

**Growth Group Study**  
**Testing Times – Pointed Parables**  
**Bible Reading Matthew 21:28–22:14**  
**23 6 2019 – John Malcolm**

**Have you ever been talking about someone, perhaps criticising them or gossiping and they have walked into the room – awkward silence, quick change of conversation?** Or perhaps you were the one who walked into the room – awkward silence and you have a strong suspicion they were talking about you.

How do you feel when you suspect people have been talking about you?

How do you tend to respond to conflict or challenging conversations?

What stands out to you about the clashing conversations between the religious leaders and Jesus as he:

- Enters Jerusalem on a donkey
- Accepts the praise of the pilgrims and children
- Expels the money changers from the temple precincts
- Curses the fig tree
- Heals and teaches in the temple
- Reveals their lack of authority.

**Read Malachi 3.1-5**

Why do you think Jesus and the authorities are so far apart in their thinking and expectations?

Why are the people of Israel and the religious leaders on trial, what examples from their history, behaviour and attitudes would be reason to judge them?

**Rejecting God's will - Read Matthew 21.28-32**

Why do you think this story is so effective?

Is this a story you can relate to, have you ever been in the position of one of these sons? (If appropriate share with the group)

Why do you think of the way Jesus asked the leaders to judge between the sons?

How might their answer have incriminated themselves?

Why do you think the “unclean sinners” were getting into the kingdom of God before the religious leaders?

**Rejecting God's Son - Read Isaiah 5.1-7 Psalm 118. 22-23 and Matthew 21.33-46**

What does the vineyard represent in the spiritual understanding of the people of Israel and who do they identify as the owner of the vineyard?

What do we learn about the care with which the vineyard was planted?

What went wrong with the vineyard and how was it manifest in Israel's history?

As Jesus told the parable, who are the messengers and how were they treated?

Who is the son in this story and how does this relate to the rejected stone?

What is the judgement pronounced on the tenants?

Who is the kingdom given to and what does this mean for us?

**Rejecting God's invitation - Read Isaiah 64.5-7, Matthew 3.1-2, 4:17 and 22.1-14**

What do the three invitations to attend the banquet reveal about the King?

What is the response to the first two invitations and the messengers who delivered them?

The issue of the person who attends in the wrong clothes reminds us there are conditions of entry to the banquet and one of them is that we wear the clothing the king has supplied.

What does the filthy clothing represent?

How do we obtain the clean garments suited to the celebration?

**Read John 20.21 - We are both invited to this feast and sent to offer the invitation to others.**

How/when did you accept this invitation and what difference has it made to how you live?

Greyfriars speaks of being "Christ-Centred" and we extend Christ's invitation each Sunday, in our outreach (mainly music, playgroup, holiday programme, BBQ church ... and more)

When are we as a church (or as individuals) our best at being invitational towards others?

Which invitational activities do you most enjoy and feel makes a difference?

How could we build on these to be even more invitational?

**On its own, anyone one of these parables is a sign of judgement.**

What impact do you think three such parables would have had on the religious leaders? (Matthew 26.3-5)

In our next study in this series the tensions between Jesus and the authorities rise as different leaders take a swing at Jesus, challenging him with controversial conundrums including tax, resurrection and greatest commandment.

**Personal reflection:**

How did Jesus reframe this vineyard image for his disciples in John 15.1?

God has invited you to the banquet for his Son, what have you done with your invitation?