

God's finest drop

Bible reference for sermon: Isaiah 5:1-7

I will sing for my beloved
my love song concerning his vineyard:

My beloved had a vineyard
on a very fertile hill.

²He dug it and cleared it of stones
and planted it with choice vines;
he built a watchtower in the midst of it
and hewed out a wine vat in it;
he expected it to yield grapes,
but it yielded rotten grapes.

The headline in the Australian newspaper read "Wine glut forces winery to uproot
cherished vines in Riverina and Rutherglen"

My son works in the wine industry. I've been hearing these sorts of reports from him for
some time now. They take me back to my own childhood and youth when our family
had vines (Grenache) almost 50 years ago and no winery wanted grenache grapes



because no one drank much red wine in
Australia at that time and exporting
Australian wines was a long way off.

So, we pulled out the vines that my
mum and dad had planted as they
made their home after the Second
World War. Vines planted in hope
pulled up in despair, in hopelessness.

In our Old Testament reading in Isaiah 5 today we hear God speak...in fact God sings of
his people Israel and Judah as a
vineyard.

My beloved had a vineyard
on a very fertile hill.

²He dug it and cleared it of stones
and planted it with choice vines;
he built a watchtower in the midst of it
and hewed out a wine vat in it;



God planted his Old Testament people Israel in his land that he promised them. He built them a temple, a city, a home, a place where he would be present for them in all his grace. “Just listen and hear my word for you and follow it. Follow me. That’s all that’s needed” God said. And so God likened his gift of land and temple and gracious presence as like a vineyard. But the people did not listen. They turned away from God.

Isaiah describes it this way:

³And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem
and people of Judah,
judge between me
and my vineyard.

⁴What more was there to do for my vineyard
that I have not done in it?
When I expected it to yield grapes,
why did it yield rotten grapes?

⁵And now I will tell you
what I will do to my vineyard.
I will remove its hedge,
and it shall be devoured;
I will break down its wall,
and it shall be trampled down.

⁶I will make it a wasteland;
it shall not be pruned or hoed,
and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns;
I will also command the clouds
that they rain no rain upon it.

⁷For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts
is the house of Israel,
and the people of Judah
are his cherished garden;
he expected justice
but saw bloodshed;

“The Song of the Vineyard” as it is sometimes known is directed to the people of Judah and Jerusalem who had turned from God and often turned on one another and certainly on the messengers, the prophets God sent to call them back. God grieves over what the people he has rescued are doing by turning their backs on him.



There is a price to pay for sin and the vines are uprooted and pulled out and sent into exile. That's the story of Jerusalem a long time ago.

But the owner of the vineyard does not give up on his beloved creation and the people he created in his own image. So, he sends his one and only Son for these people.

In our gospel reading today He likens the gift of the promised Messiah, his Son Jesus, to planting a vineyard. And this vineyard sounds remarkably like the one in Isaiah 5. Listen in to Jesus as he speaks to the Pharisees and other religious leaders...³³ "Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a watchtower."

(Matt 21:33)

The owner leases his high-quality vineyard to tenants...corrupt, evil tenants as it turns out because when the owner of the vineyard sends his slaves to collect what is due to him, the evil tenants beat, kill and stone them! Eventually, Jesus says,



³⁷Then he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ³⁸But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.' ³⁹So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. ⁴⁰Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" ⁴¹They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time."

⁴³"Therefore, I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces its fruits.

The Pharisees and Jewish leaders recognise that Jesus is addressing them just like the Old Testament people addressed by Isaiah. They won't accept Jesus. Do you?

God wants and provides his very best for his people in his Son Jesus. He gives his own Son to meet his people, to bring his grace, to give his life, to restore hope to the hopeless...his very best who willingly will be arrested and suffer and die to take on himself the punishment demanded of you and me because of our sin. There is a price to pay for sin, and God willingly pays it for you. This is his free gift. Will you receive it? for this is how God tends to you and me in faith.

Today, we've seen it. We've heard it. Today God has come with the gift of his presence and his promise to Finn in baptism and to Finn and Otilie and all their family in the promise of love and life. God plants faith in Finn's heart. And he wants to nurture this faith. In fact, it's his gift for all of us. A gift of faith, of life of hope planted like a vineyard. Will we receive it and grow in it? will we encourage the little ones? Do we encourage

one another? Today we see and we hear and we touch and we taste God in his finest gift as he hosts us at his table. do we eagerly desire this fine drop offered by God? Do we receive and grow in the gifts of God?

Do we tend to the gift of faith in our lives?

When Pastor Sue and I started our ministry partnership, we thought it would be good to get to know one another better. One of the things we did early on was to ask the question. If you could invite any 5 people to a lavish dinner party with great food and wine, who would they be and why. Who would you invite? Who do you think God would invite to his best dinner party? And here the answer is easy to know. God's best banquet and his best meal and best drop have a standing and open invitation to you and to me and all people. It's an invitation to a banquet on earth which is a foretaste of an eternal life feast. It's a daily walk with Jesus growing in the faith that was perhaps planted in baptism and a weekly growing by gathering with family here where God's good fruit is borne to witness to the people in our lives, to serve in our families, and communities.

It's the place of the vineyard where God's grace bears fruit in us as he tends us by

His Word for us

His Word with water in holy baptism

His Word in worship in the absolution

His preached Word

His Word with bread and wine in the meal of forgiveness and life.

His life together in community life and going into the world as we grow, his harvest field with his gifts of love and grace and mercy and justice into our world and the lives of people we meet. God's vineyard bearing its fruit and producing his finest drop.

This is nice drop: a bottle of Grenache/Syrah/Mourvèdre grape varieties. It won a gold medal at prestige world wine awards recently.

When we pulled out vines no one contemplated such blends which allowed varieties like grenache not only to survive but thrive. And this is what God wants for you. To thrive, to grow, to share God's amazing new life gifts as you grow in his vineyard of life. Amen.

Video of the service including the above address can be found on the St Paul's Lutheran Church Youtube page <https://www.youtube.com/@stpaulslutheranchurchboxhi1133>