

Receive Jesus Christ, and Avoid Rejection by God!

Luke 20:9-19 (text)

22 September 2019, Reformed Church of Wainuiomata 10:30 am

(Put together by Pieter van Huyssteen with due acknowledgement)

Intro

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Here is a scary thing...

You see, I know of at least three separate persons who were born into the church – yes, from believing parents; three persons who had the privilege of, over many years, receiving training in the things of God. Yet, at some stage in their lives, each one decided to reject Jesus Christ and the Bible!

What a scary thing!

Two of these persons came from the Netherlands in the 1950's and 60's, and the third from South Africa in the 1990's.

The South African (a man) rejected Jesus Christ when he was in his sixties! Thus, for an extended period he received many blessings from God's Word and from the church. At several stages, he even taught catechism. But he rejected all of that!

Well, this man has already died now. And although I was in phone contact with him during the last month of his life when he lay in hospital, he did not give me any reason to believe that his ideas about Jesus had changed then!

As for the second person – well, he is now in his late sixties, but he rejected Christ and the Bible when he was in his thirties! Thankfully, his wife and children are committed Christians, who keep on praying for him. But, for the last thirty years, he has been stubbornly rejecting Christ!

The third person (a woman now in her eighties) already rejected Christ when she was in her mid-teens! So, by now, she is very set in her ways, and not at all shy to openly and loudly proclaim her antagonism to Christ and the Bible! What's more, this woman is one of six siblings! All her brothers & sisters *love* Christ and are committed to the Him and the church! Both her parents loved Christ! So, it's just *her* – her *only* who rejected Him, and adamantly so!

Well, I get shivers down my spine when I think of these three people, for, you know, there are many people in the world who have never heard of Jesus Christ or His wonderful message. That's one thing! But here's another: God's Word tells us that, on Judgement Day, it will be worse for those who *did* hear His Word, but *then* rejected Him!

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And here's another scary thing!

You see, if these three persons rejected the Son of God – the Saviour whom He sent in compassion and love to save His people – and if one of these three even comes from a family in which mum & dad and all her siblings loved our Lord Jesus – is it then not

¹ Cf. e.g. Mt 11:20-24 (especially v.24), *Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent.* ²¹ *“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.* ²² *But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you.*

²³ *And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.* ²⁴ *But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.”*

perhaps possible that anyone among us and our church family could end up doing the same?

Well, it's then not for nothing that God, in His wisdom, allowed for us to also hear and heed the warning of our text (Lk 20:9-19) – a warning to all of us to, when we hear Jesus Christ (and when we have grown up under the blessed sound of His Word), never to reject Him, for if we *did*, the we will be rejected by His Father! And it will be disaster on the Last Day!

Our sermon has three points...

- Rejecting
- Rejected
- Cornerstone

Rejecting

My brother & sister (dear children),

Our Lord Jesus is at the temple!

He is teaching the people and healing their sick!

Of course, in the presence of the people – and watching His every word – are also some members of the Sanhedrin² who will, within two or three days, hand Him over to the Romans so that they can kill Him!

So, these Sanhedrin members are very keen to grab Jesus!

And what sparked their hatred for Him, as of late, was the fact that, only a day or two ago, He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the pigeon-sellers, and stopped their business in the temple's outer court!

They asked Him by what authority He did this! And, in a brilliant way, He answered them that He did that by the same divine authority by which John the Baptised had preached!

And, now, to reveal this same authority even more clearly, our Lord tells them a parable!

It's a parable about a *vineyard*.

Now, of course, every Jew at the time of our Lord Jesus knew that, when you talk in symbolic language about a *vineyard*, you're talking about the *nation of Israel*³ – but more specifically about the nation of Israel to whom God had entrusted *His kingdom promises!*

So, Jesus tells them about a vineyard!

And, when you look at the parallel texts in Matthew and Mark, you see that it's a vineyard in which the owner himself had already put in some hard work! Yes, it was the

² Cf. Lk 20:1-2 *One day, as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up² and said to him, "Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority"* (Emphasis mine).

³ Cf. e.g. Is 5:1-7 *I will sing for the one I love*

a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit. "Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad? Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled. I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briers and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it." The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the nation of Israel, and the people of Judah are the vines he delighted in. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.

owner himself who had *planted* the vineyard. Then he himself came and *put a protecting wall around it, dug a pit for a winepress* in it and *built a watchtower* to protect his vineyard from thieves!⁴

See? See how this owner, with love and devotion, had put in a considerable effort into his precious vineyard!?

But then the owner had to go away for a long time! So, he left his precious vineyard in the care of his tenants!⁵

Long story short: in our Lord's parable, the tenants are the Jews – especially the *leaders* of the Jews in whose care God has left the vineyard, i.e. His people, Israel!

Well, you know the story – we have read it!

While the landlord was away, it became time for harvest! So, the landowner sent the first servant (According to Matthew, he sent a first *lot of servants* – not just one)⁶ to collect his fruit!

But what did the tenants do to this first group of servants!?

Well, they beat them and sent them away empty-handed! As for some other servants in this first group – well, the tenants even killed them!⁷

Then, for a second and third time, the landowner sent servants!⁸ But the tenants treated them in the same way!!

So, what message were these tenants' actions sending to their landowner?

Well, were they not saying to him, "Sorry, sir, we don't like you; we won't give you any rent; yes, from us you will not get any fruit!"?

These are the *tenants* – representing the Jewish leaders!

But, my brother & sister, who are *servants* in real life?

Well, look, are they not all of the Old-Testament prophets whom God faithfully, and on time, sent to His covenant people, Israel, to call them back to God and to seek from them spiritual fruit!?

Yet, every time when one of God's prophets came to God's vineyard (to His people, Israel, whom God loved, whom God had given kingdom promises to, whom God had invested time and energy in), the people rejected these prophets – hated them; even beat and killed some of them!

What does the owner now do?

⁴ Cf. Mt 21:33 "***Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower...***"

Also cf. Mk 12:1 ***Jesus then began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place..."***

⁵ Of course, our Lord Jesus is drawing here on a practice which was very common in Israel in those days, i.e. that there were lots of vineyards or orchards owned by rich landlords who would often go away; and who had tenants who would work the fields! How did those tenants pay their rent? Well, when harvest time came, they paid their rent by giving the landowner a percentage of the produce whether it was grapes or olives or dates or grains. For a thorough explanation of the renting practices in those days, cf. e.g. Hendriksen's commentary on Lk 16:1-7 (Hendriksen, W. 2004. Exposition of the Gospel according to Luke (In: Hendriksen, W. ed. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI : Baker Book House. p.768-769)).

⁶ Cf. Mt 21:34 ***When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants (plural) to the tenants to collect his fruit.***

⁷ Cf. Mt 21:35 ***The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third.***

⁸ Cf. Mt 21:36 ***Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way.***

Also cf. Lk 20:11-12 ***And he sent another servant. But they also beat and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. ¹² And he sent yet a third. This one also they wounded and cast out.***

Well, he sends his very own son, for, says he (in v.13), “...*perhaps they will respect him!*”

So, the son came to seek his father’s fruit from the tenants! Yes, Jesus came to seek spiritual fruit from the Jewish nation and their leaders – as He also looks for fruit in your & my lives!

What did the tenants do to the owner’s son?

They said, “Hm, this is the heir – the one who will, one day, inherit this vineyard, but... not if we kill him, for then we will inherit this vineyard!”

Indeed, my brother & sister, this was the practice in those days. You see, it was not uncommon that, if a landowner had no heir, then the tenants who had been working there over an extended period – that they would then stand first in the queue to inherit that vineyard!⁹

So, these tenants schemed a scheme which they thought they would not be found out for! Thus, they threw the owner’s son out of the vineyard and killed him!

Well, that’s exactly what the Jewish leaders would do to Jesus Christ, the Son of God!

And they would do it only about two-three days after He had spoken these words! And they would hand Him over to the Romans who would, indeed, take Him out of the vineyard (out of the city) and execute Him there where every cursed man was killed!

What a vivid & poignant description of the Jewish leaders’ rejection of the Son of God!?

Question: Could it possibly be that anyone among us would reject Jesus?

Yes, you/I may not have rejected Him with our mouths. But what about your actions & attitude? Are these telling a story – the story that you/I have, for all practical purposes, hurt & rejected the One who has invested so much into your/my life?

What will God do to those who have rejected His Son?

Well, that brings us to point 2...

Rejected

What will God do to those who have rejected Jesus?

Well, exactly the same as what the owner of the vineyard did to the tenants who gave him no fruit, mistreated his servants, and even killed his very own son!

Yes, God would destroy those Jewish leaders and give His “vineyard” – i.e. His kingdom and its promises – to others! And so, these Jewish leaders and the Jews as a nation would be rejected!

Did this parable’s prophecy really come true?

Yes, it got fulfilled about forty years later when, by 70 AD, most of the Jews still had not made use of God’s gracious gift of His then risen & ascended Son, Jesus Christ!

Yes, in 70 AD, and not outside of God’s decreed will (!), the Roman general Titus came and killed 1.1 million Jews and destroyed the very temple of our text – that magnificent building where the Jews, on the day of our text, had rejected God’s Son who had come to seek godly fruits in their lives!

And you & I receive this news in godly fear!

But it was from that point in history onwards that the Jewish nation got scattered over the whole world – even more scattered than they were before!

And it has only been since the middle of the last century that many Jews have gone back to the land of Israel!

Yet, sadly, by far the majority of them still have not received Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as their Messiah!

⁹ Cf. Hendriksen (ibid:892)

So, what exactly God will do with modern Israel (and when He will do it), I don't know. And I'm sure, no other human being knows the exact answer to these questions! But that's another topic!

You ask, "But what about the vineyard?" "Yes, what about God's kingdom promises/blessings once given to Israel?"

Well, as our Lord's parable says, God gave the vineyard to other tenants! Yes, God gave His kingdom promises/blessings to the Gentiles – to non-Jews!

You ask, "When did that happen?"

Well, it started already with the events described in the book of Acts, when, gradually, the Gospel of Jesus Christ got warmly received by Gentiles from Jerusalem, through Judea, to Samaria and to the ends of the earth!¹⁰

So, what did God do?

Well, to use the illustration which the Apostle Paul gives in Romans 11, Israel were like branches which God broke off from their very own root! And where God had broken off those fruitless branches, He then grafted in the Gentiles who were wild olive shoots!

My brother & sister (Dear children), you & I who are Gentiles (non-Jews) take this news with gladness & joy, but also with trembling and awe!

Why with awe?

Well, because of what Paul continues to say to us non-Jews (in Rm 11:18-21), "...***do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches*** (to the Jews). ***If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you.***¹⁹ ***You will say then, "Branches (Jews) were broken off so that I could be grafted in."***²⁰ ***Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble.***²¹ ***For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.***"

So, Israel as a nation, together with their leaders, got rejected by God, because they rejected & killed the Son of His love – their Messiah!

And, to think of it: here in our text, Jesus told them all of that *in advance*!

What was their reaction!?

"Surely not!"¹¹ "May it never be!"¹² "God forbid!"¹³

Clearly, they did not recognise God's Son when He came to them!

Why?

Because they were filled with pride and self-reliance. They were self-wise!

My brother & sister, I want to come back to the sad story of those three people whom I have mentioned in my introduction.

You see, I have noticed one thing which all three these persons have in common: they're self-wise and self-reliant! And one of them, when I last saw her, was unashamedly arrogant and set in her Christ-rejecting views!

So, the Jewish leaders of our text – as well as those three people who rejected Christ – remind me of Christ's prayer after many people had rejected Him: , "***I thank you, Father,***

¹⁰ Cf. Acts 1:8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Also, cf. the rest of the book of Acts for how this word of Christ unfolded!

¹¹ ESV

¹² NASB

¹³ NIV2011, KJV 1900, RSV These are all different renderings of *mē genoito* (Μὴ γένοιτο), literally: "may it not happen!" in which γένοιτο is an Aorist Deponent Optative 3rd Person Singular of γίνομαι "to happen, to take place."

Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; ²⁶ yes, Father, for such was your gracious will."¹⁴

Well, when the Jews of our text heard the Saviour's prophetic word about their destruction, then, in disbelief and self-reliance, they said, "May it never be!" which brings us to the last point of the sermon...

Chief Cornerstone

Verse 17 tells us that Jesus looks these hardened unbelievers straight in the eye.¹⁵ Imagine our all-knowing Lord's piercing eyes looking at you – those same eyes that caught Peter that instant when he denied His Lord!

Then Christ asks these Jews to contemplate the meaning of a prophecy from their very own Scriptures which they, as law-teachers, claimed to know so well!

Yes, Jesus asks them as much as: "You don't believe Me when I tell you that you will be rejected by God, because you have rejected Me, His very own Son?" "Well, tell Me then, what is the meaning of this prophecy from Ps 118 and from Is 8 – a prophecy that speaks about your Messiah; yes, about Me, and about those who would reject Me... *'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone'*"¹⁶ *"Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."*¹⁷

Well, gauging by the last verse of our text,¹⁸ the Jewish leaders clearly understood that Jesus was applying the Messiah passages of the OT to Himself; and that that He has just pointed them out as the Christ-rejecters!

But they would not accept that Jesus of Nazareth was that very stone – the one the builders (yes, these Pharisees themselves) have rejected; and that He would soon become the chief cornerstone of the building!

Which building?

Well, the spiritual building which is made up of all God's loved ones (elect); a building of which the foundation is formed by the apostles; but of which the chief cornerstone by

¹⁴ Cf. Mt 11:25-26

¹⁵ ἐμβλέψας, an Aorist Active Participle, Masculine Singular Nominative of to direct one's vision and attention to a particular object—'to look straight at, to look directly at.' στραφείς ὁ κύριος ἐνέβλεψεν τῷ Πέτρῳ 'the Lord turned around and looked straight at Peter' Lk 22:61. In Jn 1:36 ἐμβλέπω may not differ significantly in meaning from βλέπω in Jn 1:29 (see 24.7) (Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 277). New York: United Bible Societies).

¹⁶ Quoting from Ps 118:22, *The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.*

¹⁷ Referring to Is 8:14-15, *He will be a holy place;*

*for both Israel and Judah he will be
a stone that causes people to stumble
and a rock that makes them fall.*

*And for the people of Jerusalem he will be
a trap and a snare.*

¹⁵ *Many of them will stumble;
they will fall and be broken,
they will be snared and captured."*

¹⁸ Cf. Lk 20:19 *The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him at that very hour, for they perceived that he had told this parable against them, but they feared the people.*

which all other stones are aligned and held together – that stone is the very Son of God, Jesus Christ,¹⁹ whom they now want to kill!
But, as the prophecy says, whether they stumble and fall upon Him or whether He falls upon them in holy anger, they will be crushed!

My brother & sister (dear young people & children), the message of our text is utterly frightening: **If you reject Jesus Christ, then you will be rejected by God His Father!**
And so, let everyone of us take this message seriously – until our dying day!
Someone might say, “I don’t like this sort of preaching!” “It’s negative!” “It tries to drive people into *heaven* by scaring them with *hell*!”
Well, I agree with you, for my frail human heart feels the same!
However, let’s remember that there are several ways by which God, through His Holy Spirit, draws people to Jesus!
And, of course, we all love the most gentle way, i.e. when the sinner is simply moved to tears and cut to the heart when the Holy Spirit opens his eyes to grasp what great love-deed God Almighty worked for us when He crushed the Son of His love for our sins! And so, the sinner has just one desire, i.e. to return love for God’s greater love! That’s the most beautiful way of receiving the Son of God; of being drawn to Christ!
But, there’s also the way of our text, i.e. the way of warning – of spelling out painfully the flipside of the Gospel: that, if you do not receive Jesus as your Saviour & Lord, then you will be crushed by eternal damnation!
I pray that, by whatever way God deems necessary to speak to your heart, that you will all be moved to receiving the Son of His love – and persevering in that love!

AMEN (2,838 words excluding footnotes)

¹⁹ Cf. Eph 2:19-22 in which Paul tells the Gentiles: ***So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.***