

“The Marvelous Rise of the Underdog” Mark 12:1-12 (Mt. 21:33-46; Lk 20:9-19)

Introduction

- MARVELOUS! - a word used to describe something SENSATIONAL, INCREDIBLE, REMARKABLE, OUTSTANDING, AWESOME
- MARVELOUS! - a word that we use to describe both a marvelous dinner or a marvelous act of God
- MARVELOUS! - a word that I suggest is used a little too freely in our everyday vocabulary, for in our Bible we find the word “marvelous” used sparingly – only about a dozen times – and every time it is reserved to describe our marvelous God!
- TODAY I want us to ponder the MARVELOUS rise of the underdog.
- UNDERDOG - someone in a competition, conflict or game that is not expected to win.
- UNDERDOG - oh, how we are fascinated with an underdog who rises to be victor against overwhelming odds – and how we love to root for that underdog
- Maybe it’s that part of us that always wants to hold onto hope – even when something seems hopeless. And when we see an underdog emerge to beat all odds and conquer all foes, our inner and outer spirit identifies and rejoices

FAMOUS UNDERDOG STORIES – a small sample

1. **1050 B.C.** David defeats Goliath (1 Samuel 17)
2. **1935** Boxer James Braddock (the Cinderella Man) defeats the heavyweight champ Max Baer as a 10-1 underdog.
3. **1948** Harry S. Truman (Dem.) upsets Thomas Dewey (Rep.) in the US presidential election
4. **1969** The expansion team “Miracle Mets” came from 10 games behind in mid-August to win 38 of their last 49 games to win their Eastern division. Then they swept the Atlanta Braves (Hank Aaron), 3-0 in the playoffs and were heavy underdogs to the Baltimore Orioles (109 wins) in the World Series, but after an opening loss, won 4 straight games to win the title and become one of the most famous underdog comebacks of all times.
5. **1980** The “Miracle on Ice” was the US Olympic Hockey Team incredible upset over USSR
6. **2004** The Boston Red Sox won their first World Series in 86 years when they came back from being down 3-0 in the World Series with the NY Yankees to win the final 4 games for the world title.
7. **2008** In the recent Super Bowl, the heavy underdog NY Giants defeated the New England Patriots who had an incredible 18-0 record coming into the game
8. ***But the greatest underdog story of all time might surprise many – IT IS JESUS!***
  - a. *We get today’s message title: “The Marvelous Rise of the Underdog” from the words of Jesus we choose to “mark” today in the gospel of Mark: 12: 10-11*

**9. "Have you not even read this Scripture: 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone;**

**10. THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES'?"**

*a. Today we MARK THESE WORDS of Jesus as spoken to US and important for US today.*

Jesus is quoting from a psalm well known and loved by his audience – Psalm 118: 22-23.

It is Tuesday of Passion week, and he is confronting the Jewish leaders – scribes and Pharisees. In all 3 recordings of this event in the synoptics, these words are preceded by the telling of the parable of the vineyard. Let's read this account in Mark, chapter 12, verses 1-12.

### **Mark 12: 1-12**

1. And He began to speak to them in parables: "A man PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT, AND DUG A VAT UNDER THE WINE PRESS AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey.
2. "And at the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order to receive some of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers.
3. "And they took him, and beat him and sent him away empty-handed.
4. "And again, he sent them another slave, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully.
5. "And he sent another, and that one they killed; and *so, with* many others, beating some and killing others.
6. "He had one more *to send*, a beloved son; he sent him last *of all* to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'
7. "But those vine-growers said to one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!'
8. "And they took him, and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.
9. "What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others.
10. **"Have you not even read this Scripture: 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone;**
11. **THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES'?"**
12. And they were seeking to seize Him, and yet they feared the people, for they understood that He spoke the parable against them. And so they left Him, and went away.

## Observation

**RE: v1** “parables” – this is a single parable told, only the 4<sup>th</sup> that is recorded in Mark. (The other 3 we found in chapter 4 dealing with seed.) “Parables” is accurate because Matthew 21 records that Jesus spoke 3 parables this Tuesday of Passion week. The other two are unique to Matthew (the 2 sons – “which did the will of his father?” and the marriage feast – “many are called but few are chosen”).

This parable draws from the story (“parable”) in Isaiah 5: 1-7. **READ**

The “man” is GOD. The Vineyard is the house of Israel (Is. 5:7). The accompanying wall, vat, winepress and tower are the various blessings and protections God gave to make Israel prosperous. The “vine-growers” would be the judges, kings and priests who were to protect the spiritual life of the nation.

**RE: v2-5** The slaves sent to “receive the produce” would be the prophets God send to Israel to “collect the spiritual blessings” and warn of sin: prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, Malachi, John the Baptist. These voices of these prophets, for the most part, were rejected.

**RE: v.6-8** The “beloved Son” is Jesus (John 3:16) who was also rejected and was killed. This, of course, is a prophesy of what will now happen in just 3 days.

**RE: v 9** “What will the owner do?” repeats the same query of Isaiah 5. God, the owner, will lay waste the vineyard – fulfilled in A.D. 70 and beyond. Matthew 21:43-44 makes it further clear what God will do in bringing in the Gentiles. The kingdom will belong to those trusting in Jesus

*Matthew 21:43-44 Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it. And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.*

Paul says it this way in Romans 2:28-29:

*Romans 2: 28-29 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.*

TODAY I CHOOSE TO FOCUS ON THE WORD “MARVELOUS” (v. 11) – describing the rise of Jesus from rejected “stone” of the builders (mankind) to CORNERSTONE of the kingdom of God.  
**THIS IS THE GREATEST UNDERDOG STORY OF ALL TIME – and we are called to “marvel” at it.**

Seeing Jesus as the supreme example of the rise of the underdog is difficult as we look at Him as God. But seeing Him as fully man reveals the marvelous story.

### **John 1:11**

He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

### **Isaiah 53:3**

He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

### **Isaiah 28: 16**

So, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed.

### **1 Peter 2: 4-8 (TURN and READ)**

4. And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God,
5. you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
6. For *this* is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER *stone*, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."
7. This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER *stone*,"
8. and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this *doom* they were also appointed.

Note: Jesus is 3 kinds of "stone"

- 8 a REJECTED living stone to those who refuse to believe
- 9 a precious CORNERSTONE to those who believe
- 10 a STUMBLING STONE for those who are disobedient

### **7 USES OF "MARVELOUS" IN THE BIBLE** (Note: the word "marvelous" in the Bible is only used of God)

1. **Exodus 3: 3 – THE BURNING BUSH** *So Moses said, " I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up."*
2. **2 Chronicles 26: 15 – KING UZZIAH'S MIRACULOUS HELP FROM GOD**  
*In Jerusalem he made engines of war invented by skillful men to be on the towers and on the corners for the purpose of shooting arrows and great stones. Hence his fame spread afar, for he was marvelously helped until he was strong.*
3. **Psalms 31: 19-21 – GOD'S LOVING PROTECTION FOR DAVID**  
*How great is Thy goodness, which Thou has stored up for those who fear Thee, which Thou hast wrought for those who take refuge in Thee, before the sons of men! Thou*

*dost hide them in the secret place of Thy presence from the conspiracies of man; Thou dost keep them secretly in a shelter from the strife of tongues. Blessed be the LORD, For He has made marvelous His lovingkindness to me in a besieged city.*

**4. Psalm 118: 22-23 - THE REJECTED STONE BECOMES THE CORNERSTONE**

*The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. [and quoted in Matt. 21:42 and Mk. 12:11]*

**5. Isaiah 29: 14 – GOD'S DEALING WITH THE WANDERING JEWS**

*Therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with this people, wondrously marvelous; and the wisdom of their wise men will perish, and the discernment of their discerning men will be concealed."*

**6. 1 Peter 2:9 – THE LIGHT OF SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD**

*But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*

**7. Psalms 98:1; Revelation 15: 1-3 - THE WORKS OF GOD**

*Psalm 98: 1 Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.*

*Revelation 15:1-3 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished. And I saw, as it were, a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had come off victorious from the beast and from this image and from the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God. And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, " Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!*

**Closing questions to ponder**

1. Is Jesus MARVELOUS in your eyes – particularly as you contemplate his rise from obscurity to CORNERSTONE?
2. Is Jesus your REJECTED STONE, STUMBLING STONE or CORNERSTONE?
3. Is your life truly built upon Him? – schedule, money, purpose, passion?