



Today is 13th Gospel Reading of St. Matthew

# 13th Sunday of Matthew

Study Guide - Level 1 (Grades K-2 / Ages 5-7)

Matthew 21:33-42

## Lesson Order

- Opening Prayer
- Intro / Recap last week's lesson
- Review the scripture readings
- Review the hymns of the day
- Read front page of handout together
- Use study guide lesson and Q&A
- Complete handout activities
- Preview next week's lesson
- Closing Prayer

## Tips & Hints

- Use as much or as little of the content in this study guide helping the students discover how the Orthodox Faith can be a part of their daily life.
- Use open-ended questions, encouraging young people to share their experiences or ideas, drawing connections to the topics of the day, strengthening their relationship with Jesus Christ and His holy Orthodox Faith.
- Questions, ideas, feedback, and suggestions can be directed to the publisher at [orthodoxjourneys@gmail.com](mailto:orthodoxjourneys@gmail.com)

## Goals

After completing this week's lesson, students should be able to articulate the following:

- What today's scripture lessons tell us about Jesus Christ as the Son of God
- How today's scripture reading applies to their life
- Understanding what God is expecting us to do and how to live as His followers and members of the Orthodox Faith
- How being part of the Orthodox Church gives us the tools and skills to live godly lives regardless of our circumstances
- Why they believe and follow Jesus Christ as Orthodox Christians
- What we believe as Orthodox Christians and how God is present in our lives
- Identify ways to live as Orthodox Christians 'in the world,' but not 'of the world'
- How scripture helps us encounter and know more about Jesus Christ
- Why scripture is an important part of our daily lives as Orthodox Christians
- Making scripture reading something we do on a regular basis

## Overview

### This Week

We hear a parable from Christ, explaining how the Hebrew nation of the Old Testament rejected the prophets and messengers of God, and will reject and kill Him: the Son of God.

This rejection is contrasted with the wisdom of God, Who is glorified by what is often rejected and seen as foolish by society. God reminds us His plan of Salvation is in our best interests. He gives us the opportunity to freely follow Him with faith in Christ as the cornerstone of our lives.

## Gospel Reading

Have the students read today's gospel lesson out loud (dividing the reading by verses).

### Gospel: Matthew 21:33-42

1. What took place in today's lesson?

#### Possible Answers

- A wine maker builds a vineyard and lets other people manage it for him.
- The owner asks to receive the results of their labors.
- The men abuse and disrespect the servants who come on behalf of the owner.
- The parable is about God, creating the world and allowing humanity to care for it as their means of living.
- God has established the world and sent His Son to redeem us from sin and death - this is very important.
- The people will reject Jesus, but His Father will make Him the cornerstone of the Church which will save us.

2. Why is this important for us living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

#### Possible Answers

- If someone leaves you in charge of their things, you should treat them with respect and not cheat them of any results.
- Jesus explains that those who reject the owner (God) will be punished at the Last Judgment.
- Jesus says that what the world rejects will be chosen by God as the cornerstone of the Church.

## A Closer Look

### Opening Review:

The Church was established by God, providing us with a place to gather as His people, to worship and praise Him for the amazing things He does for us. The Church is also the gathering point for service projects to help those in need, while coordinating efforts to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

As we come in union with God the Father, through His Son Jesus Christ, the testimony of the Apostles (recorded in scripture and the oral traditions of the Church), the lives of the Virgin Mary and the Saints, and our liturgical life (both at church and at home), we continue the historical mission and life of the Church.

### What Does This Mean for Us?

In today's Gospel lesson, we hear Jesus talking about grapes and big stones. This might be confusing, so it would help to have visuals describing what a vineyard is, and what a cornerstone is. (Most churches will have them, indicating when it was established or when construction began).

In architecture, the cornerstone was the most important part of a building; it would be the first they install and all other stones are laid in relationship to it. It also orients a building in a specific direction.

Saying that Jesus is our cornerstone is an important symbol, indicating that everything we do is based on Christ and how He wants us to live! There may be times when people will reject us or be mean to us, but we can remember that Jesus knows how this feels.

### Wrap-up

Jesus loves us, and provides for what we need to be His followers - He doesn't ask us to do anything unrealistic, and we have the examples of the saints to inspire us that it's possible to follow Jesus as He commands.

Our Orthodox Faith is full of wonderful people who want to grow closer to Jesus. He is our cornerstone, showing us the ultimate message of love in His life of miracles and teachings, His voluntary death on the cross, and His life-giving Resurrection.

Remember that during Holy Week, we hear Jesus was rejected and even killed, but His Father made Him the most important person in the universe. Other followers of Jesus were also rejected in their lives - the Apostles (except St. John the Theologian) and the martyrs were rejected and considered worthless. But we sing hymns to them, paint icons of them, are named after them, honoring their important examples for us!

We must watch our own behavior, because we are called to be servants of God, thereby doing what is expected of us, bringing our fruits to God (at the Last Judgment).

## Discussion Questions

Choose from these possible questions to explore today's reading.

**Question #1a:** *Who is the audience of the parable?*

### Possible Answers:

- Christ is speaking to the Jews of His time
- Christ is also speaking to His followers (both those present during His earthly ministry and us today, as members of the Church)
- Those who want to follow God

**Question #2:** *What does the landowner (i.e., God) get in exchange for His leasing of the vineyard (our lives in this world)?*

### Possible Answers:

- The fruit of the season
- True worship
- Loving obedience
- Faith and good works

**Question #3:** *Think about what types of "fruit" each of us produce (being good, going to church, forgiving, helping others, etc.), would God find them acceptable? Why or why not?*

**Possible answers** will vary by student/child, but it's important to encourage them to seriously think about their lives and how they live.

**Question #4:** *Why is membership in the Church important?*

### Possible Answers:

- Christ established the Church
- The Church teaches what God expects of us.
- There are a lot of teachings being said "in the Name of Jesus," but we need to listen and discern which ones adhere to the teachings found in Scripture as explained and taught by the early Church.
- God doesn't contradict Himself, and the teachings of the Church align with God's message.
- To be part of God's family, we must freely choose to be part of the community of believers: the Church.

**Question #5:** *What are your fruits of offering to God?*

### Possible Answers:

- Mercy and Compassion
- Asking forgiveness and forgiving others
- Giving a portion of our income to those in need
- Helping others with acts of mercy
- Praying to God and the saints (for their intercessions for others) on a daily basis
- Visiting the sick and the imprisoned
- Seeing God in those around us (whether they like us or not)
- Actively participating in divine services on Sunday and feast days

## **Handout Activities**

Read through the *One Brick at a Time* activity, discussing with the students what Christian virtues are, and how they can be found in our daily lives.

Help the children write words into the bricks, identifying ways each of us can be God-like in our lives. We don't have to do all of the virtues, or even one a day (well, maybe prayer - that *should* be done every day!), to be good Orthodox Christians.

The idea is to do what is right, making us feel closer to God. God will always love us, no matter what we do, but our journey to God will be better if we live as God expects us. He will see we love Him, wanting to be with Him, and being a positive person in the lives of others.

We can help our friends, be nice to our siblings, or do what our parents ask (without complaining or dragging our feet). Virtues are the expressions of our life in Christ, in different forms, reflecting our love of God and neighbor.

This concept may be met with reservation or lack of concern since most youth think of death as something which won't happen for years, if not decades. But our behavior and actions now, will shape how we live in our 20s, 30s, and beyond. This topic will be addressed throughout the course of the school year.

## **On The Web**

*Learn more about this week's reading:*

**His Return on Investment** (20:08 min)  
<https://youtu.be/exAGdmXJCBw>

**Christ as the Cornerstone**  
<http://ww1.antiochian.org/content/good-marriage-xxiv-trust-cornerstone-godly-marriage>

**Jesus is the Rock**  
<http://www.stgeorgegoc.org/pastors-corner/fr-ricks-sermons/jesus-is-the-rockcornerstone>

**Virtues**  
<https://orthodoxwiki.org/Virtues>

**Read more about the Ever-memorable Archimandrite Vasily (Philippov) of St. Tikhon's Monastery**  
<http://orthochristian.com/91949.html>

