

Time of Grace Ministry  
**Get Over Yourself**  
Mark 12:1-12  
June 9, 2019

*Pastor Mike Novotny*

Your sin is not your biggest problem with God; your stupid is. Alright? Sin never got in the way of anyone going to heaven, otherwise, who would be in heaven? Sin never got in the way of spiritual maturity. Everyone that you know that's spiritually mature has sinned. Sin is not the biggest problem; the stupid is. The refusing to change and be corrected and learn from tough conversations; that will get in the way of you being a stronger Christian this week, this year, and in fact, it can prevent you from enjoying life with God for all eternity.

I mean, who of us gets better at anything without correction, without guidance, without more than just a pat on the back? Sometimes maybe a kick in the pants? I mean, if you're going to be a good athlete, you need a coach who's going to call you out. If you're going to be better at music, you need a teacher who tells you when you're off tempo or when you hit the wrong notes. If you're going to get better at cooking or parenting or teaching or nursing or whatever you do, you're going to need people who don't always say you're doing it great. They're going to say, "Maybe we should try this again." And have you ever thought about doing it this way, you're going to get corrected and disciplined and it's a good thing, huh? It stings in the moment but in the end it makes us such better people.

And I suppose, that makes sense spiritually too, huh? Most of us would admit we're not perfect just yet. We want to follow Jesus and we want to be more selfless and we want to be more loving and we want to be more patient and we want to be more generous and sometimes we never actually see where we can improve until someone confronts us. This is so important for us, I just wish I had an extra half hour with you today to talk about all the ways that we can become smarter spiritual people. Like how often do you invite correction? Do you give your spouse or your parents, your kids or your teacher, or your pastor, even your critic, even the people who are under you in the organizational chart, how often do you invite that correction? Because that's what smart people do. Your sin is not your biggest problem with God. Let me say that again: Your sin is not your biggest problem with God. Your "stupid" is.

Alright, sin never got in the way of anyone going to heaven. Otherwise, who would be in heaven? Sin never got in the way of spiritual maturity. Everyone that you know that's spiritually mature has sinned. Sin is not the biggest problem; the stupid is. The refusing to change and be corrected and learn from tough conversations, that will get in the way of you being a stronger Christian this week, this year, and in fact, it can prevent you from enjoying life with God for all eternity.

And I learned that from a story that Jesus told 2,000 years ago. It was about a bunch of stupid people that was meant to make a point about stupidity but at the same time, warn us so that we could be spiritually smart. So if you have a device with you or a Bible or just want to follow

along with me in Mark 12, let's look at this story that Jesus told that's sometimes called the Parable of the Tenants, or the Parable of the Renters.

It starts like this: "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. At harvest time, he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard,' which makes sense, right? There's no direct deposit 2,000 years ago so he's out of town, he has to send someone that he knows, a servant, to collect the rent. And you notice what the rent was? It was "some" of the fruit. So we know the owner wasn't a greedy man; he was going to allow these renters to enjoy some of the harvest. In fact, he could let them enjoy most of the harvest but he wants some of it back because the rent for their agreement. We might say this is like the guy who's traveled around the world and he sends one of his old buddies or coworkers or employees to the rental property to collect the rent on the first of the month. But then things get kind of stupid in verse 3: "They," the renters, "seized the servant, beat him, and sent him away emptyhanded." So the guy shows up on the doorstep for the rent and they come out, they come out hot. And they stick a finger in his face and they threaten him; they actually push him off the front step so he tumbles onto the grass and they tower over him and one guy says, "Don't you dare come back here again." And the owner hears about it and he has to be confused, right? Who? Why? You know, was he too aggressive in asking for the rent? Was it a bad day? Miscommunication? So he tries again in verse 4: "Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully." It gets worse. Verse 5: "The owner sends still another and that one they killed. He sent many others, some of them they beat and others they killed." And you want to say what? Who would do that? You're going to turn into an abuser? You're going to turn into a serial killer for what? For some extra fruit? Verse 6: "But the owner had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all saying, 'They will respect my son,'" and don't you want to give the owner some advice right now? "No, no, no, no, no." "What are you doing? You know, he's - I don't know, maybe he thinks these guys don't know that I'm serious? This wasn't like a suggested free will offering; this was the rent. This was the deal. They're going to know that I'm serious. They're going to respect my son if I send him." So he drives his son to the airport and he kisses him goodbye in more ways than one.

Verse 7: "The tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.'" Verse 8: "So they took the son and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard." These delusional renters, these wretched renters, see the son coming and somehow they think if we kill him, all this is ours. And so, they do. Did they stone him? Did they stab him? Did they beat him to death? We don't know but they dump his body in the woods, they go back and grab a beer, and they toast their first day of not being renters but homeowners. And Jesus looks at the crowds hanging on the edge of his story, verse 9, and he says to them, "What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others." Exactly. Because judgment will get you not an hour later; you don't become a serial killer and steal someone's stuff and just get away with it. The judgment might not come from a lightning bolt from heaven but it's going to come; the master will return. And just when people think they get Jesus' serious but straightforward story, he turns to verse 10 and he says: "Haven't you read this passage of Scripture? 'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this and it is marvelous in our eyes.'"

Now, Jesus is quoting a lyric from an ancient song of worship that we call Psalm 118. Apparently, this song, there was some stone that ended up being the most important stone in this beautiful, marvelous building that God built but when the builders, the construction workers first saw it, they thought it was junk and they rejected it. They tossed it on the work pile to end up in a dumpster. And I want to say, "Wait, Jesus, like I was with you with the renter story, okay? But like what does that have to do with anything" And we might not grasp the point but actually, the people who first heard Jesus' story knew exactly what he was saying. That's why this story ends in Mark 12 with verse 12; it says this: "Then the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders looked for a way to arrest Jesus because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowds and so they left him and they went away."

You see the connection? Jesus is saying that these people, the religious leaders, the most church-ed people of church people from back in the day, they were like the renters. God had given them this incredible position; he allowed them to work the spiritual land in the temple itself that he had decked out with beauty and grandeur but it wasn't enough. And God wanted fruit; he wanted the fruit of love and of forgiveness and of humility. But when they wouldn't give it back, he sent the servant. He sent a prophet and then another. And then he sent John the Baptist. But what did they do? They verbally beat these people up. They called them demon possessed and crazy and sinful for the way that they lived. They would not accept the discipline and correction. So then - then what did God the Father do? He sent his son. The only son he had; his beloved son. And that son would become a cornerstone, right? The whole Christian church would be built on Christ alone but when these religious leaders saw him, they were like construction workers that should have known that this was the most beautiful stone of all. But instead, they rejected him; they threw Jesus in the junk pile that we call Calvary and they put him on a cross.

And if you had to pick just one word to describe these men, what word would you pick? I can think of one. Stupid, right? They're face to face with God and they kill him and they think that they'll end up with some great inheritance. They're defensive because they can get away with it. They don't have to accept these people. They have enough power and enough numbers that they can live their lives without changing a single thing and God says, "No, no, no. In the end, the owner will come." It's a story about some wretched, stupid people who forgot their place in God's big world.

So what in the world does that have to do with you? Just like a reminder to pay your rent on time? Alright, the landlord's going to show up? No, actually, this story - even though it's a different time, different place, different people - it has everything to do with everything. It has everything to do with your relationship with me if you're a member of this church. It has everything to do with your Christian friendships within your home if you're growing up in a Christian family. It has everything to do with parenting and being a kid and being an employee because it reminds us that God has given us a really privileged place in his world but that role is not as an owner; it's simply as a renter.

And that's why I want to tell you a parable that I made up today; it's called the Parable of the Pizza. Is my servant - is my friend, Brian, here today? I ordered pizza before this service began

unless the pizza people failed me, it should have been delivered by now. Oh, right on time! Look at this man; piping hot! Eighteen inch pepperoni and sausage, extra cheese pizza from Sal's - have you ever had Sal's pizza before? This is so good. This is going to be the hardest sermon to watch because I'm going to eat in front of you today. Oh seriously, how good does that look? Let's imagine - let's just imagine for a second that this - look at the grease just drip down that thing; that is beautiful. Let's imagine that this was Brian's pizza and I didn't buy it; that Brian bought it. But Brian is so generous, he's going to let me have his pizza for a little bit. And he doesn't just want me to hold onto his pizza until he's done ushering because he's hungry; he's so kind and he's so good that he's actually going to let me have a slice, maybe two, maybe four, of this delicious pizza. Which would be pretty cool of Brian, wouldn't it? But Brian would have just one request; that I share a slice or two of his pizza, which makes total sense. I mean, it would be crazy for him to give me the gift of an entire pizza and for me to grab onto this and defend it with my life like this was mine. I mean, if I go all Jackie Chan on anyone who tried to come up and steal a slice of my pizza, that would be - well, that would be stupid. And Brian says, "Just be generous. I want you to enjoy it. I want you to have it. Enjoy a slice but make sure you share a slice, too." You get what I'm getting at? If you don't get it, let me show you a Bible passage to clear it up.

Psalm 24:1. It says, "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it." The point of the passage is that everyone in the world and everything in the world belongs to God. I mean, it's God's universe. It's God's water, God's land, God's food, God's people, God's bodies, God's money, God's everything. But God is so good. Listen to this: God is so good that he wants you to enjoy his stuff. He doesn't just want you to enjoy a sad life and then one day hopefully end up in heaven. God is so generous that he says, "This is my river. I want you to fish in it. This is my sunset; I want you to take a picture of it. These are my little people, I want you to raise them and love them. This is my music, but I want you to enjoy it. These are my animals but I want you to bring them into your homes and love them. These are my essential oils - that's for my wife - and I want you to put these on you and enjoy the scent. These are my grapes and my grain, my hops, my barley. Have a good drink and enjoy it. This is my cow and this is my chicken and these are my vegetables. Put them all together and enjoy the meal." God is so good that even though it's all his stuff, he says we can enjoy it. But God has just one request, right? And the request is share. You can enjoy it, but I want them to enjoy it, too. I want them to enjoy part of you and your words and your wealth and your time and your energy and your money. If you like fancy church words, this is what we call "stewardship." Have you ever heard that phrase before? Stewardship means that God is the owner of everything we have, everything you will ever own, and we get to be the steward; we get to be like the manager who uses God's stuff in God's way and enjoy it in the process.

So that's God's design for everything but this is where it gets kind of tricky. Because just like the owner in the story, God isn't physically standing right here, right? Unlike Brian, if I hoard all the stuff and I don't share it with you, God's not here to send a lightning bolt from heaven and to demand an account. And so, when I think about the voice that God has given me or given to you, there's all these words we can speak and enjoy but God says, "Here's the rent. I want those words to build people up. And I want some of those words to be apologies to people that you've hurt. And I want some of those words to be courageous witness to people who haven't heard

about Jesus. I want those words to be humble and kind and loving. That's the rent of having a voice."

And then God says, "I'm going to give you the gift of time; 168 hours every week. And you can use so much of that time for your shows and your screens and your hobbies but some of that time I want to be invested in others. I want you to invest that in your spiritual life. I want you to gather and not give up meeting week after week. If you're a parent, I want some of that time to be used to speak to your children about Jesus in your home. That's not the pastor's job; that's the rent." And if we don't, if we think the rent is just a suggestion and not a requirement, do you know what God will do? He'll send a servant. He'll send a mom, a dad, a pastor or teacher or friend or even a critic. He'll send a brother, a sister in the faith or in the family. He'll send someone knocking on your door to remind you that that's not your stuff, your words, your life. That all belongs to God and God wants you to pay the rent.

And when that happens, you and I have to be very, very careful not to be spiritually stupid. Those conversations are not fun and maybe we wouldn't choose them but when God himself sends someone like that to our doorstep, we have to be very careful to be smart because there are five really common reactions that will end up leaving you as a proverbial person who's a fool. They're so important and they're so common, actually if you have a pen in your hand, I want you to write these down because here are five stupid reactions to being corrected.

Here's the first one: Just to ignore it. Pull the classic like, you know, "Whatever." Delete the email. Act like this person really didn't want to sit down with you. If the pastor leaves a voice mail, don't call back; just ignore it. Get away from it. Maybe we can act like this never happened.

Even more common is number two, to excuse it. Make sure in the conversation that the real problem is not something in here with your heart; it's something out there with the circumstance. "Yeah, okay, maybe I raised my voice to her but do you know what she said to me first?" Have you ever brought up the past for the things that he did wrong but, "Do you know what she did to me before I did that?"

Number three is to defend. Defend yourself with a list of as many good works as you have done that you can remember. "Oh, you want to criticize me as a spouse? I didn't do this? Did you forget when I did this and this and this and this and this? Did you forget all the things that I do for my family that now you're going to be a critic like I'm not a good husband?" "Oh, you want to talk to me about this? Do you remember that I sacrificed this and this and this and this for you?" "You want to criticize my work? Don't you know that I brought this client and that one and this project and that one? You know, who are you to just tip the scale so much and make yourself look so good that anyone who would dare to say you're bad look stupid?"

If that doesn't work, number four is to attack; forget the subject at hand. It's not about you anymore; make it about them. "Oh, you're going to talk to me about this now? Like you've never done anything wrong?" "Okay, as long as we're being honest, I have a few things that have been on my heart, too." Just flip the script, switch tracks; just make sure it's not about the actual thing that they started the conversation to talk about. Make it about them.

Or number five is just to avoid. If someone in your family is being critical, just avoid them. If someone said they were a friend and then they call you out, well, that's not a real friend, right? A real friend would accept you as you are and not judge you. And maybe you need to find a new church; this one's too judgmental. It doesn't accept you and love you the way God loves you just the way you are.

And I want to encourage all of you: Don't be stupid. I know the conversations are difficult but you will sabotage your spiritual future. Your pride in that moment, unwilling to accept correction, will rob you of joy and peace and love and patience of a better family, of better children, of a better church, of a better job. Don't give all of that away just for the pride of the moment. Just take a deep breath and pray and listen and don't throw away your eternity with God. If someone's trying to correct you because of your sin, God sent them so you don't miss out on forever with him. Who would give up forever? Eternity is a terrible thing to waste for a couple of pieces of fruit.

Instead, be smart because the God who sent that servant is a God whose love for you is so big you'll never get to the bottom of it. You know, when I read this story about Jesus, I got emotional. At first, I was mad at these stupid people. Who would think they'd get away with that? Who would treat someone so shamefully and violently and viciously? What idiots! But then halfway through the story, I got angry at the owner, at the father. Like dude, why are you so stupid? Why - come on, you know what these guys are like. Why would you send your son, your only son, into that trap? And then it hit me: Because God is a God who won't stop trying no matter what it costs him. A God who will wait and he will beg and he will plead and he will hold out his arms. He will reach out to broken, messed up, even stupid spiritual people. He will give up his son for one more chance.

I thought about that. Maybe that's the reason why we're here today and Jesus isn't. I love how the apostle Peter said it in 2 Peter. He said, "God is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance." And maybe that's why you're here today; that God just wanted to send another servant to reach up his hands at the threat of the rejection to you. Maybe it's why you're listening to this podcast as you run on the treadmill or drive to work. Maybe it's why you're watching this message on TV; because God wanted one more chance. Before Jesus returns, before all pain and suffering and death and depression is over, he wanted one more chance to give you everything.

And I want you to know the hands that reach out to you today, the hands of Jesus, he's decided to set down the gavel and wait one more day and show you his pierced hands. That God so loved the world that he would give his son, his only son, the son that he loved, to reach you. So please, be smart. The fruit of this world tastes good for a little bit but there is something so much better. God wants you to be with him in his kingdom forever where your rejoicing and your dancing will never stop. He wants Jesus to be your cornerstone; that you can put all of your hope in him and you can celebrate knowing that one day you will stand before the throne of God righteous and pure and flawless and so he waits until you open your hands and confess your sin. Until you look to Jesus and believe in his name.

There's a lot of people who live for this life. No offense, but that's stupid. So be smart. Listen to the voice of God. Sending his only son to the cross was the smartest thing he ever did. Believing in that cross is the smartest thing you will ever do.

Let's pray.

Dear God, I thank you so much for your patience. Without you, we would be - all of us - would be just like those renters and we would hold onto our opinion and our way of seeing things and our pride would - it would ruin and destroy everything so thank you, God, for the work of your spirit. I pray even now, God. I know there are families and there are relationships that are struggling in this room. I know there are people at work and things have gotten tense and it's defensive and no one's willing to listen or humble themselves and for the sake of healing and for the sake of unity and the sake of forgiveness, I pray that you would give us spiritual wisdom. Make us smart, God, deeply in our hearts. Help us to find so much in you and in your presence that we don't have to hold onto these things; we can give them up trusting that there are greater things to come.

Jesus, you said "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the peacemakers for they will see God." And that's what we want; to see you and to live in the real inheritance and in the new heaven and the new earth forever and ever and ever. So God, give us humble hearts this week. Help us to be willing to take correction, not just from people who have the right to, but everyone that you will send as a servant to our hearts. And I pray, God, you will do just what you promised; that those conversations, that correction, that pruning will not be in vein. It will produce incredible fruit for you that will bring joy to our hearts and joy to others' lives.

God, thank you for speaking the hard words to us. If everything was easy, we would miss out on some of the most beautiful things you have intended. So thank you for difficult messages that make us better people. We pray all this in the name of Jesus Christ, our cornerstone, your one and only Son, Amen.



## TIME OF GRACE®

### *Get Over Yourself*

#### Study Notes

#### *Summary*

The teachers of the law knew Jesus spoke his scathing parable of the tenants against them. Yet instead of repenting of their shocking sins, they looked for a way to kill Jesus. They cared more about their embarrassment than their relationship with God. How about you? Jesus is willing to embarrass himself to become the capstone of your faith. Will you cling to your image? Or will he become marvelous in your eyes?

- **Proverbs 12:1:** Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but whoever hates correction is stupid.
- **Mark 12:1-12** <sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. <sup>3</sup>But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. <sup>4</sup>Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. <sup>5</sup>He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed.  
<sup>6</sup>“He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’  
<sup>7</sup>“But the tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ <sup>8</sup>So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.  
<sup>9</sup>“What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. <sup>10</sup>Haven’t you read this passage of Scripture: “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; <sup>11</sup>the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes?”  
<sup>12</sup>Then the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.
- **Psalm 24:1:** The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.



- Five Stupid Reactions to Being Corrected:
  1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_
  4. \_\_\_\_\_
  5. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Peter 3:9: The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

### *Points to Ponder*

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how correctable do you think you are?
2. **Challenge:** Ask a friend, a relative, and a coworker to rate you on that same scale.
3. Name at least three reasons why having a teachable heart is essential to following Jesus.

### *Homework for Next Week*

Read Judges chapter 4.

*“God sends no one away empty except those who are full of themselves.”  
—Dwight L. Moody*