



Does God Have Expectations of Me?

Mark 12:1-12

September 23, 2018

We often resist the expectations people have for us, but what about God? Does he have expectations of me? If so, what are they? Will I be able to meet them? The Parable of the Tenants helps us with these questions.

The parable reflects the way vineyards usually operated in the first century. The grapevines would run along the ground in long rows. The wall kept predators out, and the watchtower guarded against thieves. Workers would tread the grapes in the pit, to separate out the juice. In this case, a wealthy man provided the facilities and rented them out to tenants. Jesus used these typical practices to teach a spiritual message, first to the leaders of the Jews and then to us as well. From the account, we learn that God does have expectations of us:

1. God expects us to respect and listen to his servants and His Son (vv. 2-6). The servants are prophets (Jeremiah 7:25), teachers, preachers and others who speak God's word. Remarkably, God has chosen to entrust his word to human beings, and those who do indeed speak his word must be heeded. God's ultimate spokesman, however, is his Son, Jesus (vv. 6, 10-11; Hebrews 1:1-3). It is imperative that we respect and listen to Him (Mark 9:2-7).
2. God expects us to do good deeds (v. 2). One appropriate passage for learning the kind of good deeds God wants is the Song of the Vineyard, a parallel passage in Isaiah 5:1-7. The good fruit God expected (v. 2) is to treat people with justice and righteousness (v. 7). Other appropriate examples can be found in Mark 11: worship and praise, not commercializing religion, prayer, welcoming people of all nations, trusting God, forgiving others, and embracing Jesus' authority over our lives. Another fitting example is the recurring emphasis we've seen in Mark on following Jesus in the way of the cross by humility, self-denial, serving, suffering, and sacrifice.
3. God expects good deeds to emerge in our lives as fruit. The metaphor of fruit bearing is used often in the Bible to point out that the good that develops in our lives is to come from our hearts, our faith, and a changed being (Matthew 12:33-37; Luke 6:43-45; 13:6-9). Jesus' use of a vineyard and tenants is deliberate and fitting. All the things the man provided (Mark 12:1) are resources that would enable the tenants to produce fruit. Similarly God gave Israel (Romans 9:4-5) and us (2 Peter 1:3) resources to enable us to produce good deeds in our lives. In addition to the true knowledge of Jesus, he has given us forgiveness, a life mentor, Scripture, the Holy Spirit, transformation, unparalleled love, and a faith community. These are more than enough to enable us to live the life and do the deeds he expects in us. What God expects in us, he also enables in us!
4. God expects someone to use the resources he has given. If we don't, he will take it away and give it to someone else (Mark 12:9; cf. Matthew 21:43). He might do that drastically, like he did with the Jews in the Old Testament. But he could also do it more subtly by allowing / causing our hearts to become dull and hard so that we are no longer able to see spiritual truth (Matthew 13:15; Hebrews 3:8). In other words we could fall asleep spiritually and have this happen to us without us even realizing it. Sobering thought.