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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749

Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
May 18, 2014
4th Sunday after Easter

Scripture Lessons: Revelation 3:7-11 John 15:1-11
Hymns: 758; 411; 754; 313:3

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and
our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Isaiah 5:1-7

Now let me sing to my Well-beloved

A song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard:

My Well-beloved has a vineyard

On a very fruitful hill.

2 He dug it up and cleared out its stones,

And planted it with the choicest vine.

He built a tower in its midst,

And also made a winepress in it;

So He expected it to bring forth good grapes,

But it brought forth wild grapes.

3 "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah,
Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard.

4 What more could have been done to My vineyard

That I have not done in it?

Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes,

Did it bring forth wild grapes?

5 And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard:

I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned;

And break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.

6 I will lay it waste;

It shall not be pruned or dug,
But there shall come up briers and thorns.
I will also command the clouds
That they rain no rain on it.”
7 For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel,
And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant.
He looked for justice, but behold, oppression;
For righteousness, but behold, a cry for help.

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God!

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our Risen Savior, dear fellow Redeemed.

INTRO: Grasping the connection.

We say it in church all the time, that we are the children of God. We are believers in Jesus. We are “Christians.” We say those things so often that I am afraid that they simply start tripping off our tongues, and we are forgetting their real significance. That is what this Sunday is all about. That is what Jesus wanted to get across to His disciples, not just the twelve, but **all** of His disciples, including us. And yes, that is another one of those words that we should freely apply to ourselves, but even when we do we think of it quite differently than when referencing the twelve. You see what I mean? We really do fail to grasp the reality of this connection between us and our lives and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are not the first to fail to grasp the full reality of this connection between the Lord and His people and its significance in one’s life. That becomes obvious with the simple reading of our text. These are the words of the Prophet Isaiah to the people of Judah more some 500 years before Christ was born. And yet Isaiah’s words are

good and necessary for American Christians to hear every bit as much as they were necessary for the people of Judah. Although we live some twenty-five hundred years later, after these words were first written, we remain –

THEME: The Vineyard of the LORD.

The opening verses of our text serve as a reminder of –

I. God's Faithful Care of the Vineyard

Isaiah 5:1-2 Now let me sing to my Well-beloved A song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard On a very fruitful hill. 2 He dug it up and cleared out its stones, And planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, And also made a winepress in it; So He expected it to bring forth good grapes, But it brought forth wild grapes.

God the Father is speaking of His Well-beloved, that is the only begotten Son, His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased, Jesus the Christ, our Lord and Redeemer. God the Father speaks of His Son and the vineyard which His Son has planted. Of course this picture in the Old Testament captures the Lord's relationship with His Old Testament Church, His chosen people Israel whom He had called out of the world to be His own. This calling dates back to when the Lord called Abraham to leave his people and travel to the land of Canaan. We remember how the Lord later called Moses to lead Abraham's descendants out of Egypt and how they were destined to have born from among them the Savior, that in this special Seed of Abraham all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

The Lord revealed Himself to this people, and promised to be their God, and called them to be His people. They

only had to serve Him faithfully as they had promised. The Lord revealed Himself to them in His grace and love, and gave them the Promised Land. He blessed them so that the people of Israel prospered. The Lord revealed Himself to them in His grace revealing to them the salvation that was to come in the promised Messiah. He blessed them in delivering them from all their enemies. All this and more the Lord did for His people Israel, and especially the people of Judah.

Isaiah 5:7a “For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant.”

With all that grace which the Lord had showered upon this people how could He not expect them to serve the Lord with gladness, bringing forth sweet grapes from the vineyard. As we read through Old Testament Bible History we cannot but be struck by all the wonderful things which the Lord did for these, His people, all that He did to bless them. All that He did in order that they might be His people and they might know the Lord as their God.

But has He done any less for us that we might be His people, that we might be the vineyard of the Lord? He has showered His grace upon us abundantly! He sent His Son into the world that we might live through Him. He sent His Son into the flesh, to be our brother that as our substitute Jesus might fulfill all righteousness, a righteousness the Lord credits to us by grace through faith in Jesus. He sent His Son into the world to be cursed for us, to suffer and die upon the cross that we might be redeemed by His blood, the precious blood of the Son of God. Jesus died and was buried and rose again to destroy death's power over us. He rose again that we might know

that we have been justified and that resurrection to eternal life is real.

All this the Lord did, and then He opened the world to salvation because it was **too small a thing** for Jesus to suffer and die for the sins of one nation (**Isaiah 49:6**). He died for all that we also might be drawn near to God. He called us to faith by the powerful working of the Holy Spirit. The Lord declared us to be His people Israel. And so we are **connected** now and forever to the Lord. **We are the Vineyard of the Lord.**

With all that grace which the Lord had showered upon this people how could He not expect us to serve the Lord with gladness, bringing forth sweet grapes from His vineyard.

II. The Vineyard's Fruit

But what did the Lord find coming from His vineyard, from among the people of Israel and the people of Judah. He was looking for good sweet grapes from His vineyard, --

Isaiah 5:2 But it brought forth wild grapes.

Time and again the people turned away from the Lord and served other gods: the gods of the Canaanites, the gods of the Syrians, the gods of the Philistines, any god, every god. They were not faithful to the Lord who had delivered them from bondage and brought them into the Promised Land, "a land flowing with milk and honey."

Time and again they were delivered into the hands of their enemies that they might repent and turn back to the Lord. And yet when they were delivered they would soon turn away from the Lord once again and chase after the

gods of this world. **They were very casual about their connection to the Lord.** They didn't really get how close, how tight, how vital this connection to the Lord was to be. Without the Lord they were lost, they were dead. Without the Lord they were "**not a people.**" When it came to their neighbors, it was every man for himself. They had not pity. They were not afraid to step on others as they climbed the ladder of life. So the Lord concluded in the last verse of our text –

Isaiah 5:7b "He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; For righteousness, but behold, a cry for help."

And yet as we sit here today do we do so much better? Aren't we also attracted to the gods of this age, the gods of this world today? Money and pleasure and self-fulfillment, and self-righteousness and pride, they all lurk within us. We too are very casual about our connection to the Lord a connection He made at great personal sacrifice. We are quick to serve our flesh and the gods of this age when the Lord has every right to expect sweet grapes from us, His vineyard. All too often He finds wild grapes, and I can tell you wild grapes are really sour in your mouth.

Years ago when our family lived in Illinois we were hiking in a forest preserve. As we walked down the trail we came upon a large grape vine and it had many nice looking ripe purple grapes hanging in nice clusters from the vines. So I stepped over and picked a few of those grapes and began to eat them. I didn't take long for me to regret that move! The extent of their sourness was quickly evident on my face. They set my teeth on edge. It was not what I was hoping for, not at all, even though being that we were hiking in the forest I had no right to expect anything other than what I experienced.

But the Lord has invested so much in us and in our lives. He has made the connection. He has cultured us as His people, as His vineyard. He should expect sweet grapes, wonderful fruit from us His vineyard. He expects to see love and kindness and mercy and generosity. All too often we are cold and hard hearted to those in need around us. We may not even see them! We must confess that we daily sin much. All too often we produce sour grapes, the sour grapes of discontentment, of doubt, of unbelief.

Isaiah 5:3-4 “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. 4 What more could have been done to My vineyard That I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, Did it bring forth wild grapes?

Why did it bring forth wild grapes? Not because of any failing in the Lord! What more could He have done than what He had done for them?! **Then why?** Because of the weakness of their flesh, because they indulged their flesh with carnal pleasures, and allowed themselves to be led down the path that leads to destruction by the lies of the devil.

Let us beware of the wiles of the devil, of the weakness of our flesh, and of the allurements of the world, lest we be found to be unpalatable to the Lord. Because the Lord doesn't want any sour grapes. In our text we read of --

III. The Lord's Rejection of Wild Grapes.

Isaiah 5:5-6 And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; And break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. 6 I will lay it waste; It shall not be pruned or dug, But there shall come up briars

and thorns. I will also command the clouds That they rain no rain on it.”

Even as they turned away from the Lord, so the Lord would turn away from them. He would neglect them. Allow them to be overrun by their enemies. The vineyard would be destroyed, the protecting walls torn down. It wouldn't receive the seasonal rains so necessary for life. Devastation did befall Israel and Judah. They were all taken away into captivity and the land became desolate. But God is merciful and a remnant was restored, And the promises were fulfilled.

And so yet today, God will not hesitate to allow the refreshing rains of His gospel to be withheld from a people that does not appreciate the Lord mercies. **“Be not deceived, God is not mocked”** (Galatians 6:7)! It is dangerous, and even stupid to neglect so great a salvation as we have in the Lord. He has made us His vineyard, and endowed us with His love and His power that we might produce good fruit. He has every right to destroy us and dismiss us from being among His people, and yet in His grace He continues to pardon and preserve us as His own. Let us treasure the connection we have to God our Savior. Let us seek His blessing and His strength.

That is what we do again this morning, as we come before the Lord's altar and receive the very body and true blood which the Lord Jesus offered for our salvation. The Lord is gracious. In spite of our sin He still keeps us connected. He continues to nurture us as His tender plants, and He waits and cares for us, and He waits some more, looking for the sweet fruit that the gospel produces in our hearts and lives. And so we confess, **To God all praise and glory!**

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.