

How to Avoid the Worst Mistake of Your Life

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 February 2026

Preacher: Dylan Marais

[0 : 0 0] The landlord, last of all, sent his son to them. They will respect my son, he said. Well, let's pray to Jesus as we start our time together.

! Lord Jesus, we want to respect, love, obey, and listen to you. We can't do that in and of ourselves because of our sinful hearts and dull minds.

And we need your spirit, Lord, to speak to us about who you are and to change our hearts so that we can listen to you, we can honor you, we can live for you in our lives.

We ask for your help in your name. Amen. Well, we've all been there as a kid. You're playing games with your siblings or your friends, just messing around, having a good time, maybe being a bit boisterous.

You're meant to be doing something else, something boring, like, I don't know, washing the dishes, cleaning your room. And your parents have reminded you in that polite sing-song voice they have, don't forget to do the dishes.

[1 : 2 3] And you don't even hear it. You just keep playing because it's more fun to play. There's a repeat. Don't forget to do the dishes. And there's that little catch.

You're like, oh, yeah, yeah, we'll do the dishes. We'll do the dishes. And you turn around and you've forgotten that they've been spoken to. And you're back to playing again. And you're playing and it's all fun and games.

Until you hear that voice. Oi! How many times must I say the same thing? I've had it up to here. Whoop!

And the hand goes up above the eyebrows. Up to here is always here. Ooh! Ooh! And then you know you're in trouble. You've messed up.

You didn't listen when you could. And the time for listening is past. And the time for pain has arrived. In today's story, Jesus tells a parable that puts the Jewish leaders on notice that they are on the very, very, very, very close edge to Jesus having it up to here and to God having it up to here with them for not listening to Jesus and not respecting Him.

[2 : 5 1] They are close to utter disaster. And it all depends on how they respond to Jesus as the cornerstone. We'll see that the same message of warning and the same message of responding to Jesus has as much urgency for us today.

Let's first unpack the parable and then we'll draw some lessons from it for us today. The first thing we see is that these people are going to make the worst mistake of their life by not listening to Jesus.

We make the worst mistake of our lives. This parable is one of the more clearer parables to understand, but it's absolutely frightening because in it Jesus gives a final notice warning to His people.

By rejecting Him as their king, they're going to make the worst mistake of their lives. In the parable, God, who is the landowner, has made a lovely vineyard for the Jewish nation who are the tenants to live and to produce fruit for Him.

He's furnished it with everything they need. All they have to do is produce good fruit, meaning their good works, loving God and loving their neighbor. So you'll read there verse 33.

[4 : 14] Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it. He dug a wine press in it and built a watchtower. They've got everything they need to live a life that can obey God and produce good fruit.

They just have to farm. They just put water in the ground, put seeds in the ground and water it. They don't have to build anything. It's all there for them. And then the landlord rents the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place.

When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect the fruit. The servants that the landlord sends are the Old Testament prophets that God would send to remind His people of the good fruit they were to produce.

All they have to do is welcome the servants and say, yes, here's the fruit that we owe the landlord. But the tenants treat the messengers shockingly badly, not only refusing to listen to them, but beating and killing them.

Verse 34. When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. The tenants seized his servants. They beat one, killed another, and stoned a third.

[5 : 35] Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time. And the tenants treated them the same way. The sad truth is that this is nothing new in the story of the Bible.

Jesus is telling back to the Jews of his day their own history, their own backstory. Time and again, this is exactly what Old Testament Israel did to the messengers that God would send them.

We saw it in our Old Testament reading from Isaiah 5. Isaiah warns the Jews of his day that they need to repent of the rebellion against God and start producing the fruit that he expects from his people.

Instead of good fruit, when he gets there, he just finds bad fruit. Instead of justice, he finds violence. Instead of peace, he finds bloodshed.

And the warning is, if they do not listen, they were going to go into exile. There is one thing, though, that makes Jesus' warning even more urgent than the Old Testament.

[6 : 41] And that's because he is the final messenger that God is going to send to his people. In the parable, the landowner sends messenger after messenger until finally he sends his son.

But the tenants, in an inexcusable act of cold-blooded and calculated rebellion, seize the son and kill him. Verse 37 and 39.

Last of all, he sent his son to them. They will respect my son, he said. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, this is the heir.

Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance. So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and they killed him.

Jesus is here prophesying about what the people of Jerusalem are going to do to him within a few days. But Jesus ends the first part of his lesson of the parable with an absolutely chilling question in verse 40.

[8 : 04] Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?

And we all know there's only one answer to that question. Just think for yourself.

If you were the landowner and you had sent your workers to go and speak to your tenants and they treated your workers, your envoys, your messengers like that, and then finally you send your own son to go and speak to them and they kill him.

What would you do when you visited them to sort out what was going on? Well, the only one answered that question and the Pharisees fall right into the trap.

He will bring those wretches to a wretched end. And he will rent the vineyard to other tenants who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.

[9 : 20] And of course they're right. People who treat other people like that are wretches. The Greek word is evil, bad. The bad people are going to come to a bad end.

The landlord will by no means let them off the hook. Jesus' warning is that if they reject him, if the Jews of his day reject him as the son, unlike the Old Testament, this time there is no coming back from exile because they're not going into exile.

They're going to be killed and then disinherited with others taking their place. Now this is a mini-prophecy of Jesus.

It's a warning that comes true. It's not a... God doesn't give warnings lightly. He is a good father. He is a good parent. Like all good parent training, you mustn't make a threat that you can't keep.

When we were growing up, we had a good family friend, Tommy. He used to make us go-karts with engines, with motorbike engines.

[10 : 38] It was so cool. And we would get angry with each other about who won and who came first and who came second. He says, listen, if you continue, I'm going to rip your arm off and beat you with the wet end. And we were scared for the first few times he said that until we tried pulling each other's arms off.

We were like, no, can't be done. God doesn't make threats that he can't keep.

Neither does Jesus. It's a final warning to God's people. If they don't listen to Jesus as the Son, they're going to end up in something far worse than exiles.

They're going to go into something they cannot come back from. This threat of being killed happened, just as Jesus said it would, in the year AD 70.

In AD 70, the Roman armies marched into Israel, besieging Jerusalem, and killed everyone in it in one of the most horrific slaughters of all time.

[11 : 43] Now that period of AD 70 is worth looking at in more detail. We don't have time to do that today. Keep it in the back of your minds. We're going to pick it up again in a few chapters time in Matthew 24 when Jesus continues these discussions with the people in Jerusalem and they've continued not to listen to him.

The warnings get more and more intense. In case you think this is unfair, you need to appreciate just how patient God has been with his people.

This is not the first warning. It is the story of the entire Old Testament. Here's a quote from 2 Chronicles chapter 36.

2 Chronicles 36 is the last chapter in Chronicles. Chronicles is the history of the Old Testament Jewish people. this is what it says.

The Lord, the God of their ancestors sent word to them through his messengers again and again because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place.

[12 : 52] Just notice that. He sends messengers again and again because he's got pity. Why? He doesn't send messengers to mess up their lives to hurt them.

He's sending messages to warn them because he loves them. Do not continue down this path. It's going to hurt you. You're going to hurt yourself and I cannot let you continue hurting other people.

Stop what you're doing and do what I've told you to do. But they mocked God's messages, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.

That is a chilling sentence. Well friends, God is patient. God is long suffering.

But his patience has a limit. And that's a good thing. If you are a good parent, you cannot allow your children to continue doing bad things, especially if they're hurting others.

[14 : 12] You've got to, you can warn them, you warn them once, you warn them twice, and then you've got to get stuck in. A good friend of mine in England had a system with his kids and he could see they were doing something wrong.

He caught their eye, the thumb went up. And they continued doing the wrong thing. He caught their eye, the second finger went up.

And they knew when that third finger comes up, as I say, that's when the pain starts. Now to do that in England is quite a thing. It shocks all the other parents as well.

God is patient and long-suffering, but his patience has a limit. He's got to step in when people are hurting each other and not listening to him.

But first, the good news. God's patience is longer than we expect. God's patience is longer than we expect. When the chronicler wrote what we've just read about in chapter 36, that was about 500 BC.

[15 : 14] The Jews went into exile in Babylon around about 500 BC, which is a full 500 years after David had become king. That's a long time to be patient with people.

500 years. Prophet of the prophet again and again. Why is God that patient? Well, we can be thankful that he is.

1 Peter 3 verse 9 says this, The Lord is not slow in keeping his promises as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

The end of Chronicles was written 500 years after David. It was written 500 years before Peter wrote what he wrote in 1 Peter 3. The Bible says you are alive today because God is patient so that he can have mercy on you.

What are you doing with his patience? You've heard him speak. When you come to church here, you hear him speak.

[16 : 32] You hear him speak every time you do the thing that you're not meant to do. You know when it's wrong. Your heart and your conscience tells you that because you're made in God's image.

What have you done with the patience of God? The good news is that God's patience is long-suffering but the bad news is God's patience does have a limit.

1 Peter 3 goes on to talk about the day the Lord's judgment will come, about the day that the Lord's judgment will come. It will come like a thief. It will come when you least expect it.

God is going to stop his patience with you. the heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and its works will be laid bare.

Everything that you've done is going to be opened up on judgment day. And you can't stop that day. You don't have the power to change the time when you meet God on judgment day.

[17 : 31] And you don't know when that's going to come. we need to respect God's patience, not test his patience.

Your life may well depend on it. By rejecting Jesus as the rightful heir, God's people are going to make the worst mistake of their life. But it's not just the people Jesus was talking to.

The same is true of us today. The whole purpose of the parable is to serve as a warning so that we don't make the worst mistake of our lives by disrespecting and rejecting Jesus.

And that's what the parable points to. It's telling us to do what the tenants did not do. And that is to respect Jesus for who he is, which is the absolute cornerstone of God's plans for this world, and in particular the cornerstone for our lives.

And so we need to look at Jesus, respecting Jesus as the cornerstone of your life. Now the Pharisees didn't respect Jesus as anyone special, let alone recognize him as the Messiah.

[18 : 45] And so they treated him just like any other person that gets in the way of their plans for their own lives. They dismissed him, they ignored him, and they rejected him.

We do exactly the same thing. It's not just children that mess around and want to have fun. adults do the same thing. Someone told you not to go and have that extra drink.

Someone at work told you not to go and mess around with that person at work. God doesn't leave himself without a witness.

We know when we're doing wrong. And we say, no, no, no, sort of go into auto mode. I'll get there. Okay, maybe. Thanks, thanks, thanks. Thanks. Appreciate that.

But your mind is set on doing the thing wrong. Dismiss, ignore, and reject. We mustn't do that with Jesus.

[19 : 48] We must respect him. God wants us to respect Jesus because of who he is. So that's the verse 37 in the parable. Last of all, the landlord sends his son to them.

They will respect my son, he said. We think of respecting Jesus as not quite as high as worshipping him. So why does God say respect here?

Well, the Greek word for respect is an interesting one. It means to turn one's attention away from something that you're busy with and towards something in a riveted way to be locked into that thing that captivates your attention.

Why would they respect Jesus? Well, have you read the story of Matthew? Here's one where angels and kings came and bowed down at his birth.

Here's one that when he walks to the land with a word of power, can still storms, heal sickness, raise the dead.

[21 : 00] He's got words of wisdom that when he gives them, people thousands of years later across the cultures are still listening to his words and treating them as if they come from God himself, which they do.

He is utterly captivating. But in this parable, Jesus tells us why he is worthy of our attention, and it's in the kind of center of the whole parable.

verse 42, Jesus says to them, have you never read in the scriptures, the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

The Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. There's a stone that the builders rejected, but that rejected stone is God's precious stone.

becomes the cornerstone, the capstone, the headstone, the foundation stone, the most important stone, not in the history of the world and in their lives.

[22 : 05] Now, not many of us build with stones these days, but in the ancient world, the builders would work away at the stone quarry to get just the right shape of stone to fit in, just the right position in the house or temple that they're building.

And if the stone didn't fit in with their plans, they'd toss it away. But if they're not careful, they would find themselves without the stone that was most important, the cornerstone, the piece that holds the whole building project together.

together. And this is what so many people do with Jesus in their own lives. They don't recognize him as the cornerstone that holds it all together. But to do that is to totally misunderstand who Jesus is.

I want you to listen to how the apostle Paul talks about the result of Jesus being the cornerstone of God's plans for the whole universe, let alone your lives.

This is from Colossians chapter 1. And it's trying to impress upon the church how amazing Jesus is. He says this, the Son is the image of the invisible God, the first born over all creation.

[23 : 25] For in him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through him and for him.

you could spend a lifetime getting to know that person and just realizing and thinking what he has done to make this universe that you live in so amazing.

By the word of his power, he upholds all things. Every atom, every star, every galaxy, every thought in your brain, every pulse of your heart, you owe to this man Jesus Christ.

that's why verse 17 it says this, he is before all things and in him all things hold together. He is before all things and then you put him last because why must I go to church?

Why must I listen? Why must I read my Bible? Why must I pray? I'm having too much fun here. God and he's the head of the body, the church, meaning if you're a Christian, he's your head, he's your ruler, he's the beginning and the first born from among the dead.

[24 : 50] The first born from among the dead. When last did you speak to someone who came back from the dead? Well, you can't, thankfully, be quite freaky, but we speak to Jesus.

That's why we speak to him. He came back from the dead and because of that, in everything he might have the supremacy. He's got the supremacy because of his resurrection from the dead.

This is a being of the highest power, the highest glory, the highest authority, the highest majesty. And you're going to disrespect that.

You're going to treat him like a piece of rubbish. To be tossed aside as an inconvenience to your infinitely myopic plans for your infinitesimally short life.

What a stupid thing to do. Don't treat Jesus as if he's nothing.

[26 : 02] But in that passage in Colossians, it's what he does with that power that deserves our utmost respect. Paul ends that section by writing this, For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him.

All of God's fullness dwells in Christ. You can think about that for a long time and think about how amazing that is. what does he do with this fullness of the universe, of eternity, of omnipotence?

Through him, to reconcile to himself all things. That's what he does. He takes people who are rebels, who've dismissed him, and says, okay, come, let's be friends, enough of that.

What he should do is kill you, but this being is so majestic that he decides to save you.

Through him, to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.

[27 : 21] how can you ignore this being? How can you ignore this cornerstone? Jesus might seem like he doesn't fit into your life.

Many think Jesus is the wrong shape and the wrong size for me. He's the right shape and the right size for you, good for you. No, he's going to mess my life up, man.

He's more like a stone that's caught in my shoes. You know, when you're walking in that tiny little stone and you don't want to take your shoe off. Cool, just leave it.

It's irritating me, man. This parable says, do that at your peril.

You see, Jesus isn't that kind of irritation stone. Because not only is he the cornerstone of God's whole creation, he's the living stone.

[28 : 21] that can totally change your life, for good or for bad. In the parable, Jesus says what will happen to those who don't listen to him.

Verse 44, anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.

but if you have him as your cornerstone, if you respect him as your cornerstone, he can be a stone that can totally change your life.

Peter is reflecting on this whole idea of Jesus as the cornerstone in his letter. So I'm going to read from 1 Peter chapter 2. He says this to the Christians, to the Christian church.

As you come to him, the living stone, he's a living stone, he makes changes, he uplifts, he protects, he gives you a foundation, he makes your life on a sturdy footing, he's responding to you and your situations, he's helping you.

[29 : 41] As you come to him, the living stone, rejected by humans, but chosen by God and precious to him. This is why you want to choose Jesus as your cornerstone.

He's a precious stone to God. What has happened to you in your life when you've taken something that is precious to someone, borrowed it, and messed it up?

They're going to have words with you. this stone is chosen by God and precious to him. If you come to him, verse 5, you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house.

That sounds pretty cool. A house that's filled by the Holy Spirit. Spirit. The Spirit of the living God is going to come and make a house in your life.

And you're going to see the changes that he can do. What is he going to do? To be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

[30 : 58] You're going to do stuff that God likes. You know how important that is? Wow. Imagine doing stuff that God likes, not doing stuff that he doesn't like.

And you need Jesus as the cornerstone. You need the Holy Spirit to do this. You can't do this by yourself. And then Peter ends it by saying, for in scripture it says, see, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.

You won't be put to shame. You're going to be honored, uplifted, respected, loved, helped, protected, all the good things that you want from life, from God, if you come to Jesus.

You get the exact opposite. If you throw Jesus away, like he's a stone that don't mean nothing to you, that you don't need, he's just an irritation, because he's precious to God, and God is not going to let you do that and get away with it.

And the last thing that Peter tells us there, once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God, once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

[32 : 13] This is the power of having Jesus as your cornerstone. He is the place where mercy and belonging take place. He is your spiritual home.

When your life begins to unravel, and you need something that will hold it together, just stop and check. Where is your attention? salvation? What are you riveted on?

Are you overthinking the problems you're facing? Or does Jesus have your attention, your thoughts, your hopes, and yes, your fears? Jesus is the rock that gives you a foundation and stability when everything else is uncertain.

He is the rock of protection and salvation. He is the rock that gives you refuge from the storms of life. And so, if you don't yet have Jesus as your cornerstone, don't be like the Pharisees and dismiss the messengers that God is sending to you.

You owe it to yourself to investigate the claims of Jesus. Come to our Discover Jesus course. It's starting this week. Learn how Jesus can be the cornerstone in your life.

[33 : 22] Come to Jesus. Give him the respect he deserves. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said the following words. Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

The rain came down, the streams rose, the winds blew and beat against that house, yet it did not fall because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.

The rain came down, the streams rose and the winds blew and beat against that house and it fell with a great crash. Don't let your life end with a crash. Build it on the life-giving foundation of Jesus as your rock and your solid cornerstone.

Can I pray for us? Lord Christ. Lord, you are so high and mighty, so powerful, the being that holds the whole universe in the palm of your hands and we've treated you like a despised thing.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. We are so thankful, Lord, for your death, that you love us, that you've called us into a relationship with you, that you have taken us from the quick sand of our lives and built us on this, put us into this place of rock-solid foundation where we can trust you and build a life that can produce the fruit that you want.

[35 : 13] Lord, have mercy. Be our cornerstone, protect and save us. Amen.