

Vineyard of the Lord

Isaiah 5

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7/31/2022

**BIG BEND
BIBLE
FELLOWSHIP**

5:1-2 – The unproductive vineyard

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. 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.

Why were there high expectations for this vineyard?

It belonged to a loving person (my Well-beloved). It was planted on a very fruitful hill. The ground was carefully prepared (dug it up and cleared out its stones). It was planted with good stock (planted it with the choicest vine). It was protected (a tower in its midst). Provision was made for the fruit to be processed (made a winepress in it).

How is the vineyard analogy a good one representing God's care for His people?

A vineyard is a prized possession, and there is none that demands more constant and persevering toil. Not only, therefore, does the Lord declare that we are his beloved inheritance, but at the same time points out his care and anxiety about us.

How did God's vineyard disappoint Him?

With all these advantages, He expected it to bring forth good grapes. But instead, it brought forth wild grapes.

How are wild grapes worse than unfruitfulness?

The wolfsbane, or wild vine, bears bitter, foul-smelling and poisonous berries. This is a precise description of the self-willed and false religion of the unfaithful covenant people.

5:3-4 – Judah to consider the story of the vineyard

And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. 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?

Who is to blame for the poor vineyard results?

Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard: The question is simple. Is it the fault of the owner of the vineyard, or is it the fault of the vineyard itself?

- Literally, one could never "blame" a vineyard for lack of production. But in the LORD's vineyard, the will of man is a factor.

Wasn't there anything God could have done for better fruit from His vineyard?

In the story, there was nothing left undone by the owner of the vineyard. He did all he could do. In the same way, God cannot be blamed at all for the wild grapes Israel brought forth. God did all He could do, apart from making men robots, acting apart from or against their wills.

What more could God in the here and now so that more people would turn to Him for salvation?

Would more occurrences of the supernatural have made a difference? No, people rationalize away the supernatural... the Pharisees accused Jesus of healing by the power of the devil, which while still supernatural, was an alternative to God intervening in the affairs of mankind.

What is our responsibility in response to receiving God's grace in salvation?

2 Corinthians 6:1-2 – *We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*

We, as God's vineyard, are called to work with the grace of God, so that grace is not received in vain. Grace isn't given because of any works, yet it is given to encourage work. God doesn't want us to receive His grace and become passive. God gives His grace, and we work out of gratitude for what He's done for us.

James 2:18 – *But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.*

5:5-7 – God's judgment on the unproductive vineyard

"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. 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." 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.

v5 – What would God do about His unproductive vineyard?

I will take away its hedge: All the owner of the vineyard must do is stop providing special protection to the vineyard, and it shall be burned ... it shall be trampled down.

How has God delegated His hedge of protection to the church?

1 Corinthians 5:5 – *deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

When a Christian is stubbornly unrepentant, the church should "turn them over" to Satan, so they will feel the pain of their sin and repent. There is spiritual protection in a fellowship of believers...

Proverbs 27:17 – *As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.*

v6 – Why would God stop caring for His vineyard?

I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned or dug: The vineyard will receive nothing from the LORD. The vineyard resisted and protested the "pruning" and "digging" and "watering" the owner did. So now, the owner says, "Fine. No more pruning or digging or watering. You will see for yourself if that is better."

v7 – To what does the vineyard analogy refer?

It is clearly stated here: Israel, and even more specifically: Judah.

What contrasts illustrate the Lord's disappointment with Judah?

He looked for justice, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold, weeping: The prophet plays on words here. In the Hebrew, he wrote "He looked for mishpat, but behold mispat; for tsedaqa, but behold tseaq."

5:8-10 – Woe to the land barons.

Woe to those who join house to house; they add field to field, till there is no place where they may dwell alone in the midst of the land! In my hearing the LORD of hosts

said, "Truly, many houses shall be desolate, great and beautiful ones, without inhabitant. For ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield one ephah."

v8 – What practice was God condemning here?

Woe to those who join house to house: The picture is of greedy real estate buying and development.

What is the problem with building up wealth?

1 Timothy 6:10 – *For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.*

It is the love of money, not money itself, that leads to evil choices. Also, wealth can become an idol:

Psalm 62:10 – *Though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them*

When we have abundance, we tend to grow lazy spiritually, believing our money will take care of us.

Luke 12:15 – *Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions*

Jesus warned us about trying to serve two masters (Luke 16:13). We cannot love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength if we also love money (Mark 12:30). God will not share His throne.

v9 – What would become of the wealth of Judah?

Many houses shall be desolate, great and beautiful ones, without inhabitant: In judgment, their real estate deals will not be successful, and they will have many vacant and unsold houses.

- When men are covetous after the things of this world, God has a way of making them to be filled with disappointment and with bitterness.

v10 – How productive would their fields be without God?

About as productive as what you can expect from a famine. 1 bath = 1/10 homer, 1 homer = 1/10 ephah, ephah = bushel... pretty sad for 10 acres of farm land.

5:11-17 – Celebrating everything but God.

Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may follow intoxicating drink; who continue until night, till wine inflames them! The harp and the strings, the tambourine and flute, and wine are in their feasts; but they do not regard the work of the LORD, nor consider the operation of His hands. Therefore my people have gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge; their honorable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. Therefore Sheol has enlarged itself and opened its mouth beyond measure; their glory and their multitude and their pomp, and he who is jubilant, shall descend into it. People shall be brought down, each man shall be

humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled. But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God who is holy shall be hallowed in righteousness. Then the lambs shall feed in their pasture, and in the waste places of the fat ones strangers shall eat.

v11-12 – Who specifically will suffer God’s wrath?

Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may follow intoxicating drink: The picture is of those who "work hard" to party and endlessly celebrate. Their lives are filled with substance abuse and music - But they do not regard the work of the LORD, nor consider the operation of His hands.

What is wrong with partying and pursuing an entertainment lifestyle?

Simply put, it forgets about God. Though they may claim to remember Him in some way, they have no *regard for the work of the LORD, nor consider the operation of His hands*. Anyone who really does, will live as if God is real and there is much more to life than partying and entertainment.

v13-15 – What are the consequences for partying and pursuing an entertainment lifestyle?

Therefore My people have gone into captivity: those who forget about God because of their partying and entertainment will be judged by a captivity that will end the laughs (*he who is jubilant, shall descend into [Sheol]* v14). And the proud would be humbled.

v16 – How would the Lord be exalted?

The LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment: The fact that God is disciplining His own people to turn them back to Him shows that He is serious about faithfulness. And it shows His faithfulness to His promises.

v17 – What is the difference between the lambs and the fat ones?

God would take care of those faithful to Him while those who pursued their pleasure of the world to the exclusion of the Creator will be consumed by those they do not know.

5:18-21 – Those thinking they know better than God

Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as if with a cart rope; that say, "Let Him make speed and hasten His work, that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come, that we may know it." Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!

v18 – What does it mean to draw iniquity with cords of vanity?

They pull their sin to themselves with ropes of emptiness! They flatter themselves by imagining that what is sin is not really sin. These are the wicked ropes by which they draw iniquity.

v19 – How else do these ungodly people provoke God?

They say, "Let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come, that we may know it": In saying these empty words, they show their arrogant contempt of the LORD. It is as if they are saying, "Go ahead, God. We are ready for your judgment."

v20 – What characterized Judah to bring God’s wrath?

Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil: Using clever and deceptive words, they blur moral issues and excuse their sin. They look at their own evil and call it good, and they look at the good of others and call it evil. Isaiah is describing a deep state of moral confusion.

How do we see this today in the USA?

There is a concerted effort inspired by demonic entities to abandon Christian values which they call "Western" values. They are attacking the family, law & order, freedom and independence.

Psalm 2:1-3 – *Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us."*

v21 – Who are those who are wise in their own eyes?

They are the ungodly who have stopped thinking rationally to buy into the devil’s anti-God narrative and thus became idolators...

Romans 1:21-23 – *although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.*

They are full of pride, and reject the wisdom of God...

- "The Bible is so judgmental. (Judge not lest you be judged.)"
- "It's all how you interpret it; You have your interpretation and I have mine."

This kind of thinking exalts the wisdom of man over the Word of God.

5:22-23 – Woe to those with worldly, temporal values

Woe to men mighty at drinking wine, woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink, who justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away justice from the righteous man!

v22 – Who does God condemn here?

Woe to the men mighty at drinking: These are men of accomplishment, of high achievement - in sin!

What attracts people to mind-altering substances?

It's ironic that the people most in love with this world seek to escape from it by intoxication. Those without a biblical worldview have no assurance of life beyond this fallen world so they seek relief in worldly pursuits.

v23 – What goes along with being intoxicated?

Who justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away justice from the righteous man?... These are men who care only for their own pleasure and entertainment, and care nothing for others. Selfishness characterizes them!

5:24-30 – A sure and complete judgment.

Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble, and the flame consumes the chaff, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom will ascend like dust; because they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. Therefore the anger of the LORD is aroused against His people; He has stretched out His hand against them and stricken them, and the hills trembled. Their carcasses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still. He will lift up a banner to the nations from afar, and will whistle to them from the end of the earth; surely they shall come with speed, swiftly. No one will be weary or stumble among them, no one will slumber or sleep; nor will the belt on their loins be loosed, nor the strap of their sandals be broken; whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent; their horses' hooves will seem like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind. Their roaring will be like a lion, they will roar like young lions; yes, they will roar and lay hold of the prey; they will carry it away safely, and no one will deliver. In that day they will roar against them like the roaring of the sea. And if one looks to the land, behold, darkness and sorrow; and the light is darkened by the clouds.

v24 – What would God's judgment be like?

As the fire devours the stubble, as the flame consumes the chaff: Stubble and chaff are both very flammable. God is warning of sudden, complete, and severe judgment.

Why would there be such swift judgment?

Because they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel: Every one

of Judah's sins could be traced back to a rejection and despising of what God says. Man's opinion was far more important to them than God's word.

v25 – What does it mean that the Lord's hand is stretched out against Judah?

That hand which had many a time been stretched out for them against their enemies is now stretched out against them personally.

v26 – What would be the instrument of God's wrath?

He will lift up a banner to the nations from afar, and will whistle to them from the end of the earth: God will call foreign nations to come and invade Judah, making them instruments of His judgment upon them.

v27-29 – What would characterize the instruments of God's judgment of Judah?

They shall come with speed, swiftly ... No one will be weary or stumble among them ... Nor will the belt on their loins be loosed ... Whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent: the armies God will call against Judah are all business. They are totally focused, prepared, and readied - with the strong men of Judah use their strength for drinking contests! This would be a great mismatch, and a soft, drunk, and flabby Judah will certainly fall against such dedicated enemies.

v30 – Why would the LORD put Judah in such a distressing place?

Behold, darkness and sorrow; and the light is darkened by the clouds: Because He loves them. These words are harsh, but merciful; the words are a slap in the face to prevent total and eternal destruction. The only question is, "Will we listen to God's warning?"

- God's woes are better than the devil's welcomes.

What applications stand out from today's discussion?

- The Lord expects members of His vineyard to be fruitful... we're saved for good works!
- God has done all the heavy-lifting in our salvation, the ball is in our court to have a relationship with Him.
- God's discipline is to simply turn us over to ourselves to face the natural results... turn back to Him and avoid more consequences.
- Worldliness is unfaithfulness to God... turn back before it's too late.
- The ungodly are not able to think rationally... much of the problems in our society are a result of this.
- God's judgment is swift, *with a flood* (Daniel 9:26))