

SAVING THE LOST

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A SERMON
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*“The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”
Luke 19:10*

OUR Lord's mission upon earth was a very gracious one. It had a narrow side to it, for He came only as a minister—not as a Savior, mark you, but as minister—to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” He was, as the apostle Paul reminds us, “a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God.” And He did not traverse any other country but Palestine, in order to preach the Gospel to the people, but He kept Himself to the seed of Abraham.

Yet there was abundant room for one personal ministry within that realm alone. If a Christian worker were to say that he would confine his labors to London, he certainly need not think that he would have a restricted range. And our Savior's personal preaching in Palestine gave Him more work than any one man could accomplish.

But even in that restricted sense, it is remarkable that He should have said to the woman of Canaan, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” The lost sheep were the peculiar desire of His heart—not so much Israel, as “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” His eye was specially fixed upon them, His grace sought out the objects most needing it. His mercy hungered after human misery in order that He might relieve it, so that always there were uppermost in His mind thoughts of pity and love towards the sons of men.

At this present moment, under the Gospel dispensation, there is no division between Israel and the Gentile. I do not care whether I am an Israelite or not, after the flesh, because in Christ Jesus, there is neither Jew nor Gentile. That is all abolished and all the fuss that some people make about whether we are descended from the Jews is nonsense and nothing better.

If it is so, it does not matter in the least. For now, “There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all.” The middle wall of partition has been taken down once for all, and now, all over the world, this truth stands in reference not to this nation, or to that alone, but to the whole human race, “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Still does His eye, with eagle keenness, spy out the lost. Still does that eye, with dove-like tenderness, weep for the lost. Still does the eternal Savior live that He may seek and save that which was lost.

If you were never lost, you have no part or lot in His work of salvation. But if you are lost, and know it, this is the very link which unites you to the Savior. He has come to seek and to save just such as you are, and I hope, in the observations I am about to make, that I shall be able to show that He came to save you.

I. I shall speak concerning OUR LORD'S MISSION. He has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Notice, first, *what a gracious mission it was!* It was a mission of pure mercy and indescribable love. Our Lord Jesus Christ did not come into the world to seek His own honor, but to seek and to save the lost. Not to get anything for Himself, but to give everything to those who are lost. His mission is one of

undeserved goodness, on His part, towards those who have treated Him ill and who deserve very different treatment at His hands.

There was no law, except His own love, to compel Christ to come to save sinners. They had no claim upon Him. When He resolved to come, it was an act of matchless grace. If He had not chosen to come, He would still have been the ever-blessed Son of the Highest, enshrined in everlasting glory though every one of us had perished.

His coming was infinite goodness, returning good for evil, coming down to our lost estate, and determining, by superabundant affection, to save us from it. Our Savior is embodied grace, incarnate love, and His mission is grace itself. Let us never forget that He came to save the lost—not to save the good and the excellent.

Ah, my brethren! Christ's eye looks in the opposite direction to ours. We usually look for some goodness on the part of men before we help them, but He looks to their sin, and degradation, and necessity. He is kind to the unthankful and the evil. He justifies those who are not in themselves just—while we were dead in trespasses and sins, “in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” Grace, pure grace, abounds in Him, and is blessedly manifested in His mission of saving the lost.

Further, while that mission is a very gracious one, I call your attention to the fact that *it is also a great one*. Jesus Christ came to seek and to save the lost and there are plenty of them. It is no small charge that Christ has taken up when He speaks of saving the lost. What a mass of our fellow countrymen are lost!

I mean, in the common use of the term “the lost classes,” that are morally gone astray, and are, by universal consent, put down among the lost. Look at whole nations of mankind that are sunk up to their eyelids in infamous transgression, lost to every sense of shame and decency. Christ, however, has come to save just such as they are and truth to tell, the difference between us and them, by nature, is not more than skin deep. We are a little better washed on the outside than they are, but the inside of the cup and platter of fallen humanity is pretty much alike in all men.

We may have been better taught. We may have been more restrained than they have been, but a viper is still a viper wherever he may live, and man is, in every case, a lost man, a depraved and sinful creature. To my mind, it seems a wondrous charge for Christ to undertake—to save “the *lost*,” without any qualification added to the word—just “the lost.”

What a mission Christianity had when it first came, for instance, into Rome! When Christianity first came there, it was inconceivably vile. Its emperors were madmen. I think I cannot truthfully say less of such monsters as Nero, and Tiberius, and Caligula, whose power seemed all to be bent to supply themselves with the means for the indulgence of the most abandoned forms of vice.

The city of Rome was full of statues, the larger part of which, thank God, have been utterly destroyed—and I often wish the rest had been, for many of them are polluting and depraving even to look upon. The city was full of idols as well as of art, and the principal images were not the more respectable ones, like Jupiter and Mercury, but Venus and Bacchus, and other abominations from the filthy crowd of Olympus.

The rich indulged themselves in every luxury. Women, while their maids waited upon them, and dressed them, practiced upon their female slaves cruelty of such a kind that one would think that everything feminine had gone out of them. Slaves were tortured and put to death—and nothing was ever said about such common crimes.

In the amphitheatre, into which the multitudes crowded, scores and even hundreds of gladiators died in a single day—slaying each other in mutual conflict to make a Roman holiday. The nation was full of corruption, bribery, filthiness. A few characters shone out brightly, the more renowned because they were so few, but the land, as a whole, was such that, if Vesuvius had belched forth a torrent of fire high enough to set all Italy in a blaze, and an earthquake had opened its mouth and swallowed it all up, there would have been as much justification for its destruction as for that of Sodom and Gomorrah of old.

But Christianity came into Rome in the form of a poor fisherman, and a tent-maker, and others like them. And they began to say, “We must love each other. You who are rich must count it a privilege to help the poor. We must all fear and serve the one true God, for there is but one. And God has made of one blood all nations to dwell upon the face of the earth. You are not to treat men with cruelty. You are not to have these sanguinary games. You are not to indulge these licentious propensities. The Lord Jesus Christ, God’s Son, has died to save us from sin and all its consequences.”

It was a very still small voice that was heard in Rome at first—and if it had not been for the supernatural power of God, it would speedily have been silenced. But its influence soon began to spread, for some of the rich men in the city, and some of the soldiers on guard in Caesar’s palace, and many of the poor slaves embraced the new religion, and everywhere they were renowned for kindness, and gentleness, and purity, and love.

Then wicked men said, “We will put this new religion down,” and horrible persecutions followed. But notwithstanding all that the Christians suffered, Rome became leavened with the influence of Christianity. By and by, slavery passed away, cruelties were no longer indulged, the amphitheatre was abolished, many of the idol gods were broken in pieces, the one invisible God was worshipped, and the world rose up, like one that has been in an awful swoon, and dreamed dreadful things—and she looked into the mirror and saw her face as though she had been born again.

Christ had come to seek and to save lost society, and He did it in a marvelous way, as He always can do it, and He will continue to do it, for this is the great errand of my Master, that wherever men are sunken in sin and vice—wherever they are immersed in crime, or satisfied with their self-righteousness—He has come to save them from it.

Mark, also, that my Master’s mission, while it is a gracious one and a great one, *is a very complete one*. He comes to seek, that is, to find, the lost. And coming into contact with lost humanity, He does not leave it lost, for He saves those whom He seeks.

And *what a condescending way of saving He has*, for the text says, “*The Son of man is come.*” He was no “Son of man” once—He was and always remains the eternal Son of God, but He deigned to take upon Him this poor nature of ours. He became a man like ourselves—a condescension so marvelous that, though we hear of it now with little astonishment, yet, if we sat down to think it over, it would remain an unexplained mystery to bewilder us with its marvels of matchless grace.

Yes, the Son of God became the Son of man. As such, He lived. As such, He bled away His life upon the cross that He might redeem us. He has come as the Son of man that He might lift us up to be the sons of God. And blessed be His name, the deed is done and by His Spirit’s power, its glorious results are still bringing untold blessings to all who trust Him.

Just once more, *what a practical aim our Savior had in coming here!* Our Lord Jesus Christ did not come to propound a philosophy, He did not come to explode ancient errors, He did not come to keep abreast of the times, He did not come to do the pretty things that many ministers are trying to do nowadays, He did not come to be rhetorical, He did not come to be popular, He did not come that He might gain the esteem of the multitude. He came to seek and to save the lost. Would God that His church would keep to the same kind of work!

But His church seems to me to act in a great measure as if she were in the world simply to show off her pretty self with all her fineries—to play her grand music, and tickle the ears of people with a Sunday concert, and I know not what of floral show to increase the attraction of it. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—and what are we, who call ourselves His disciples, doing?

Many of us are doing a thousand other things than this one great thing which alone is worthy of the service of the man who calls himself *a Christian* and who therefore ought to be one who is *like Christ*. He came to seek and to save the lost. Brothers and sisters, try to get at this work as closely as you can. Whatever else you can or cannot do, do seek to be the means of saving souls. Whatever you can do, that is fine and grand, and that will bring you into esteem among your fellow men, do try to save poor lost sinners, even though they should be among the lowest of the low and the poorest of the poor. Do try to

do what you are called to do in your Master's name, for by the power of His matchless Gospel, you also can seek the lost and bring them to Him to save them.

Thus much about our Master's mission.

II. Now I want, in the second place, to give a MESSAGE TO THE LOST ONES FROM MY TEXT.

I do not know where you lost ones are, but here, somewhere, are some of you who know yourselves to be lost. I am not talking to these other people, but you and I will have a little conversation between ourselves.

And first, I ask you to *think what an interest is excited about you*. You are lost and it seems that earth and heaven, too, are concerned about your being lost, for the Son of man, who is also the Son of God, blends heaven and earth in one in being concerned about you. God's church is interested in your salvation. Many Christians are praying for you and I am trying to speak out the common love of Christians to you.

Because you are lost, we long that you may be saved. Suppose there is a little child in the family—not a very pretty child, not always quite clean, nothing very much to look at in anybody's eyes except her mother's. They are seven or eight in the family, and the parents have not much time to waste in admiration of any one of them when they have to earn bread for so many.

But just now, little Mary is the principal object of thought in the family. Everybody's heart is taken up with Mary. There is nobody in the house who is not thinking of Mary—what is the reason? Why, Mary went out this morning, to go on an errand, and it is now evening, and she has not come home. And they have been round to the police station, but they cannot find her. Mary is *lost*, so there is more thought of her than about Jane, or Hannah, or John, or Thomas, though they are of older growth and better children it may be. But Mary, just now, is uppermost with everybody, because Mary is lost!

It is so with regard to you, my dear friend. You are in the uppermost thought of Christ just now, and you are in our uppermost thought, too, because you are lost. I do not want you to feel at all elated at being the subject of this interest, because it is not so much you, you know, or anything about you except the one fact that you are lost, which makes us so much interested in you.

Presently there is such joy, such kissing and hugging, such delight, such singing because Mary is found. Perhaps you step in and look at Mary—she is just as commonplace a little bairn as ever sat on a mother's knee, but still, you see, she had been lost, and she has been found, and therefore, they are rejoicing over her with great joy. All the prominence that Mary gets is not due to her goodness, but to the fact of the love that cannot bear that she should be lost.

And it is so with you, my dear friend. We would move heaven and earth about you if we could. We would suspend the angels' songs and bid them lean upon their harps, and look on, while all heaven and earth, in the person of the Well-beloved, are seeking and saving that which is lost. So I bid you remember what interest is excited about you!

Next, notice *what power and what wisdom are engaged concerning you*—you poor lost body over there! The Son of man is come to seek and to save you. It is not that the preacher is laboring to save the lost, but do you see, the pearly gates are swinging back on their golden hinges—the King's palace gates are opening and there is One passing through, whose coming to the earth astounds cherubim and seraphim.

It is He who descends, disrobing Himself as He comes down, hanging up His royal rings like new stars, doffing His azure mantle, and stretching it across the sky, for as George Herbert quaintly says, He has new clothes a-making down below. He comes here, to this poor earth, and you see Him as a babe at Bethlehem and a boy at Nazareth.

Being here, He stoops continually lower and lower till He reaches the deepest depths of all upon the cross of Calvary. And all the while He goes about His daily task hunting for such as you. And what He literally did when He was here, He is still doing by the divine Spirit—He is still watching, still waiting, still seeking, still going round the earth hunting after the lost.

It ought to greatly encourage you who are lost when you remember that there is such a One as the Lord Jesus Christ who has come after you. A child, lost in the woods, sits down and cries. The night is coming on, she is very weary and her sad little heart has only one comfort. "Father will begin to hunt after me directly he comes home, and when mother tells him that his little girl is lost, he will search for me all night long. Father knows the forest trails and knows where I have been wont to stray. Father will find me before the morning, so I will lay me down and sleep."

And dear lost one, you may have even more confidence that the Savior will search for you. Do not give up in despair because Jesus seems so long in coming to find you. He has a piercing eye to see you and swift feet to leap o'er mountains after you—and a ready hand to grasp you and strong shoulders on which to bear His wandering sheep home to the fold above. There is hope for you, lost one, for the Son of man has come, bringing all His Godhead with Him, and in the infinity of His power, and wisdom and love, He is seeking to save just such sinners as you are.

I want you, however, to notice another thing—you lost one, I mean, for you and I are supposed to be talking together tonight. *Do you see what trouble you have caused?* The little child is troubled at being lost, but think what trouble there is at home on her account. Last Wednesday morning, there came into my study a brother-minister and I saw at once that he was in terrible trouble.

He had come to see me about something else, but I could not help saying to him, "You have some great sorrow on your heart, have you not?" He answered, "Yes, I have. I lost my wife a year and a half ago, and that was a great grief to me, but I have a trial now which seems to cut me to the heart almost more than that bereavement did."

"What is that?" I asked, and he replied, "Last Sabbath morning, when I went to preach, I thought my boy had come into the chapel with me, but after the service, I could not find him. I went home, but he did not come in to dinner, and I could not get any tidings of him anywhere. I had to preach, in the evening, with a heavy heart, for I still could not find him, and I spent the greater part of the night with others searching everywhere for him. "And now," he said, "it is Wednesday and I have not found him, nor have I heard a word concerning him."

Oh, you should have seen how sad he looked! "It is my eldest boy," he said, "and he is lost." Up to this present moment, I believe that he has not heard anything of him. He would compass the whole land to find him, I know, but he does not know where to look for him. The boy is lost and possibly, he does not know what trouble he is giving his father and all his friends. If he did, he would very soon be home.

Ah! and sinners do give great trouble because they are lost. You have heard what trouble sinners gave to the Lord Jesus Christ. That death of His upon the cross was part of the trouble that fell upon His great heart because we will sin—because we will be lost—because we will not turn unto Him and live. What trouble many of you sinners give to your friends on earth—and what trouble you gave to the Lord Jesus Christ! It threw Him into a bloody sweat even to think of you so lost, and to take your place, and bear the penalty of your guilt.

There is one other reflection, which will not, I hope, wipe out this one. That is, *what joy you would give if you were found!* Oh, what clapping of hands there would be and what singing of songs of thanksgiving in your home, if you have a pious mother or a godly father! Sometimes, members of this church come to speak with me, and I know, by their manner, that there is something very joyful that they have to tell me. They do not laugh—they seem very quiet about their joy but there is a deep undercurrent of gladness.

One said to me, lately, "God has been very gracious to me, for both my son and my daughter have just found the Savior." You know that fathers and mothers, when they are right-hearted, are much more glad about such good news as this than they are when they say, "My son has gained a fortune," or "My daughter has married into a rich family."

Oh, no! to be able to say they are saved is the best thing that can possibly be said about them. I feel such gladness as I can never express when I think of my own dear sons, whom God has brought to the

feet of Jesus and called to preach the Gospel which their father loves. O you poor sad sinners, you would be the cause of great joy on earth if you came to Christ—and you would make Christ Himself glad, too.

That is the greatest wonder of all—that He who sits upon the throne of God in bliss ineffable, can have an increase to His joy if you are saved. Yet we know that it is so, for “there is joy”—not only among the angels—but Christ said, “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” That is to say, it is God Himself who has the joy and Christ who rejoices over one sinner that repents.

That is my special word with you, poor lost sinners. May God bless it to you and may you speedily be found by the seeking Savior!

III. Now I come to the closing portion of my discourse which is to be a WORD TO OURSELVES.

My dear brothers and sisters, the workers in this church, I want to speak to you and to myself. And what I want to say is just this—if Jesus Christ, the Son of man, has come to seek and to save that which was lost, *what honorable work is yours and mine when we try to be the means of saving souls!*

The Grand Worthy Chief Master of the confraternity of soul-sinners is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Those who belong to that blessed company have Jesus Christ as their Head. I always feel that it is a high honor to be a minister of the Gospel when I recollect what the old Puritan said. He said that the Lord God had only one Son and He made a Minister of Him—what could He do better with Him? So, today there is no higher rank on earth than that of a winner of souls. Be you in whatever position in life you may, if you are seeking to bring eternal salvation to men, you have far higher employment than falls to the lot of the mightiest of earth’s kings and princes.

Next, think *how thorough your efforts ought to be in this work*. You ought to go after souls, to *seek* them, as the Son of man came to seek them. If they will not come into the place where you usually speak, go and speak to them where they are. If you have not got the children you want to have in your class in the Sunday school, go and seek to bring them in, and then, when you have sought them and gathered them around you, do not be satisfied till they are saved.

It is a great mercy to have the house of prayer filled with people listening to the Gospel. I am always glad to see such a sight, but oh! if you hearers are not saved, what is the good of your coming here? If my Master will not give me your souls for my hire, I can scarcely thank Him for allowing me to preach to you, for I am doing you harm rather than good, being “the savor of death unto death,” rather than “of life unto life,” if you hear the Word, but are not saved by it.

O dear unsaved souls, we can never be satisfied concerning you until you are truly converted to God! Dear Christian workers, do not rest until those who listen to the Gospel message, believe it, and so find eternal salvation.

Notice next *how naturally some of you ought to take to the work of soul-winning*. When a child is lost, who should seek it? Why, its mother and father, of course. They are sure to do so. Well, do you seek the souls of your own children? Do you pray for them? Do you try, by your teaching, and by your example, to bring them to Christ? If you do not, shame on you that you bear the Christian name! I hope all of you who are Christian parents are seeking the salvation of your own children.

The next person to go in search of a lost child, after its parents, I should think, is its brother. A lad hears that his dear little sister is lost. I see the hot tears in the boy’s eyes as he says, “Mother, I will go anywhere, I will go everywhere, if I can but find her.” Well, now, you who are brothers, you who are related to one another—and you are all brothers of the one great human family—you all ought, for that very reason, to be concerned about finding these lost ones.

But if there is one member of the family who is affected the most by the loss of the child, it is, probably, the older sister who was especially charged to take care of it. Or if the big brother is responsible, because the child was entrusted to his charge, he will not be able to bear himself. He will cry, “Oh, that I should have lost her!—that I should be the cause of her wandering away!” He will not rest at night, I am sure, unless he has found her.

Some of us are very specially put in charge of souls. You teachers are. You evangelists are. You ministers are, and I am, as I know full well. What if I should ever be the cause of the loss of any one of you? I would not have it so. God grant that it may never be, that any word of mine, spoken in a thoughtless manner, or anything that I might say too coldly, or with too much levity, should ever lead an immortal spirit to turn away from hope and from the Lord Jesus Christ! It would be a dreadful thing if that were to happen—and if it ever has, let us henceforth be among the first to seek to find those who have gone astray.

I will tell you, too, who would be sure to look after a lost child, and that is, a child who was once lost and who has been found. It may have happened years ago, but the lad says to his mother, “I know what it is to be lost, for I was once lost in a wood. Let me go and find the little one, as somebody came and found me.” You who know the smart of sin, the sorrow that sin brings, will be amongst the very first to try to find the lost ones. I am sure you will, so I scarcely need say a word to urge you to this holy service.

Then there are those who are acquainted with the ground where the lost ones are—they are sure to go seek them. A child lost in our London streets will probably be found again, but a child lost in the backwoods of America may never be discovered until its bones are found. We, who know the dangers of the road—that roaring lion, those pitfalls and traps—we cannot but feel that we must be amongst the first to go to seek the lost.

*“Oh, come, let us go and find them!
In the paths of death they roam;
At the close of the day ’twill be sweet to say,
I have brought some lost one home.”*

And we may, with great hopefulness, go about the work of seeking the lost *because there is One with us, in the seeking party, who is sure to find them.* “Come,” we say to one another, “let us gather together, and let us go and search the woods to find the lost one.” But we know so little about the work and we are so weak and feeble that we soon become dispirited.

But here comes the One who is going to lead the search party! You know Him. Look at His pierced hands and feet and brow. Mark that ensign of the Son of man, the spear gash in His side. Look at His dear face. Was there ever, on any other countenance, such beauty of compassionate love? He comes forward, girt with His golden girdle, with His eyes brighter than flames of fire, and He says, “I will lead the search. You take your orders from Me. I will tell you where to go and I will go with you. And so, My lost ones shall all be found.”

Dear Master, we are only too glad to go on such an errand. You shall not have to tell us twice, and if any of us are inclined to linger, we think we see You lift Your pierced hand and say, “Who will go for Me? And whom shall I send?” And many of us, rising in our seats, would fain uplift our hand and dedicate ourselves from this very moment to this blessed service, each one of us saying, “Here am I Lord. Send me.”

Go thus, brethren and sisters, in the Holy Spirit’s might, and in your Savior’s name. And may He enable you to bring home, with rejoicing, many of the lost ones—and to Him shall be all the glory forever and ever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

MATTHEW 21:23-46

Verse 23. *And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?*

Jesus knew that these men came to Him for no good purpose, and that they were only trying to trip Him up in His speech. He was always willing to teach when men were willing to learn, but He did not care to cast His pearls before swine. Therefore mark the holy caution, the sacred ingenuity with which our Lord replied to these men.

24-27. *And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.*

He carried the war into the enemy's camp. He answered His accusers by asking them a question which they could not answer in either way without condemning themselves.

28-32. *But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.*

Those poor fallen women and degraded tax gatherers practically said, by their conduct, "We will not serve the Lord." Their past evil life had been a deliberate rejection of the authority of God, and yet, when John the Baptist came, they repented and they believed. Each of them had said, like the elder son, "I will not," yet they did it. But as for these chief priests and elders, who all their lives had been outwardly serving the Lord and saying, "We will go and work in God's vineyard," when John came and pointed them to God's own Son, they would not accept Him.

They had, just now, by refusing to tell whether the Lord's messenger was from heaven or of men, again rejected Him and proved that they had not repented. They did not believe John—they had themselves confessed that it was so—and, therefore, out of their own mouths they were condemned.

I wonder whether there is any lesson in this parable to some who are here. I should not be surprised if there is. I hope that there are some among you, who hitherto have said, "I will not go," who will repent, and go and serve your God. And on the other hand, it is to be feared that there may be some here, who have always been saying, "I go, sir," who nevertheless have not gone and perhaps, never will go—but will remain to the last disobedient to the command of God. The Lord grant that it may not be so!

33-41. *Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.*

You see at once how this parable related to the leaders of the Jewish people. From generation to generation, they scorned the prophets of God, persecuted them and put them to death. And when our

Lord Himself appeared, though His glory might easily have been seen by them, yet they cast Him out from among them and put Him to death.

Yet, beloved friends, we must never regard the Scriptures as referring only to strangers and people of past ages. We must also look to see what bearing they have upon ourselves. The rejection of God's prophets is the sin of our common humanity. And the murder of the Son of God was the crime, not of the Jews only, but of the whole human race. We, too, have a share in it, for we have rejected the Son of the Highest.

"But we were not there," you say. No, and yet we may have repeated that terrible tragedy in our own lives. God has sent you many messengers and if you remain, at this moment, unconverted, you have not treated them well, otherwise you would have yielded your heart to God. Some of them you have rejected by your neglect and others have been the subject of your ridicule and contempt. Against some you have striven violently, for your conscience has been touched and you have had to do violence to conscience in order to reject their message.

Last of all, the Son of God Himself has come to you in the preaching of the Gospel. You have heard of His death and of His atoning sacrifice, but you have rejected them and in acting thus, you have done, as far as you could, the same as they did who crucified the Savior. You still refuse to have Him for your Savior. You disown Him as your King. You strive against His righteous sway.

You tell me that you do not. Well, then, you have yielded to Him and you are saved. But if that is not the case, you still remain such an adversary of God that you reject His Son. Take care lest of you, also, that prophecy should become true, "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons."

42. *Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures,—*

What a question this was for our Lord to put to men who professed to have the whole of the Scriptures at their fingers' ends and to be the only qualified interpreters of them. "Did ye never read in the scriptures,"—

42-43. *The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*

And at this day, we Gentiles enjoy the privileges of the Gospel, while poor Israel is scattered to the four winds of heaven. But He that spared not the natural olive, will not spare the engrafted branches if we are found unfruitful. God takes the Gospel away from one nation and gives it to another. But if it is not accepted by the other one and if He has not all the glory of it ascribed to Him, He will take it away from that nation, too.

He may deal thus with us—if England becomes and remains a drunken nation, a cruel nation, a proud nation, an unbelieving nation, a superstitious nation, and brings forth the evil fruits of the vine of Sodom—we may not expect that God will always continue His kingdom amongst us. He will say to us, as Christ said to these chief priests and elders, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."

44. *And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken:*

If you stumble over Christ, the chief Corner-stone of God's building, you will be broken in pieces. If you reject Him, you shall suffer serious loss.

44. *But on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.*

If you arouse the wrath of Christ and the Rock of ages falls on you—as a huge cliff comes toppling from its lofty height upon the traveler and crushes him past all recognition—you will be ground to powder.

45-46. *And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.*

Unhappy people, to reject Him who alone could bless them—and yet to stand in fear of Him whom they tried to despise! Let it not be so with any of us, but may Jesus become our Teacher, and our Friend, and our Savior forever, by His abounding grace! Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.