

CWA Old Testament Lesson - Pentecost 20 - October 26, 2014 - Kieth Bernard Kuschel

Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church - 377 E Lincoln Trail Blvd– Radcliff, KY 40160

Isaiah 5:1-7

(1) I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. {2} He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit. {3} "Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. {4} What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad? {5} Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled. {6} I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briers and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it." {7} The vineyard of the LORD Almighty is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.

When do you sing?

Why do you sing?

SONG ABOUT VINEYARD

I. Joyful Song

A. Owner's work

1. 2. 3. Location, Dug, Cleared
4. 5. 6. Chose, Watchtower, Press
7. Reason for joy

B. God's Blessings on Israel

1. Chose, planted, dug
2. Cleared, watchtower, fruit=joy

C. God's blessings to us

1. Chosen, planted, dug
2. Clears, watchtower, fruit=joy

II. Sad Song

A. Owner's expectation

1. Provision, income
2. Smelly grapes

B. Gods' expectation

1. Justice, righteousness
2. Thankoffering

C. Instead: Bloodshed, distress

1. Economic
2. Sensual
3. Deception

D. Our fruit

1. God gives
2. God expects

E. Examples

1. Housing and provisions for others
2. Pleasure/helping expenditures
3. Deception?

III. Stern Song

A. Owner's reaction

1. Destroy wall
2. No pruning or cultivating
3. NO rain

B. God's reaction

1. NO protection
2. Withdraw Prophets
3. No Word

C. God's reaction to us

1. Let enemies in?
2. Withdraw Law & Gospel?
3. Let briars and thorns in?

IA1 What did the owner of the vineyard do? He picked the location on a fertile hillside. Grapes need soil that has a very particular chemical makeup. Hillsides provide the right amount and intensity of sunlight.

2 Next he dug it up. The water & fertilizer could get to the roots. The air and bacteria necessary for humus production could get into the ground.

3 Then he cleared it of stones. That's a big job anywhere. But an Arab proverb says that when God created the world he sent an angel with two bags of stones. One bag broke when the angel was passing over Palestine. So, Palestine has half the rocks. The rest of the world has the other half.

4 Next he chose the vines. The vines didn't choose to come in on their own. Some wild ones didn't creep over the wall. The owner chose and planted them.

5 He built a watchtower. From here one could see when wild or domestic animals or people would get into the vineyard. That would avoid destruction and stealing. The watchtower also became the storage facility at harvest time.

6 He cut a winepress. This included a bathtub shaped depression cut out of a ridge or cliff into which the juice ran when the grapes were pressed. And remember no dynamite available.

7 If the vineyard were a person, it would have sung a joyful song of thanks to the owner for all the work he had done to prepare it.

B1 In verse 7 the Lord tells us that the vineyard is the nation of Israel. God chose Israel to be His special people from whom the Savior would come. He planted them in the special location called the land flowing with milk and honey. He sent His prophets to dig up their hard packed spiritual lives with His law, so that they acknowledged their sinfulness. Thus the good news of His forgiving love could create and maintain faith in the Savior God in their hearts.

2 He cleared out the stones, the other people who had been inhabiting Palestine, so that they could not be choking out the spiritual growth of God's people by their ungodliness and their worship of false gods. His prophets manned the watchtower, constantly warning people about the intrusion of sin and falsehood into their lives. He gave them direction and opportunity to produce fruit, to live out their relationship with Him and the people around them as a product of all He had done for them. The people of Israel had every reason to sing a song of joy because of all the Lord had done for them.

C1 Does any of this sound familiar? God picked us out to be His special people. Not because we deserved or earned the right to have a relationship with Him. Just because He loved us. He planted us in a special place called His family. He did that by breaking up our sin packed souls with His Law which led us to believe that we are sinners. That made it possible for the good news of Jesus the Savior to penetrate our souls, convincing us that Jesus died to wash away our sins, lived to cover us with His holiness, and rose from the dead so that we might live forever.

2 He regularly clears His family of the false teachers who would divert people from Jesus and thus retard our spiritual growth. He leads His people to apply His Word to each other to warn each other against ungodliness, apathy, and spiritual laziness which can be just as destructive to our relationship with Jesus as false teachers. He gives us skills and opportunities to live our lives to benefit people around us and to give Him glory, which makes our lives rich and full. We have every reason to sing a song of joy because of all the Lord has done for us.

IIA1 The owner of the vineyard didn't do all of this for nothing. He looked for a crop of good grapes. To provide for his family. To provide an income for the household.

2 There was a problem. It yielded only bad fruit. The word means smelly. The grapes rotted on the vine. That has happened to me with tomatoes. You smell them when you walk into the garden.

B1 The Lord expected a crop of good fruit from His people. The last verse says: He looked for justice and righteousness. He expected His people to do what was just and right toward each other and toward all those around them, reflecting His justice, His righteousness.

2 He expected that of them as a thankful response to Him for all that He had done for them. If His people really appreciated all that He had done for them, they would have tried very hard to use every aspect of their lives to thank Him by living as reflections of His justice and righteousness. An approach to life which God says makes Him very happy.

C1 Instead all God saw was bloodshed and cries of distress. The people were taking advantage of each other and of others. Squeezing the blood out of people literally or figuratively whenever they could get away with it. The rest of the chapter gives examples. Taking away their neighbors' houses. Driving people off the land which provided them with their livelihood.

2 The financially well off are described as seeking pleasure, rising up early to get drunk, staying up late to extend their passion, reveling and brawling.

3 They are good at deception, make evil look good, and make the good of others look evil. They bribe the judges. This is the rotten grapes of the vineyard. What a sad song.

D1 Are we producing fruit for the Lord? The owner of the vineyard expects, even demands fruit. Remember this is the Lord who gives us gifts, forgiveness because of the death of Jesus, holiness because of the perfect life of Jesus and eternal life because of the resurrection of Jesus.

2 He expects that we do what is just and right toward those around us as a reflection of His justice, His righteousness. He expects that of us as a thankful response to Him for all that He had done for us. If we really appreciate all that He had done for us, we will try very hard to use every aspect of our lives to thank Him by living as reflections of His justice and righteousness. An approach to life which God says makes Him very happy.

E1 Let's use this chapter's examples. Are we using other people to better ourselves without considering if we are rendering them incapable of providing for their families or taking away their means of providing for themselves and their families? Or, are we using some of our resources to help people stay in their residences and keep their means of income intact?

2 Are we addicted to sensually pleasurable activities, or involved in drunkenness, passion, reveling and brawling, all of which is selfish, self-oriented activity? Or are we involved in giving ourselves for the benefit of others? When you look at your checkbook or credit card statement, is it obvious that pleasurable activities, our entertainment budget, is much bigger than our budget for helping others and our budget for bringing the Gospel of Jesus to others?

3 Are we making sure our lives look good to others? What do they really look like to God? Are we trying to make sure the lives of others look much worse than ours? Do we manipulate others so that we get our way? Are we producing smelly grapes? If God were to sing a song about us His vineyard, would it be a sad song?

IIIA1 The owner got very upset when the vineyard only produced smelly grapes. He says: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed. I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled. The animals could trample it. The humans could appropriate it.

2 {6} I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briers and thorns will grow there. Without pruning it would be all vines, no grapes. Without cultivating it would be incapable of maintaining a good crop and briers and thorns would take over.

3 You know God is talking when the owner of the vineyard says: “I will command the clouds not to rain on it.” Nothing can grow and produce fruit without water. What a stern song from the owner of the vineyard.

B1 We know how God dealt with Israel and Judah because they produced smelly grapes. He removed His hedge and wall. Without His special protection Israel and Judah were just two pint sized nations. Their enemies trampled them.

2 He allowed the cultivator of His law to stop being applied by the prophets. People refused to acknowledge their sinfulness. He allowed fertilizer of His Gospel to become scarce. People stopped trusting in the Savior God and the Promised Messiah. If they wanted to be without the Lord in their life, God stopped pruning and cultivating.

3 If they wanted to be without the Lord in their life, He let the briers and thorns grow. They became overgrown with the worship of Baals and Asherah and whatever false gods were available. They became overgrown with disgusting godlessness. Finally God let the Word stop raining in the land. No prophets were working at all. If they insisted on producing only smelly grapes, God withdrew and said, “Have it your way.” It doesn’t get any worse than that.

C1 How does God respond when He looks at our smelly grapes? Does He let our enemies trample us? If you objectively look at your life, can you determine who is in charge? Who is winning the daily battles in your life? The Devil? The unbelieving people who surround you? If they are, is God trying to tell you something? Might you be on the slippery slope that leads to abandonment of the Lord? Lord, please don’t withdraw your protection. Without it I won’t continue to believe that Jesus lived and died and rose for me.

2 How does God respond when He looks at our smelly grapes? Does He stop pruning and cultivating? If you objectively look at your life, can you correctly evaluate your use of God’s Law and Gospel in your life? Are you going along with everybody else and not even dealing with the concept of sin? Are you going along with everybody else and insisting that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news that there is no definitive good news and everybody is right? If the Law and the Gospel are scarce in your life, is God trying to tell you something? Might you be close to divorcing the Lord? Lord, please don’t stop cultivating my life with your law and fertilizing it with Your Gospel. Without it I won’t continue to believe that Jesus lived and died and rose for me.

3 How does God respond when He looks at our smelly grapes? Does He stop the rain and let the briers and thorns to grow? If you objectively look at your life, can you tell how much influence the Word of God has on your life and how much the false teaching of other religions has on your life? Is God trying to tell you something? Might you be close to being overrun with briers and thorns? Lord, please don’t stop raining on my life and pruning it with Your Word. Without it I won’t continue to believe that Jesus lived and died and rose for me.

Lord, don’t ever let things happen so that You have to sing a stern song about me.