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NT(IBS)511 X1-Miller
Module 13 Final Assignment
Interpretation (Mark 12:1-12)

* PRIMARY STRUCTURE CHOSEN FOR INTERPRETATION:
Primary Structure 2: Bracketing Causation

1. Respond to the Identification questions from the corresponding Segment Survey.

a. What is the element of cause present in this segment? (Identification)

1. Jesus speaks to/against the chief priest and co. through the use of a parable. (12:1-11)

a. Mark explicitly states that what is spoken by Jesus is: (1)

i. “to them” = to the chief priests and co. (following contextualization from 11:27-33)

ii. a parable

- It follows then that whatever interpretive meaning that Jesus aims to convey through the use of the parable is directed toward the chief priests and co. to whom Mark indicates he is speaking.

b. Contents of the parable: (v. 1-9)

i. Persistent ‘vineyard’ imagery alluding to Isaiah 5:1-7

- OT text draws parallels between characters which may further the interpretive process
 - Owner of the vineyard = “the Lord” (Isaiah 5:7)
 - Vineyard = Israel (Isaiah 5:7)
 - Vines/Fruit Bearers (maybe also tenants/farmers) = people of Judah (Isaiah 5:7)

ii. Description of the vineyard (all v. 1)

- Well-equipped and fortified
- Includes wall (*likely for protection*) and watchtower (*likely for security*)
- Equipped with a winepress (*equipped in order to yield a product*)
- **This description implies that the owner of the vineyard took great care when considering the design of the vineyard he was building**
- So then I infer the owner to have great personal investment involved with the product produced by and maintenance of the vineyard.

iii. Farmers' Violence p.1 (v. 1-5)

- Owner rents the vineyard out to the farmers (v. 1)
 - Follow the aforementioned inference, *the owner likely had good faith that the farmers to whom the property was rented would treat the property with respect and deal fairly with the product produced.*
- The time for harvesting the crop of the vineyard = time to collect on the debt of the renters (v. 2)
- The owner sends representatives (servants) to collect from the tenants, but the farmers meet them with violence (v. 3-5)
 - Types of violence incited by the farmers:
 - Beating the servants (v. 3,5)
 - "treating shamefully" = Humiliating the servants (v. 4)
 - Killing the servants (v. 5)
- **The farmers display a lack of respect for the owner of the vineyard through their treatment of his servants and refusal to pay to him what they owe (i.e. "some of the fruit of the vineyard").**

iv. Sending the Son/Farmer's Ambition (v. 6-7)

- "had one left to send" = the servants have either refused to go back to the farmers or have not yet returned to the owner; *may indicate that even those that were not killed did not return to the owner* (v. 6)
- **"whom he loved" = the owner cared more deeply for the son than the servants, as only the son is distinguished in such a way (v. 6)**
- **"they will respect" = the owner believes in the authority that his son embodies; there is a certainty within the owner that the farmers will listen to someone that is esteemed by the owner (v. 6)**
- The farmers actually devised a plan to take ownership of the vineyard ("inheritance") by killing the son of the owner
 - I am unable to speculate on this greatly, as I am unfamiliar with many the customs of the culture that Jesus is speaking to, but this does not seem to me to be sound reasoning...

v. Farmers' Violence p.2 (all v. 8)

- Farmers followed through with the plan to kill the owner's son
- This is the only instance where the disposal of the victim is indicated: "threw him out of the vineyard"

- **INFERENCE: The increased details regarding the owner's opinion of his son, as well as the increased details regarding the eventual fate of the son, imply the heightened significance of the "son character"**
- vi. Final Question; Owner's Reaction (all v. 9)
 - Mark indicates that Jesus steps outside of the context of the parable to ask a question of his listeners
 - The question is a hypothetical regarding the action of the vineyard owner within the parable
 - Promptly, Jesus provides the answer
 - **VERB TENSE CHANGES: indicates that events are yet to come**
 - Prior to this, verbs are all past-tense (i.e. said, killed, sent, etc.)
 - Here verbs are future-tense (i.e. will do, will come, will kill, will give)
 - **Jesus' answer to his own question implies that the owner of the vineyard has become angry/contemptuous of these farmers who have disrespected him, his servants, and his son.**
- c. Scriptural Referencing/Connection: (v. 10-11)
 - i. Jesus draws for his listener a relationship between the parable and the words of Psalm 118:22-23
 - ii. Jesus challenges whether his listeners (the chief priests and co.) understand ("have read") the scripture

SUMMARY: The delivery of the parable accompanied by allusions to Isaiah 5:1-7, wherein the vineyard is destroyed, and Psalms 118:22-23, wherein the rejected stone is made most important, challenges the chief priest and co. to re-evaluate how they understand the Scriptures they 'have read.' In the eyes of the priests, they are likely the servants of the parable, but Jesus implies to them that perhaps they are the tenants.

b. What is the resulting effect of the cause in this segment? (Identification)

1. Tensions continue to rise between Jesus and the religious leaders (12:12)

- a. *Action:* the priests begin to search for a way to have him arrested = indicating that the opposition wants to act.
- b. *Motivation:* the priests feeling that Jesus has spoken against them/their traditions = speaks to the controversy between the two factions (chief priest and co. vs. Jesus and disciples).

- i. *In view of the imagery pulled from Isaiah 5:1-7, the priests recognize that Jesus is speaking in terms of their traditions, but communicating an addition message within the same context*
 - *IOW, the priests see that Jesus is teaching Scripture, but has added the idea of the farmers/tenants.*
- c. *Hesitation: the priests refrain from further confrontation for now* because of fear of the people: “afraid of the crowd”.
- d. *Final Result: Because the priests were afraid to act, they choose instead to leave Jesus be and opt out of direct confrontation to him in the follow passages.*

2. Respond to the Definition questions from the corresponding Segment Survey.

a. What is the meaning of the causal element present in the segment? (Definition)

Based on the evidence provided in 1.a above, **I believe the meaning to the parable (causal element) is to:**

- i. **indicate to the opposition that Jesus is the conduit through which the Lord intends to bring change to the world.**
- ii. **indicate to the opposition that their current traditions are not aligned with the desires of God as they may believe.**

Main supporting points:

1. Owner of vineyard = the Lord; by proxy, the son = Jesus; farmers/tenants = priests (MAYBE) (Point 1.a.1.b.i)
2. Owner of the vineyard seeks to give the vineyard to others and not the tenants. (Point 1.a.1.b.vi)
3. Owner sends son after acknowledging the son’s authority; ***runs parallel to the information that Mark has indicated to the reader up to this point*** (Point 1.a.1.b.iv.Bullet 3)
4. Jesus challenges the priests’ understanding of the Scripture. (Point 1.a.1.c)

b. What is the meaning of the resulting effect present in the segment? (Definition)

Based on the evidence provided in 1.b above, **I believe the meaning to the priests’ response (element of effect) is to/for:**

- i. acknowledge the growing tension between Jesus and the opposition, and to reveal the growing animosity from the priests.
- ii. Mark to reveal to the reader that the priests' outlook on Jesus has grown from seeing him as a troublesome presence (previously) to feeling that Jesus opposes them directly.
- iii. indicate that the public had grown to support Jesus' ministry, at least to such an extent that the priests were unwilling to act immediately for fear of backlash.

Main supporting points (1.b.1.all):

- 1. The priest feel their persons/teachings/traditions have been the target of this parable
- 2. **The parable alludes to ideas such as: dishonest stewardship (the tenants disrespect), change (the future recipients of the vineyard), and a challenge on Scriptural wisdom ("haven't you read...")**
- 3. The priests recognize that the reaction of the people could prove hazardous to them should they have chosen to act against Jesus in a public manner.

Interaction with Secondary Sources:

The following notes are review from Donahue and Harrington's, *The Gospel of Mark*, pg. 337-343.

Donahue, J. R. (2002). *The Gospel of Mark*. (D. J. Harrington, Ed.) (Vol. 2). Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press. p. 337-343

Impressions: As usual, I find myself in good agreement with the assertions of Donahue and Harrington (DH) throughout their interpretive process. I find that their understanding of the purpose and the after-effect of this parable is well-align with my own with only a few discrepancies, all of which are expounded on and noted below. As an aside, I am quite happy that if I were to take nothing else with me away from this class (though I certainly will), I would at least have been introduced to this amazing commentary.

Note v. 1: DH systematically reviews the introductory verse; both in regards to Mark's introduction of Jesus and Jesus' introduction of the parable.

- DH agrees that the farmers/tenants within the parable is in reference to the chief priests and other associate leaders of the Jewish people.

- DH acknowledges the connection to Isaiah 5:1-7, evoked through the imagery of “vineyard”.
- DH directly indicates that “the parable evokes the following identifications: the vineyard = Israel, the owner = God, and the tenant farmers = Israel’s leaders;” which align directly with my assertion in Points 1.a.1.b.i above.
- DH presents an argument against understanding the parable as “systematic theology,” which would pose issue to the aforementioned identifications; a point which I took for granted, but is valid nonetheless.

Note v. 2: DH makes the assertion that the servants = the biblical prophets, and the fruit of the vineyard refers to a “common biblical idiom” in regards to ‘results’ on multiple metaphorical and literal levels.

Note v. 3-5: DH makes note of the *progressively* disrespectful and violent nature of the farmers when it came to their interaction with the servants sent to collect what they owed.

- DH states “These servants ... can include biblical figures such as Moses and David as well as more recent figures like John the Baptist.
- I think DH is touching base with how the priests and those listening at the time would have more immediately reacted to the parable, understanding it within the context of their own culture at the time.

Note v. 6: DH visits the idea of the identity of “the son” and the manner/reason he was sent

- DH and I find good agreement in that “the son” is like in reference to Jesus himself, as a product of the parallel running between the parable and greater Markan Gospel through the use of the phrase “whom he loved,” as well as the line of reasoning associated with the owner = God, the owner’s son must then be Jesus.
- DH and I are however at odds when dealing with the purpose of the statement “they will respect my son.”
 - DH believes this to be a mistaken assertion of the owner of the vineyard, believing the farmers’ would respect his son simply because of the son’s position
 - I, however, feel that this was a declaration of authority imbued upon the son, not that it would be immediately acted upon, but that after all is said and done, the respect for the son will be acknowledged by all.

Note v. 7: DH indicates that the idea of the farmers that once the heir is dead, they would be the inheritors is “puzzling.”

- I am glad I’m not the only reader that caught that idea and found the logic therein to be somewhat flawed to say the least.

Note v. 8: DH analyzes the actions taken against the son

- DH recognizes that the son was not, in fact, respected but was killed just as the servants were.
- DH then states that the act of “throwing him out of the vineyard” may mean that they had treated the son with an additional disrespect in that he was not even given a proper burial.
- I feel that this speaks to my own assertion in Point 1.a.1.b.v where I make the inference that essentially greater detail = higher significance

Note v. 9: DH indicates the break away from OT Jewish tradition that could have been most troubling and provocative to the chief priests.

- Isaiah 5:1-7 provides the implication that the fate of the vineyard (“Israel”) would be that due to its fruitlessness, the vineyard on whole would be destroyed.
- Jesus’ parable in Mark implies that not the vineyard would be destroyed, but those that were given the charge to care for the vineyard (i.e. the chief priests and co.) would bear the weight of the punishment.
- I think this is a safe, reasonable, and justifiable interpretation of Jesus’ parable, as it would rightly incite resistance on the part of the priests due to confirmation bias, leading to the heightened tension seen at the end of the segment.

Note v. 10: DH implies that the use of the Psalm text in the passage is not a continuation of the parabolic teaching, but rather was delivered with the intention of reveal the meaning of the parable to the chief priests.

- Parable says: Farmers will be punished.
- Parable means: Jewish leaders will be punished.
- Psalm provides the reason why by implying Jesus to be the “rejected stone.”
- I can’t expand on this apart from saying that this puts into words an idea that I wrestled with throughout the interpretation process. I agree with the point, but I could find the correct combination of words to express the thought myself.

Note v. 12: DH again develop the points of contention between the chief priests and co. and Jesus.

- DH states Isaiah’s prophecy (OT text that the priest would have been familiar with) was against all of Israel.
- DH also states that after borrow the imagery of Isaiah’s prophecy, Jesus parable lays the weight of punishment solely upon the shoulders of the Jewish leaders (the priests).

p. 342, DH makes a final interpretive statement which agrees well with my own premise in that the purpose for which Jesus spoke this parable was to speak against the practices and tradition of the **JEWISH LEADERSHIP (PRIESTS, and DH also says political leaders).**

- DH, however, makes a cautionary addition at the end of his interpretation, which I feel is valid and worth including in this report, that states “A careful reading of this parable can be a safeguard against its misuse as teaching Christian theological supersessionism whereby the church replaces Israel as the people of God.”

The following notes are review from Stein’s, *Mark*, pg. 530-540.

Stein, R. H. (2008). *Mark*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. p. 530-540

- p. 530-533, Stein investigates the historicity of the parable, as well as whether them form currently presented is more of a Markan editorial piece or if it stems from Jesus.
 - Stein makes the initial commentary that this parable is to speak to the nature of Jesus’ authority, and that it should rightly be considered in tandem with the preceding passage wherein Jesus’ authority is challenged.
 - I see Stein’s point, and I agree. Though I would add: it is not the sole, or *potentially* even the primary, function of the parable.
 - Stein presents others’ arguments against the authenticity of the parable by way of disagreeing with the simple presence of allegorical details.
 - Stein combats this by using the following essential logic: “if it was good enough for the early church, why would Jesus not have also been okay with the presence of allegorical details.”
 - While I feel like, in essence, that is a weak argument, it may suffice for many cases.
 - Stein presents other’s arguments against the authenticity of the parable by way of stating that the actions and situations within the parable were unrealistic and/or irrational.
 - Stein combats this argument by unifying the claims of several other scholars:
 - a. Parables often portray unrealistic behavior
 - b. It made sense to the evangelist that originally compiled the text
 - c. “the ‘unrealistic’ behavior of the landowner and the tenants ... corresponds exactly with the ‘unrealistic,’ but *true*, behavior of the God of Israel and the people of Israel in the interpretation of the parable.
 - I find Stein’s argument here to be much more coherent and well-stated. It uses facts to base its claim, rather than subjective comparison. I feel others would be hard-pressed to disagree with his claims,

though I must echo his concluding sentiments in the discussion of historical authenticity, when he asserts that the “presuppositions one holds ... play an important role in this matter.”

- p. 538, Stein issues the following statement regarding the rhetorical question about Psalm 118:22-23, based on his own exegesis of the text:

“The religious leaders had read this portion of Scripture, of course but they did not accept what it meant with respect to the present situation. In rejecting Jesus (God’s Son), they (the tenant in charge of God’s vineyard) were rejecting the very cornerstone of God’s new temple. Without their acknowledgement, they were doing the will of God, and this is marvelous to behold. They had indeed read this scripture, but because they did not accept what it taught, they were misled in their thinking and actions.”

- In response to the above excerpt:
 - I can appreciate, and agree with, much of Stein’s interpretive application of the text, though I differ from him in the way of associating the “will of God,” to the priests’ rejection of Jesus as the Christ. However, that is purely a product of my faith traditions, and not of inductive study.
 - I acknowledge that in an indirect manner, Stein here also address the notion that within the parable, Jesus draws on the imagery of Isaiah and establishes the character identities just as I have previously listed (as well as DH)
- p. 538, Stein address the presence of the Causation, albeit indirectly. Stein alludes to the desire of the chief priest to arrest Jesus and states “the reason Mark gives for this is that they understand the parable to be about them.”
 - Stein implies that the want to arrest (i.e. tension/contempt of the priests) was caused by the speaking of the parable.
 - Stein also attributes to Mark the indication of reason for the eventual result, further implying the use of the structure as an editorial decision by the author.
- p. 540, Stein address the division of Israel’s people brought about by the ministry of Christ.
 - Stein provide the evidence of the priest desire versus the people’s passions (i.e. the priests would not act for fear of the response from the public).

- I have previously alluded to this bit of information presented within this section, myself. I feel that understanding that to be explicit rather than implicit is beneficial in following and understanding the sequence of events from prior to this scene to the very death of Christ.
 - The growing tension is not the product of simple debate; it is the problem that the man, Jesus, poses to the established religious hierarchy. Jesus' teachings and messages are sensational and, at the very core, have the ability to uproot this system that has been in place for thousands of years.
 - This is why Jesus was viewed as an enemy of such great gravitas, because to leave him to continue preaching would be detrimental to the system that currently bolstered the power and authority of the priesthood. Little did these priests know, they would actually be the catalyst to that system collapsing through their resistance against and execution of this man, Jesus. Ironic.