

Isaiah 5:1-7

The text which we have before us this morning provides us with yet more evidence of the **lengths** to which our God will go, in order to **communicate** with us. Throughout the pages of His Word, our God makes use of many different **types** of communication. Sometimes He speaks to us in plain **words** and **phrases**, while at other times He makes use of **parables**. Sometimes He speaks in **prose**, and other times in **poetry**. The LORD has seen to it that there is something for **everyone** in His Word. Today's text is an example of God speaking to us in **song** - **The Song Of The LORD's Vineyard**. As the Prophet Isaiah sings this song, we will see that it is a song of **praise**, a song of **sorrow**, and a song of **hope**.

The opening verse of the song lays the **groundwork** for its remainder. It is a verse filled with **praise**. The text begins, *"I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard. My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. 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."* Just look at all the **wonderful** things which the owner had done for his vineyard. First of all, we hear about the **soil**. The owner had chosen a **fertile** area - a place where the soil had the kinds of **minerals** and **nourishment** which were necessary for the proper growth of grapevines. And since this area was on a **hillside**, it would be continually exposed to **sunlight** - another important ingredient for proper growth. The land itself is described as a **top-notch** location.

But then we hear that the owner took special pains to **prepare** the soil for **planting**. He **dug** it up - literally, he carefully worked up the soil **by hand**, in order that the soil would be able to **soak up** all the precious **raindrops** as they fell to the earth, and channel that life-giving water to the root system of the grapevines. He also **cleared** the area of **stones** - stones which would later be used to build a **wall** around the vineyard to keep out the **animals**; as well as to build a **tower** in the center of the vineyard, from which he would watch its progress. This was no small task, especially considering how rocky the soil of the Holy Land happens to be. There is an old fable which claims that when God created the world, he sent an angel across the face of the earth, carrying two bags of rocks. The story goes that while the angel was flying over **Palestine**, one of the bags broke open - thus depositing about **1/2** of the world's stones in that one area. If you've ever been involved in clearing a field of stones around here, you know it involves **lots** of hard work. Just imagine how much work this man must have put

out, in an area where there is probably as much rock as there is soil!

After all this preparatory work was completed, next the owner **planted** his vines. They were each hand-chosen - the **best** vines which were available anywhere - vines which were renowned for both the **size** and **quality** of the grapes which they produced. This man was planting “the mother of all vineyards,” and he was sparing no **labor** and no **cost**. Only the very **best** would be used in this vineyard. Of course, the finishing touch was to install a **winepress** in the vineyard, because after all, making wine was what growing grapes was all about.

Now, it’s in the final verse of our text that God reveals the **meaning** of **The Song Of The LORD’s Vineyard**. Isaiah said, “*The vineyard of the LORD Almighty is the **house of Israel**, and the **men of Judah** are the **garden** of His delight.*” God had truly showered **Israel** and **Judah** with blessings. He had **separated** them from all the other nations, designating them as His own **special** people. He had graciously given them His **law**, His **prophets**, and a clear revelation of His **will** for their lives. They had been provided, by the Almighty God Himself, with grace, mercy, and blessings **beyond compare** - **none** of which had been **earned** or **deserved** by them.

Now that you’ve heard about all the things which the owner **did** for his vineyard - and you realize that Isaiah was talking about the relationship between **God** and His **people** - listen to the **next** words in our text. “*He looked for a crop of **good** grapes, but it yielded only **bad** fruit.*” That doesn’t seem **possible**, does it? With the best **soil**, and the best **vines**, and the best **care**, how could this vineyard produce anything **other** than the best **fruit**? That’s the question which the **owner** had too. He had every **right** to expect **good** grapes, but instead he received only **sour** and **unusable** ones. The LORD saw the **same** bad fruit in His **children** - **wild** fruit - fruit which was **unfit** for consumption. I don’t think it’s going to be a surprise to anyone that the LORD is describing the **sins** of His people. And we need to realize that **our** sins are not only **bad** - they are **repulsive** to God - they are exactly the **opposite** of what God **expects** from us, and of what God **deserves** from us.

All too often we attempt to **rationalize** our sins. We think that because we had good **intentions**, that the LORD will **overlook** our shortcomings. Or we think that since we **started out** well, that the LORD will be pleased with our **meager** efforts. Maybe those efforts weren’t the **greatest**, but they should count for

something. However, the LORD would compare such thinking to a grapevine which produces only **leaves** and **buds**. Although having good intentions and getting off to a good start are certainly **important**, what the LORD is **really** interested in is the **end result** - the **fruit**. And when it's **not there**, He's obviously **disappointed**.

That brings us to the **second** verse in **The Song Of The LORD's Vineyard** - a verse which is filled with **sorrow**. We read, "*Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, **judge** between me and my vineyard. 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**? 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**. I will make it a **wasteland**, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briars and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds **not** to rain on it.*" It should have been very clear that the owner of this vineyard had been perfectly thorough in his **generosity**. He had invested a considerable amount of time, talent, and treasure, in order to make his vineyard one which had **no rival**. We certainly shouldn't think it strange when the owner throws up his hands in **frustration** and **confusion** asking, "Where did I go **wrong**?" He even invites the townsfolk to come and **judge** between him and his vineyard. Perhaps they could think of something he had **overlooked** - something he had left **undone**.

Of course the **reality** of the situation is that every thing **had** been done, and by **restating** that fact in their judgment, the men of Judah and Jerusalem would actually be **condemning themselves** for bringing forth **bad** fruit. So, when the judgment had been pronounced, and the vineyard had been deemed **no good**, it only stands to reason that this **fruitless** vineyard must be left to its own **destruction**. Therefore, the LORD removed the **hedge** and the **wall**, which had formerly **protected** the vineyard from being **trampled** by animals. The LORD also removed His tender loving **care** - withholding the life-giving **rain**, and allowing thorns and briars to **overrun** the grapevines, and **choke** them out.

It should **never** have come to that. The LORD had done **so much** for Israel. He had **chosen** them - **not** because they were **greater** or **better** than others, but to show His **love** and **power** and **glory**. Israel needed **work** - **lots** of work - and the LORD gladly **provided** it for them. All He hoped to see in **return** from them was a little **justice** and **righteousness**. But it wasn't there. Instead, God saw **bloodshed**, and He heard cries of **distress**. That was in **physical** Israel - and now

we have taken their place as God's **children**. We are the **spiritual** children of Israel, and our God has been no less gracious to **us**, than He was to the people of Isaiah's day. He has blessed us with **so much**. And what does He hope to see in **return?** - a little **humility**, and **meekness**, and **patience**, and **love**. But it's **not there**. Instead God finds in us **pride**, and **passion**, and **discontent**, and **malice**. Because of our **sins**, we deserve to be left **unprotected** - we deserve to be **trampled** by wild animals - we deserve to be left **without hope**.

But the LORD didn't do that for **physical** Israel, and He hasn't done it for **us** either. **The Song Of The LORD's Vineyard** is a song of **hope**. You see, the LORD saved a **remnant** in physical Israel. He **rescued** all those who **believed** in Him - all those who put their complete **trust** in the promise that He would send them a **Messiah**. That means there is hope for **us** too - not because we have **earned** or **deserved** it, but because of God's **grace** and **mercy** in sending **Jesus** to take away our sins. Oh, He can and does send us occasional **reminders** of the fact, that He would like to see and hear some **positive responses** from us. The LORD **withholds** rain, or sends **excessive** rain to remind us that we are **His** vineyard - and without **His** care, we will not **survive**. But He also sends us reminders of the **hope** which is ours through our **Savior**. There is hope for the old and the weary, there is hope for the newly begun. There is power and strength to be found, in the grace of our Lord. My dear friends, faithfully and frequently **listen** to and **share** God's Word, receive His **holy Supper**, and bask in the **grace** and **forgiveness** which He freely offers. Amen.