

What Should I Do?

People look for a resolution. People naturally yearn for and crave a resolution. I remember when I was just beginning college. I was in a Aural Skills class. The professor was explaining to us that chords must resolve. And they must resolve the right way. He would sing a scale, *Do to Do* and then stop on *Ti*. He would wait for our faces to cringe and our eyes to squint. And then he would finally resolve the chord.

We need resolution. This is true when it come to music. But, even more so, it's true when it comes to our spiritual life. Jesus knew this fact. He knew it perfectly. So, he tells the people gathered around him this story about life and resolution. And they get pulled in. They get absorbed in the story. And as we hear Jesus speaking, we can't help but be pulled in as well.

As he begins the story we meet a man who plants a vineyard. He rents the vineyard out to some strangers. Then he goes away on a long journey. The time comes when it is just right to harvest the fruit. So, he sends a servant to them.

Now, what have the tenants been doing all this time? Were they lazy? When the servant came was there no fruit to harvest? Or, were they greedy? When the servant came, there was bunches of grapes, but the tenants, in their greed, refused to pay their rent. Notice, there is no answer to this question. This story is told from the master's point of view. He doesn't know what they have done with their time. But, he sends his servant to collect his rent.

Imagine his shock to hear that they beat the first servant and sent him away. The, master of the vineyard wanted to put the best construction on the situation. Maybe there was just a misunderstanding. So, he sends another servant. They did the same to him. They beat him. But, even worse, they humiliated him. And then they drove him away.

Now, at this point the people whom Jesus is speaking to are starting to wonder. They are starting to wonder if the master's patience is a path to self-punishment. For, after the second servant returns home. He sends a third. They beat him severely. Literally, they *traumatized*¹ him. And then they threw him out.

At this point the people are starting to conclude to themselves that the master is so patient that he wants to punish himself. It is at this point that the master pauses. He doesn't know what to do. So he asks a question: "What should I do?" Now, what we need to know is that this wasn't a quick, passing question. It was a deliberate question² that he pondered for some time.

If ever there was a situation that needed a resolution, this was it. He should go over there and punish those wicked tenants. But what does he do? He sends his son—his only, beloved, cherished son. And not surprisingly, they beat him; they kill him; they throw him outside.

It is at this point that Jesus pauses. He pauses and he asks the crowd what the master should do? Jesus answers the obvious question with an obvious answer: "*He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.*"³

Now, what happens next is absolutely fascinating. The people have what they were yearning for. They have a resolution. We would expect them to say "Yes!" or "Amen!" But that's not what they say. Instead they say: "*May this never be!*"⁴

This statement is half a wish and half a demand: *may this never be!* We expected a strong 'yes' and instead we heard a deafening 'no'. Why? Let me tell you a story: There once was a shepherd, named David who lived in Greensburg. And there once was a Fierce warrior named Goliath. He was a giant. And he lived in West Newton, PA. And he went to Faith Lutheran Church. David went out to meet the wicked Goliath who was a member of Faith Lutheran Church. And he killed him.

¹τοῦτον τραυματίσαντες

²Deliberative Subjunctive: τί ποιήσω;

³(Luke 20:16 NIV)

⁴(Luke 20:16 NIV)

What do you think of the story? You see, we start out thinking to ourselves: ‘this is a good story.’ Then we think to ourselves: ‘Wait a minute, I’ve heard this story before.’ Then finally we say to ourselves: ‘Wait a minute, I’m not the good guy in this story. I’m the bad guy.’

That’s exactly what was happening here. That is why we expected to hear a strong ‘yes’ and instead we heard a ‘may it never be!’ The crowd of people remembered the story that Isaiah told—the story we heard in our first lesson. They remembered that the Israelites were the *bad* guys in the story, not the *good* guys.

Jesus made put them in in his father’s shoes and made them ask themselves the question: “what should I do with my wicked people? Then, Jesus made them ask themselves the question: “what should *I* do with Jesus? He is the son of God. What should I do with him?”

And here again, their answer is both amazing and appalling. We know what the right answer is. What should I do with the Son of God? Receive him. Rejoice in him. But, no! That’s not their response. They choose to be the wretched tenants in the story. They plan to hurt the Son. And then they carry out their plan.

What should I do? It’s the question the master of the vineyard asked. It’s the question Jesus forced the people to ask about Jesus. And here today, Jesus makes you ask yourselves the same question. What will *you* do with Jesus?

My brothers and sisters, the real question is not: “what should I do with Jesus?” The real question is: “How does our Master deal with us?” Rejoice that he deals with us according to his own patience. You see, he doesn’t just ask the question “what should I do?” to his people in the Old Testament. He asks the same question about us. He asks it. Then when we sin against him, he asks it again. He is ever-so-slow in bringing his wrath. Oh, we have deserved it. We have deserved to be crushed and destroyed many times over. How many times have we promised to obey and rebelled? How many times have we promised to love and then loved ourselves? How many time have we promised to produce fruit worthy of our Lord, but instead there was nothing? Rejoice that when the question is “how does our Master deal with us?”, the answer is: *With his own patience*.

And not only that, my brothers and sisters. Rejoice that he also deals with us according to his Son’s perfection. What an amazing Savior we have! He was willing to do his Father’s will perfectly. He perfectly went to his own people even though he knew they would say “no!” He went to them and taught among. He went to them and pleaded with them. He went to them and was put to death by us. And his perfect obedience and perfect sacrifice are given to us.

Oh, what should I do? What should I do in response to that sort of grace and mercy? I will repent. I will sing. I will rejoice in the Master’s patience that he shows. I will rejoice in the Son’s perfection that he gives. Amen.