right to have these guys arrested. And kicked out. But this owner is different. This owner goes beyond what is humanly reasonable.

He stretches our understanding of mercy and compassion and grace. And when you step back. A moment. This is the story of the Bible. Isn't it? Isn't it the story of the Bible?

That God sent his people. Prophet after prophet after prophet. And what do his people do? They beat them. They imprison them. They kill them. They hate them. And then they build their tombs. And say. Oh these are the prophets. And there's great longing out here. Just hear the words of the father. He says. I will send my beloved son.

Where have you heard that before? Where have you heard that before? Anybody? Yes. At the baptism of Jesus. This is my beloved son. He longs that they realize.

[15:26] That he. The son represents me. And when the son comes in the parable. He meets vicious and deadly opposition. Precisely because he does represent God. And in a display of completely irrational logic.

The tenants hash this stupid plan. They say. Let's kill the son. And then somehow it'll all be ours. Then we'll get the vineyard. So Jesus takes the parable.

And he asks two questions in application. Verse 15. What would you do? What would you do? What should the owner do?

And then he puts a twist on it. Doesn't he? He says he'll get rid of the tenants. And the vineyard will be given to others. And suddenly he gets them to the skin of the religious leaders. And they call out in verse 16. Don't they?

No way. No way. No way Jesus. Surely not. You cannot say that. They do not care one little iota.

[16:27] When Jesus says they have violated God's ownership. They don't care that Jesus knows and exposes their plotting to kill him at this very minute. They don't care that Jesus knows their hearts.

Jesus knows their dirty little secrets. They don't care about that. What really gets them is that Jesus is saying their religious system. Which they have built. Which has given them their status and their security.

Is going to be taken away from them and given to others. The whole position of the leaders of the religious system is going to be lost. And that is the horror to them.

The thing in which they have built their superiority and their identity. It is intolerable to them that God should take it away. And that salvation should be given to others instead.

And that. And how glad we are this morning, aren't we? The story of Acts is that God takes what was theirs and gives it to the ends of the earth. Are we glad of that? That we Gentiles might believe?

[17:31] That's the first question. They are reeling from it. And then God comes in and asks them the second question. Verse 17. And he takes them back to Psalm 118.

And he says. This verse. About this kind of great stone. This rock. The builders look at the rock and they reject it.

But God takes that rock. And even though the builders have rejected it. And they've started to build over there. God takes this rock. And everything that God builds is centered on that rock.

On the rejected rock. That's the cornerstone. And God puts it at the head of the corner. And everything is now built on that. And all their busy building over there comes to nothing.

The building Jesus is speaking about, of course, is his death and his resurrection. In his death, they actually reject him. They throw that rock away.

[ 18 : 33 ] And they think that by killing him, they'll get their building back. And their institution back. But God will raise Jesus from the dead. And God will exalt Jesus to the highest place.

And now God, all that God does through the world. And for eternity is built on Jesus Christ. It's the cornerstone. You see, what it's saying to you is this.

The most catastrophic decision that you can ever make is to reject the Lord Jesus. There's a little bit more here. There's something very remarkable in the use of this text.

And I want us to stand back a little bit from it. Because when the early church started preaching the gospel in the book of Acts. This was the text that they preached on again and again and again and again.

Here's the amazing thing about it. Yes, they are going to kill Jesus. But the very wickedness that they are planning to do. The very wickedness that they are planning to do.

[ 19 : 31 ] Is the very thing through which God's glory and grace and forgiveness is won. Do you see the sovereignty of God in that? In other words, all our hostility to God and its greatest wickedness.

Our very attempt to throw God off his throne. And having put Jesus to death is the means by which God opens the door to salvation.

And forgiveness to each other. Isn't that amazing? We'll see it again tonight. That in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Our hostility to God meets the grace and the glory and the power of the eternal God.

And what that means to you is this. That in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God owns us not once.

But twice. He owned us once as creator. But he owns us again. Now as redeemer. And even though we resent the fact that God owns us.

[ 20 : 37 ] We gradually get used to it. And even though we replace God with ourselves. And say I own myself. I'll do what I want. And even though that leads to the death and the murder of Jesus Christ.

In his death and resurrection God buys us back. And we come back to him a second time. And that is true ownership. Have you come back to him?

Are you twice owned? And let me look at the third episode. Which is 19 to 26. And that is double ownership. And it is the very famous story of the text Caesar.

Now verse 19. What should they have done? They should have bowed and asked for forgiveness. Shouldn't they? But in verse 20 what do they do? They mount a covert surveillance operation. It is very interesting isn't it?

In verse 20. These guys. These spies. Who pretend to be in verse sincere. In verse 21. They come up to Jesus. And they flatter him. And they butter him up. And then they ask.

[ 21 : 38 ] Verse 22. Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar or not? Is it lawful for us to pay our taxes? And they are very very pleased for themselves.

About that question. It's a very clever question. It puts Jesus on the horns of a dilemma. You see that tax to Caesar. Was very very unpopular.

It was just a small amount. But everybody had to pay it. And incidentally it went through the hands of the Sanhedrin. The very guys that handled the money and took their cut from it.

But even having to pay that little coin. It irked the residents of Jerusalem. Because it said to them. We are still under Roman occupation. We're not our own. And everybody hated it.

And the popular answer for Jesus would have been. Don't pay your tax to Caesar. But if Jesus said. Don't pay your tax to Caesar. They would have got him.

[ 22 : 35 ] And they would have arrested him. And they would have sent him to the authorities. And if he says. Pay it to Caesar. Jesus will lose his popular support with the people. And to be honest. They'll arrest him anyway.

So Jesus gives this brilliant answer. He takes a coin. Doesn't he? In verse 24. He says. Show me a denarius. He hasn't got one himself. And he says.

Show me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have? And they say. Caesar's. He says. It's all a matter of ownership.

The coin really belongs to Caesar. He minted the coin. He approved the coin. And the proof it is. Is he's got his image on it. So when Caesar asks for one coin back.

Give it to him back. And the word render in verse 25. Means give back. It does not mean give. It means give back. It was something that was his.

[ 23 : 32 ] In the first place. And then Jesus goes back. And says. There's actually a much more important point here. Isn't there? Because God is the owner of every person. Caesar included. God owns you.

God owns you. He made you. And the proof of it is. That you bear his image. That you and I were created.

In the image of God. And Jesus is saying to you and me. And to them. You can't compartmentalise your life. You can't have money over here. And housing over there. And fashion over there. And God over here. He owns it all. You can't divide your life into two spheres. You can't have a religious sphere. And church. And prayer. And singing. And the worship over here. And then the rest of life. I'm going to decide. How do I do with my money. And my time. And my job. The whole thing belongs to God. The whole lot. It's all on loan from him. And if you have to give coins back.

[ 24 : 33 ] Occasionally to Caesar. Jesus says. You have to give it all back to God. You. Needs to give you. Back to God.

You. Needs to give you. Back to God. And I think that's just remarkable. Remarkable. Let me finish. I think the image of hands. It's very helpful. Here. If God is my owner.

It means that underneath my life. Is the hand of God. Underneath my life is the hand of God. Which I can rest on. And if I rest on his hand.

I can hold everything in life. With an open hand. But if I pretend that the hand of God is not there. I'm going to grip everything very very tightly.

[ 25 : 35 ] Very very tightly. The three idols. In this passage. Are the three idols of Luke's gospel. Which I've only really figured out this week.

Religion. Money. And the approval of others. And if I don't believe that God's hand is underneath me.

As owner. I'm going to grab hold of my money. And I'm going to hold it very tightly. And if God's hand.

Is not underneath me. I'm going to grab hold of your approval. And I'm going to hold myself as the owner. Very tightly. But if God's hand is underneath mine.

It's a great relief isn't it. And the only way that I can hold things loosely. Is not just to know that God owns me.

[ 26 : 30 ] But the hand that is underneath me. Is good. Good. Good. He's the one.

Who even though I have treated him shabbily as a tenant. Even though I have tried to act as God. He sends me messenger after messenger after messenger. And I treat that messenger terribly.

And then he sends me his son. And even after we crucify him. God raises him from the dead.

Undoing this wickedness. Buying us back for the second time through the resurrection.

And it puts Jesus as the head of all things. And it says build on him. Build on him. And be built into this spiritual house. Not just in this life.

But in the life to come. And let me say to you. That is a very very different gospel. From the gospel of self esteem.

[ 27 : 34 ] That is a different gospel. From the gospel of Oprah Winfrey. That is a different gospel. From the gospel of Joe Losty. That is a different gospel.

From what you hear from Joyce Mayer. That is a different gospel. From the gospel that you hear on the God channel. You. Are not your owner.

God is your owner. And God calls you. To give yourself back to him. And I think that. Is very very good news indeed.

Let's pray. Father God.

We come before you this morning. And we need. And we want to acknowledge. That we are yours. And so Lord.

[ 28 : 35 ] Forgive us for the times. When we get caught up in structures. And programs. And our own agendas. And they displace you. Help us Father God.

To know that Jesus Christ. Is our saviour. And our Lord. And we acknowledge. That you are our true owner. Our creator. And our redeemer. And we acknowledge. That we belong to you.

Help us to build our lives. Knowing that Jesus Christ. Is the chief cornerstone. Help us Lord. For those issues. Of religion. And money.

And the approval of others. To know. That underneath us. Is the everlasting arms of God. And so we don't have to grip things tightly. But Lord.

That is a great wonderful reassurance. And so Lord. We want to commit our lives to you. We want to give you our praise. And glory.

[ 29 : 33 ] For you are worthy of all glory. And all praise. And all majesty. And honour. And Father. We want to thank you.

That we belong to you. In Jesus name. Amen. That's right there. Amen. Amen.