

**A Good Shepherd  
Parable**

**Unfaithful Tenants**

Adapted by:  
Brenda J. Stobbe

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**Illustrations by:  
Jennifer Schoeneberg**

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## INTRODUCTION TO LENT

The season of Lent is another "waiting time". The Good Shepherd program makes it easy for children to see the time pass as they prepare to experience Easter.

The stage is set for Lent by using a series of seven cards. The first six cards are purple with one side showing a blackened silhouette and the seventh card is white with one side showing a blackened silhouette. Each week the cards are removed from the Lent basket and laid out in a straight line to your left with the solid side facing upward. As each week's story is shared, the card is turned over. The first week the purple card with the silhouette symbolizing the story of "Waving Palms" is revealed. The second week that card and the one with the silhouette symbolizing the story of "Zacchaeus" are revealed. And so on. Each week we begin with card one, asking the children to mentally recall each part of the Lent story, before telling the current week's story.

During the story response time, the children are encouraged to take the Lent basket and the story basket from the shelf and see if they can tell the story each week. By using the Lent cards and the story figures the children look ahead with great anticipation to the joy and wonder of Easter.

Each lesson in the Lent series tells you what story, story figures and Lent cards are to be used. During the "circle of light" be sure to place the appropriate bookmark representing each week's story in the Good Shepherd classroom Bible. This allows the children, non-readers as well as readers, to become familiar with where the Lent stories are found in the Bible.

During this time called Lent we learn a lot about Jesus, the stories he told and the things he did. We learn about his relationships with his friends and the people who followed him. The message of Lent is heard as we gradually begin to understand that Jesus showed himself to be the Messiah.

## **1-MATERIALS USED DURING LENT--YEAR I**

The medium Lent basket on the shelf contains:

- a set of 7 cards are used each week in the following order:
  - a purple card with palm branch silhouette
  - a purple card with Jesus and Zacchaeus silhouette
  - a purple card with basket silhouette
  - a purple card with chalice and paten silhouette
  - a purple card with cock (rooster) silhouette
  - a purple card with a bunch of grapes and vine silhouette
  - a white card with an empty tomb and cross silhouette

The story sets are used in the following order:

- Waving Palms basket
- Zacchaeus basket
- Feeding the 5000 basket
- The Last Supper basket
- Peter Denies Jesus basket
- Unfaithful Tenants parable box
- Crucifixion and Resurrection basket

Items needed from the worship shelf for Lent:

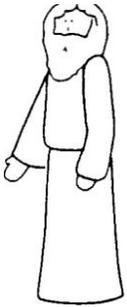
- chalice (for use with the Last Supper basket)\*
- paten (for use with the Last Supper basket)\*

If communion is served during the "circle of light" the week The Last Supper story is presented you will need to purchase bread and grape juice.

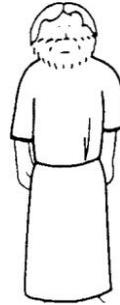
\* These items are not furnished for you. We recommend their use and hope you can acquire them locally.

## UNFAITHFUL TENANTS ... MATERIALS

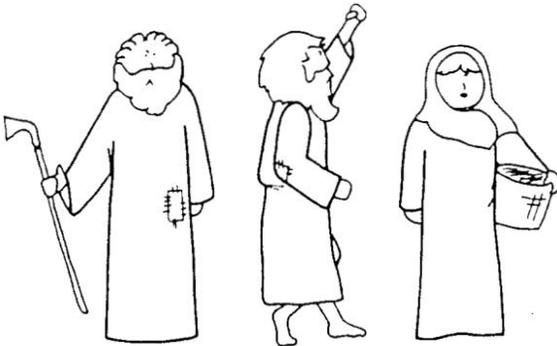
- parable box containing:
  - green felt oval underlay
  - 3 laminated scenes of vines and grapes
  - laminated owner figure
  - laminated son of owner figure
  - 3 laminated tenant figures
  - 3 laminated servant figures
  
- from worship shelf
  - Lent basket containing 7 cards



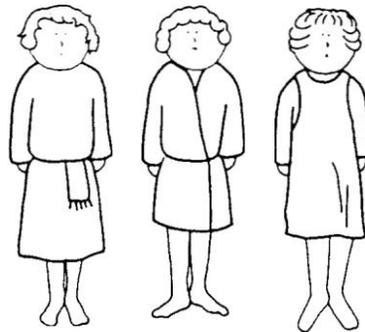
Owner



Son



Tenants



Servants

## UNFAITHFUL TENANTS .... 1\Iark 12:1-12

### ACTIONS

After speaking, stand and get the Lent basket from the worship shelf. Place it on the floor by your place in the circle. Go back to the shelf and pick up the Unfaithful Tenants parable box with two hands. Return to your place in the circle.

Gently trace the outline of the box. Sit in silence as you concentrate on the box and gather your words for the story.

Point to the worship shelf.

Remove the six purple cards from the Lent basket and lay them out with the plain purple side showing in a straight line starting to your outer left.

Remove the white card from the Lent basket and lay it next to the purple card closest to you with the plain white side showing.

Turn the first purple card over so the silhouette of the palm branch shows. Touch it reverently.

Turn the second purple card over so the silhouette of Jesus and Zacchaeus shows. Touch it reverently.

Turn the third purple card over so the silhouette of the basket shows. Touch it reverently.

Turn the fourth purple card over so the silhouette of the chalice and paten shows. Touch it reverently.

### WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get these materials so you will know where to find them if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

All the words to this story are inside of me. Will you make silence with me so I can find all the words to this story?

The worship cloth is purple and we know we are waiting. This is the sixth week of Lent.

These are Lent cards.

They will help us understand the stories we hear during Lent and make us ready for the time we are waiting for ... Easter.

The first week of Lent we learned about Jesus coming into the city of Jerusalem while the people waved palms.

The second week of Lent we learned how Jesus came for everyone--even Zacchaeus who had done bad things.

The third week of Lent we learned about Jesus teaching and feeding 5000 people.

The fourth week of Lent we shared the Last Supper with Jesus and his disciples.

Turn the fifth purple card over so the silhouette of the cock (rooster) shows.  
Touch it reverently.

Turn the sixth purple card over so the silhouette of the grapes and vine shows.  
Touch it reverently.

Rest your hands lightly on the box, touching it reverently.

Slowly shake your head and smile.

Nod your head confidently.

Raise your eyebrows and shake your head.

Lift the lid just slightly.

Take the lid off the parable box. Unfold the green underlay. Lay it out in front of you and slowly smooth it.

Place the 3 scenes of vines and grapes on the right side of the underlay vertically.

Put owner just to the left of them. Put the 3 tenants next to owner; then move owner to other side of underlay.

The fifth week of Lent (last week) we heard how Jesus' special friend, Peter, said he didn't even know Jesus.

This sixth week of Lent we will hear the parable of the Unfaithful Tenants.

This is a parable box. I wonder if there is really a parable inside this box?

You see parables are very precious.

This box looks a bit like a gift.

Parables are like gifts. We can't go buy one, or even rent one, like we do a movie. Parables already belong to us.

And like gifts, we don't always know what's inside by looking at the box.

We have to take the lid off. If we take the lid off our box, maybe we will discover a parable.

Once there was a man who said such amazing things and did such wonderful things that people began to follow him.

And sometimes the people would say to him, "Who says you may talk like this? Who are you?"

And the man who said such amazing things and did such wonderful things told them this parable.

A man planted a vineyard.

He rented it out to tenants. Then he went on a long trip.

Place one servant next to tenants.

Soon it was time to collect some fruit from the vineyard. The owner sent his servant to get the fruit.

Move servant back to box.

But the tenants beat him and sent him away without fruit.

Place a second servant next to tenants.

Then the owner sent another servant.

Move servant back to box.

But they beat him and sent him away without the fruit, too.

Place third servant next to tenants.

So the owner sent his third servant.

Move the servant back to box.

But the tenants treated him badly too. They beat him and sent him away.

Look puzzled.

Then the owner wondered what to do.

Hold up index finger indicating you have an idea.

He decided, "I will send my son, whom I love very much. They will respect him."

Move the son near the tenants.

But when the tenants saw the son they said to each other, "Let's kill the son and then all that the father owns will belong to us."

Lay son down horizontally on underlay.

And they killed the son.

Look puzzled again.

What will the owner do?

Remove the 3 tenants and put them in the box.

He will not give the vineyard to the tenants. He will give it to someone who will take care of it.

And the people who heard the words of this parable wanted to be the people who would care for the vineyard.

## WONDERING QUESTIONS:

I wonder if the tenants ate the fruit from the vineyard?

I wonder how it tasted?

I wonder if the tenants were ever sorry they hurt the servants and killed the son?

I wonder who those are who will care for the vineyard?

Watch carefully how I put these materials away so you will know how to use them if you choose to make this your story today or another day.

This piece can be folded by taking this edge and fold it to this edge.

Let's do that again.

Now, if we fold this top part down and this bottom part up, it should be ready to place in the box.

This is the sixth week of Lent.

We will wait and make ourselves ready for one more week, then it will be Easter.

Watch carefully where I return this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make it your work today or another day.

I wonder what you will make your work on this day? Will you work with the story?  
Let's begin.

Place all the materials except the underlay back in the box.

Beginning at either side, fold the underlay to the other side.

Repeat the side to side fold.

Carefully fold the top edge down one-third of the underlay and fold the bottom edge up over that. Place in the box.

Pick up the six Lent cards and place them in the Lent basket.

Pick up the white card and place it in the Lent basket.

After speaking, carry the parable box back to its shelf. Carry the Lent basket back to the worship shelf. Return to the circle.

Dismiss children to their work ONLY after everyone has had a chance to choose their work.

## UNFAITHFUL TENANTS .... TEACHER HELPS

This parable is recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke and the Gospel of Thomas, which is an apocryphal book. There are disagreements among scholars regarding the meaning of the parable. While all feel that the parable is directed at the leaders of Israel, some feel this is an allegory on Isaiah 5 while others believe it to be the story based on actual situations that occurred in Jesus' time.

In the account in Matthew there are multiple servants sent, in Mark there are three servants sent, one at a time and one is killed. In Luke three servants are sent, none is killed. In all accounts the son is killed when he is sent. While the accounts of the parable differ somewhat, it is obviously considered important enough and familiar enough to be included in four different accounts.

Those who feel the parable is based on Isaiah 5 note the similarities to Isaiah's words about the vineyard. They see the series of servants sent to the tenants to be like the prophets sent to the people of Israel. The son, then, is Jesus. In the Gospel of Mark this parable comes after the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the cleansing of the temple and the curse on the fig tree. So there is some credibility given to this allegorical interpretation. At this point in his ministry Jesus was trying to help those he walked with understand that he was more than just another prophet. He was trying to help them understand that he was indeed the Son of God.

However, those who believe this parable is based on actual situations have good historical reasons for that belief. The unrest in Galilee during the time of Jesus would have led to situations just like this. The rule of Rome was not ever really accepted by the Jewish people. In this parable the owner of the vineyard may have been a foreigner. As such, he would have been the target of anger by those he hired to run his operation. They felt the land should belong to them, not to a foreigner. They may also have been trying to seize the land themselves. It was accepted that if there was no heir to property, anyone could seize it and make it their own on a first come, first get basis. When the son was sent the tenants may have believed that the owner was dead and his son was now the new owner. If they killed him, then there would be no one standing between the land and themselves. (The Parables of Jesus, Joachim Jeremias, New York: Scribner's Sons, 1972, p. 75)

The message of the parable for the children should be based on the understanding that we all have been given responsibility to care for and share the promises and gifts God has given us. We are not to try to hold that precious light only to ourselves. The fruit from this vineyard is for everyone. We will try to help the children understand that they have been put in charge of caring for the vineyard, too. How will they respond to persons who want part of the harvest? How did God respond when we wanted to share the love sent to earth? Did God keep Jesus for Gdd only?

The wondering questions in this story move from least involved to more involved. Younger children will be comfortable with exploring the taste of the fruit. They will also be

able to respond to the feelings the tenants may have had. It will most likely be the older children who will consider who those are who will care for the vineyard. They may talk about the church, concretely, about ministers or parents. And perhaps they will even understand themselves as those who will care for the vineyard.

#### SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN:

Sometimes we trust other people with something of ours, only to have them ruin what we gave them to take care of. When has that happened to you? How did you feel? Would you trust that person again?

In our story the landowner decided that the tenants would respond better to his son than his servants. Who do you listen to the best? Why?

In this story the owner of the land gave the tenants four chances to be trustworthy. After that, he gave them no more chances, and gave the vineyard to someone else. Can you remember a time when you were given a second, third or fourth chance to do something?