



“The Lord’s Vineyard & Its Wild Grapes”

Isaiah 5.1-20

October 9, 2022

This morning the prophet Isaiah is going to take us on a field trip. We are going to visit a vineyard together. How does that sound? Are you ready for that? While we are there, we are going to go ahead and taste some of its fruit.

If you like grapes, it would seem you’re in luck, because this vineyard is a top-caliber operation. It has the highest quality of soil, the best species of vine, and the most cultivation and preparation. So as we will see, the sweetest and juiciest of grapes were expected. But sour, slimy, smelly grapes appeared instead.

And we need to look at them, smell them, and taste them. Because the grapes are representative of sinful practices and attitudes that we remain capable of, even as those redeemed by God. Such sin upsets the magnificent possibilities of fruitfulness—the very fruitfulness and spiritual productivity that the Lord intends for our lives.

I know we are reading long portions of Scripture here in our study of Isaiah, but let it be so and let our attention spans be increased, because this is how these prophetic oracles are to be read. That is my conviction. We can always stand to increase our ability to concentrate as we read through these extended portions of Scripture.

As we go through Isaiah Chapter 5, here is what I want you to look for. Verses 1 through 7 provide the parable of the vineyard. What we see is that a choice vineyard produced a foul crop. Then in Verses 8 through 30, six clusters of nasty, stinky grapes are placed in front of us, where we can smell them and even taste them.

Each of these clusters is indicated by the word “Woe” Be looking for it. This is a prophetic word of judgment and grief. All of this is to sober us to the pull of sin that remains in us and to empower us in a response of fruitfulness by God’s grace working in us.

So let’s look at what is Isaiah Chapter 5, starting in Verse 1:

**¹Let me 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;
and he looked for it to yield grapes,
but it yielded wild grapes.**

**³And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem
and men 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 looked for it to yield grapes,
why did it yield wild 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 waste;
it shall not be pruned or hoed,
and briars and thorns shall grow up;
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 men of Judah
are his pleasant planting;
and he looked for justice,
but behold, bloodshed;
for righteousness,
but behold, an outcry!**

**⁸Woe to those who join house to house,
who add field to field,
until there is no more room,
and you are made to dwell alone
in the midst of the land.**

**⁹The LORD of hosts has sworn in my hearing;
“Surely many houses shall be desolate,
large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant.**

**¹⁰For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath,
and a homer of seed shall yield but an ephah.”**

**¹¹Woe to those who rise early in the morning,
that they may run after strong drink,
who tarry late into the evening
as wine inflames them!**

**¹²They have lyre and harp
tambourine and flute and wine at their feasts,
but they do not regard the deeds of the LORD,
or see the work of his hands.**

**¹³Therefore my people go into exile
for lack of knowledge;
their honored men go hungry,
and their multitude is parched with thirst.**

**¹⁴Therefore Sheol has enlarged its appetite
and opened its mouth beyond measure,
and the nobility of Jerusalem and her multitude will go down,
her revelers and he who exults in her.**

**¹⁵Man is humbled, and each one is brought low,
and the eyes of the haughty are brought low.**

**¹⁶But the LORD of hosts is exalted in justice,
and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness.**

**¹⁷Then shall the lambs graze as in their pasture,
and nomads shall eat among the ruins of the rich.**

**¹⁸Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood,
who draw sin as with cart ropes,**

**¹⁹who say: "Let him be quick,
let him speed his work
that we may see it;**

**let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near,
and let it come, that we may know it!"**

**²⁰Woe 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!**

**²¹Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes,
and shrewd in their own sight!**

**²²Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine,
and valiant men in mixing strong drink,**

**²³who acquit the guilty for a bribe,
and deprive the innocent of his right!**

**²⁴Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble,
and as dry grass sinks down in the flame,
so their root will be as rottenness,
and their blossom go up like dust;
for they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts,
and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.**

**²⁵Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against his people,
and he stretched out his hand against them and struck them,
and the mountains quaked;
and their corpses were as refuse
in the midst of the streets.
For all this his anger has not turned away,
and his hand is stretched out still.**

**²⁶He will raise a signal for nations far away,
and whistle for them from the ends of the earth;
and behold, quickly, speedily they come!**

**²⁷None is weary, none stumbles,
none slumbers or sleeps,
not a waistband is loose,
not a sandal strap broken;**

**²⁸their arrows are sharp,
all their bows bent,
their horses' hoofs seem like flint,
and their wheels like the whirlwind.**

**²⁹Their roaring is like a lion,
like young lions they roar;
they growl and seize their prey;
they carry it off, and none can rescue.**

**³⁰They will growl over it on that day,
like the growling of the sea.
And if one looks to the land,
behold, darkness and distress;
and the light is darkened by its clouds.**

And because the Holy One of Israel has spoken to us, we say AMEN, and may God bless the reading of his word!

I've experienced many illnesses and sickness through the years of my life. But to the best of my knowledge, there is one kind of sickness that I have managed to evade all of these years. That sickness that I think I have managed to evade is this: food poisoning.

Have any of you had that? I'm seeing some nods of understanding and affirmation. Food poisoning, what a terrible thing. You take something in that you intend to nourish your body with and it makes you sick instead! That is not how it is supposed to work.

The Lord had marvelous plans for the nation of Israel. Israel was His vineyard, and Judah was His pleasant planting. And in the imagery of this passage we just read, He purchased them. He invested in them. He provided for them. He cultivated them with His Word.

God was preparing them for a harvest of fruit that would glorify the name of the Lord as His people lived in a way that was distinct by His grace. It was a harvest of fruit that would nourish one another in the nation; a harvest of fruit that would also provide spiritual nutrition for the nations around them as they walked in the ways of the Lord. This kind of fruitfulness was God's desire.

They were prepared to be this kind of nourishing presence on the earth, but instead, they were filled with all manner of iniquity and sin and idol worship. What we have presented here for us in this passage of Scripture is not that they were producing no fruit, it is that they were producing foul fruit, wild grapes.

This language of wild grapes is a little bit more intense than what we have in the translation of wild grapes that comes up in Verses 2 and 4. I am not an expert in the Hebrew language, but a man named Alec Motyer, who wrote a book on the prophecy of Isaiah that I am reading said this, "A very literal translation of wild grapes could be stink-fruit." How does that sound? Stink-fruit! Something foul, smelly, slimy, even toxic.

So when it talks about wild grapes, it is not the kind of blueberries or raspberries that grow out in the wild that you collect and bake a pie for Pastor Jeff with. Not that kind of wild fruit. This was something rancid. It was not good! At the source of it is that they rejected the Law of the Lord of Hosts.

**²⁴Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble,
and as dry grass sinks down in the flame,
so their root will be as rotteness,
and their blossom go up like dust;
for they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts,
and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.**

Under the Mosaic Covenant, God gave six-hundred and thirteen commands and stipulations that would make them distinct in holiness and in love among the nations the earth. They rejected the Law of the Lord and it is not just that they rejected it, they despised it. They didn't like it. They didn't want it. That is what was distasteful to them. They didn't like the Psalms of David. They didn't like the word and the history. They had an aversion to the truth of God.

So, with continued calls to repentance being ignored, the judgement of the Lord was brought in and this purging of the vineyard was to come through the Lord's whistling of the foreign powers of Assyria and Babylon. That is what was happening here in this text.

Looking at all of this from a New Testament lens, brothers and sisters, we need to be warned as well. We need to take heed. We need to look at what is here because the reality is that Christians in churches can produce bad fruit of the lingering sinful nature in them as well.

I have been driving in the Dodge and listening to the radio as I do. I have been listening K-earth 101, the oldies station that plays my music. There is a commercial that this station has been playing repeatedly. It is a commercial about clergy abuse, inviting people abused and harmed by pastors and priests to pursue litigation, so that they can be rightly compensated for it. There is enough of this kind of abuse taking place in houses that bear the name of Jesus that it is worthwhile for these organizations to publicize it on the radio and receive responses. That is stink-fruit! That is not the nourishing life-giving fruit. That is harmful stink-fruit, abusers in the house of God.

That's just one example. We can talk about all kinds of manifestations of conflict and cliquishness and territorialism and infighting in the church. Sexual immorality among Christians. All kinds of things like this, and there is a sense in which we have that pull in these mortal bodies. We need to confess our sin too, thanking God for the grace by which He has forgiven us in Christ. But we are capable of producing this kind of fruit.

You read through Paul's letters and you see it. It was a reality even the very early church age. You read through Paul's letters and in each one of those early gatherings of Christians, you will see that they had things that they were struggling with and that they needed to repent of, so that they could do away with the stink-fruit and produce the good fruit that gives life and that is nourishing through the power of the Holy Spirit.

One example in particular is the Corinthian church. Read I Corinthians and then read II Corinthians and you will get an idea of what a hot mess that church was. There were all kinds of crazy things going on. Perhaps the most alarming issue that was revealed there was their practice of the Lord's Supper, of Communion, where the wealthy within the church of Corinth were kind of pushing aside the poor in their midst. They were filling up on the communion elements, even getting drunk with communion wine.

Paul indicated in I Corinthians Chapter 11 that, "Okay, you need to examine yourselves before you take the communion of Jesus. And you take it in a worthy manner." Paul was even suggesting that many of the people in that church were getting sick and dying because of what they were doing. That is bad fruit!

You read through the churches of Asia Minor in Revelation Chapters 2 and 3. There are seven different churches, five of them had to be severely rebuked by Jesus. In one case, Jesus told some of the members of one of the churches, "If you continue in this way, I am going to come against you with the sword of my mouth."

To another church, He said, "If this continues and you don't repent, I am taking away your lampstand." So humbly before the Lord, we need to consider what kind of fruit we are bearing. This rings forth to the people of Bethel Grace Baptist Church this very day.

We need to think about this and Isaiah is our friend who is helping us to think it through. He is guiding us along. You know that caricature of the raving, ranting Hebrew prophet? I love how Isaiah just smashes that false picture. He is such a reasoned man. His writing is so persuasive and clear.

Isaiah is so tender as a man of God. Did you notice that this chapter opened up as a love song? A love song to the vinedresser and the vineyard. He loved God and country, his people. And even with the repeated use of that word “woe,” understand that the use of that word does not simply denounce sin, it laments it. So in Isaiah’s writings he was writing from a heart that feared the Lord, and provided warning mingled with sorrow and godly grief. That is the heart of this book.

So here in this chapter, what Isaiah did was to hold up six clusters of wild grapes, as it were, to illustrate what was going wrong. Once again, each of these clusters is represented by a “woe.”

It is now time for us to take a look at these grapes. Here is why we do this: first I want for us to look at this and by the power of the Holy Spirit, I am praying that He will produce in each of us and in all of us collectively, an aversion to these sins that we might be repelled from that into what is good; that we might not resist the Holy Spirit but go with the flow of the Holy Spirit and produce a crop of fruit.

So we will look at each cluster and see each species of sin, then we will see the series of four “therefores” that indicate God’s judgment. My desire at the end is then to do a reversal. Here are these six clusters of grapes. What would it have looked like in each species of sin if it turned out the exact opposite, because, brothers and sisters, that is what the Spirit of Jesus is going to make so attractive in our eyes as we are filled with His truth and His grace.

Six Clusters of Wild Grapes—first we see:

1. The “Stink Fruit” of Greed (5:8-10)

Yes, I am going to keep using that language because that is the language of the Sacred Text.

We see this in Verse 8, with the imagery of the rich getting richer by amassing real estate in Israel.

**⁸Woe to those who join house to house,
who add field to field,
until there is no more room,
and you are made to dwell alone
in the midst of the land.**

What we have here is more than a picture of ambitious capitalism, like in our culture where people may take opportunities to gain wealth in a free market by purchasing available properties. What we find throughout the warnings of Isaiah is that this was a matter of the rich oppressing the poor.

So there were people buffeted by the difficulties they were facing and their cupboards were bare. They went to neighbors who had plenty of grain. They asked, “Can you help and can you provide so that my family can eat?” Then the rich said, “Yes, we will help you out. We will give you these measures of grain and you give us these portions of your property in exchange. In that way, you will be able to feed your family.”

So instead of looking at their abundance and saying, “God has helped me and I am glad to give,” they were saying, “Here is an opportunity. I will give to you and I am going to get from you as well.” That is what was going on here.

Understand that in the context of Old Testament Israel, God said that the land of Israel was His and that all of the people were living there by His gracious permission. He placed them there. It was the will of the Lord that the land be handed down along family lines in perpetuity through the generations to ensure that each clan would always have its home.

So when the wealthy of Judah were being opportunistic, accumulating more and more and more property unto themselves, what we have is the practice of practical atheism. They were living as though God were not a factor and that God’s plan for the well-being of the children of Israel was meaningless.

This pointed to the fact that the Kingdom of Heaven was not their treasure. Their appetite was for earthly wealth and that appetite could not be satisfied because they kept having to have more and more and more, so they were willing to take what God intended for other people. This is opportunistic greed. And let our hearts be warned because wild vines can grow out of us as well.

These verses go on to lay out the unintended consequences for those people that would accumulate more and more being isolated from society, and God withholding His blessing so that acres of vines would produce only one bath. That is like six liters. So God was at work in the midst of it. He was seeing all of this, and the first cluster held before us is that of greed.

The second is this:

2. The “Stink Fruit” of Revelry (5:11-12)

We see this when we go into Verses 11 and 12:

**¹¹Woe to those who rise early in the morning,
that they may run after strong drink,
who tarry late into the evening
as wine inflames them!**

**¹²They have lyre and harp
tambourine and flute and wine at their feasts,
but they do not regard the deeds of the LORD,
or see the work of his hands.**

So what we see here is that the party animal mentality was alive and well in Old Testament Israel. That same pull toward the night club and the debauched place of revelry like is still a pull for people that are named as Christians.

Many will still feel the pull of it and Paul addressed this in the New Testament churches because they had grown up in pagan worship, where they were involved in all kinds of drunkenness and sexual immorality as worship rites. Paul realized that this was going to be a pull, so you must recognize this in Old Testament Israel as well—that longing after drunkenness and getting hammered. Party hearty. That kind of thing.

You can see in the language of Verse 11, for many of them, drink was their life. The pursuit of liquor got them out of bed in the morning and the effect of liquor kept them out of bed at night. Then the alter ego of drunken impropriety took over as they were inflamed by the alcohol.

The language of inflammation is having the nuance of lust. So with all of these instruments, the dancing turned dirty, you might and say, and who knows what else was going on. I think we know what else was going on. It was debauched revelry.

The saddest part is that we see in Verse 12 the link between the rise of sensual indulgence and the loss of spiritual perception. Sensual excess dulls the mind to the things of God, so that when we live with this kind of pursuit we lose our perception and we miss the obvious. We don't see the deeds of the Lord. We stop seeing the work of His hands.

There was the wild fruit of revelry. We continue and also see:

3. The “Stink Fruit” of Defiance (5:18-19)

This is laid out for us in Verses 18 and 19. The picture found here is in the words of one author, so absurd it must be true. It is the imagery of a horse drawn cart. In our day you might think of a U-Haul trailer. Instead of being pulled by horses, the cart was being pulled by people. We see that what they were pulling in their cart was loads of sin. Verse 18:

**¹⁸Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood,
who draw sin as with cart ropes,
¹⁹who say: “Let him be quick,
let him speed his work
that we may see it;
let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near,
and let it come, that we may know it!”**

Isaiah understood in Verse 18 what a burden sin is. It enslaves us. It takes us into bondage as we pull its load. Even as we struggle to pull it forward, we are tethered to the deceit of sin. It says that we draw iniquity with cords of falsehood. That language of drawing iniquity with cords of falsehood, could be understood in one of two ways, or maybe both.

It could be that we lie about the sin we've come under the bondage of. Few people are upfront about the sin that they are dealing with. For someone who is dealing with drunkenness, they will minimize the drunkenness and say, "I just need the alcohol at night to get myself to sleep." The one who is gambling will hide it. The one who is looking at porn will conceal it. We are pulling this heavy load with these cords of falsehood.

The other way it could be understood is this: it could be that sin lies to us about its place in our lives. Sin is personified throughout the pages of Scripture as having desires and pursuits. And it promises to fill the void and give fulfillment when in fact it enslaves us like beasts of burden. So we see this picture that is laid out before us.

Here is the sorrowful absurdity of it all: the progressive nature of sin is seen in the arrogance and defiance it brings in the person who is living in it. So the person subjugated by sin is scoffing and testing and even taunting the very One who has the power to release them and set them free.

The next cluster of wild grapes is:

4. The "Stink Fruit" of Perversity (5:20)

By perversity I mean deliberate deviation from what is good. This deviation is rationalized by exonerating evil and vilifying what is good. So we have these famous words in Verse 20:

**²⁰Woe 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!**

What we have depicted here is the often repeated attempt of rewriting the moral code, so that sin becomes the accepted way of life.

We switch the labels so that we call evil things good and good things evil. That's the practice, and what we have depicted here is that it can happen at the societal level and at the individual level. Light and darkness are experienced at the community level, are they not? Right now we are all sitting under lights. If we were here at night, we would shut them all off and be together in darkness.

So woe to those who put darkness for light and light for darkness. This is the societal redefinition of good and evil. Then it can happen at the personal level too, because how is taste experienced? We taste things individually when we eat something, so it could be a matter of a person putting bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

Whatever level, we find ways to rationalize sin. Generation after generation after generation insists that reality be redefined so that our evil can be called good. Whoever proclaims the evil of what is being called good, they will call them evil. They will be swept outside the periphery of society.

Brothers and sisters, there are many manifestations in the society that we are living in. One is abortion. The people who advance abortion don't call it pro-abortion, they call it pro-choice. And they don't call pro-life, pro-life, they call it anti-choice. Do you see how the language is used? This happens in so many different ways.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we need to think about our own lives and how we are capable of doing this as well. We rationalize gossip by saying it is a prayer concern. There are people that belong to churches that will rationalize fornication as making love, and pre-marital intimacy as necessary to make sure that they are sexually compatible before making such a commitment. These things happen and we are capable of these things.

By the way, a man and a woman equals compatibility. God designed it that way. Marriage, a man and a woman to the glory of the display of Christ the groom and His church, the bride. That is marriage. That's it. But if you advance that, you will be pushed to the periphery of society as one who is an oppressor, denying people their rights. While everybody has the right to be a part—a man and a woman, they may get married. That's marriage.

The wild grapes of perversity. And it is one thing when it happens in the unredeemed world, but when this is taking root in churches, in the body of Christ, boy do we need to ask the Lord to sound the alarm. And that is exactly what Isaiah sought to do.

Then we see the:

5. The “Stink Fruit” of Conceit (5:21)

This is more of the progressive nature of sin. It is all progressing, and it comes to the point where we have the sense of autonomy in the moral affairs of life—this conceit.

**²¹Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes,
and shrewd in their own sight!**

The Hebrew concept of wisdom always had a moral element to it. This is autonomy in these areas. It is the attitude resistant to counsel and moral instruction from the Creator of all things. It is the attitude that says, “I have things figured out for myself. I'm the captain of my own ship. I will determine my course for myself. I will do things my way.”

The wild grapes of conceit, then it comes to:

6. The “Stink Fruit” of Corruption (5:22-23)

Another surprise is given in the final cluster that is presented to us. We are taken to the judges of Israel into the very heart of the legal system, and we find men on the benches and they were heroes in the worst possible sense. Because the judges of Israel, they were heroic and their power was not manifested in their willingness to stand for the downtrodden in the face of powerful members of society. Instead their heroism was in their ability to mix and hold strong liquor instead.

**²²Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine,
and valiant men in mixing strong drink,
²³who acquit the guilty for a bribe,
and deprive the innocent of his right!**

They were positioned in places of authority to do good but instead, they used the position of authority to benefit self. It was opportunism that we see presented here.

So we have these six clusters of wild grapes, better yet, stink-fruit. And in the midst of all of this, while this was filling the land of Israel, the ageless ongoing truth continues then into this day. God is not mocked. Galatian Chapter 6 and Verse 7

⁷Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

And the Lord will be exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows Himself holy in righteousness.

Weaved throughout the presentation of these six clusters with six “woes,” there were also four “therefores.” Each one depicted God’s just judgment; each one used vivid imagery to do so. First, in Verse 13, there was the therefore of:

1. Exile

They will be taken captive.

**¹³Therefore my people go into exile
for lack of knowledge;
their honored men go hungry,
and their multitude is parched with thirst.**

Exile would come first in the form of Assyrian exile; then Babylonian exile for the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin. This is expanded upon in Verses 26 through 30, with the stunning imagery of world powers being whistled for by God, and they immediately came and made it happen.

The first “therefore” of judgment was exile. The second was that of:

2. Dead/Sheol

Sheol, or the grave; this imagery of death throughout the Old Testament.

**¹⁴Therefore Sheol has enlarged its appetite
and opened its mouth beyond measure,
and the nobility of Jerusalem and her multitude will go down,
her revelers and he who exults in her.**

It depicts people being swallowed up alive. Ironically, people with such large appetites for wealth and alcohol consumption and all of the abuses related to both in terms of greed and debauchery, they were met by a foe with a larger appetite than theirs was. It gulped them down.

There is the imagery of Sheol. Then third, there is the imagery of:

3. Drought

These images of physical drought represents the deeper concern of spiritual drought, so that the grass is just fading and even the blossoms are falling. It is because they have rejected and despised the Word of the Lord, which is the fount of life for the soul, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**²⁴Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble,
and as dry grass sinks down in the flame,
so their root will be as rottenness,
and their blossom go up like dust;
for they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts,
and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.**

Then finally, we have the fourth foe of:

4. Divine Anger

This is given to us in Verse 25:

**²⁵Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against his people,
and he stretched out his hand against them and struck them,
and the mountains quaked;
and their corpses were as refuse
in the midst of the streets.
For all this his anger has not turned away,
and his hand is stretched out still.**

Here in this text, we see the imagery of the outstretched hand of the Lord portrayed for us at the beginning and at the end of the verse. What was so alarming for the people of Israel about this was that it was the same imagery that is used all throughout the book of Exodus.

Who was the outstretched arm of God striking in the book of Exodus, ten times over until they finally released the people of God? Who was being hammered with the outstretched arm of God? Yes, it was the Pharaoh and the Egyptian people.

Who was that outstretched arm raised against in this text? It was the people of Israel and it is a stunning image, because the Lord will be exalted in justice when the call to repentance is repeatedly spurned and even despised. So we have this chapter which is a grave portion of Scripture.

I was thinking about this: what if Isaiah was here? What if the man, Isaiah, who wrote this in the Spirit was here? What would he think of our worship service this morning? What would he think of the way that I handled this text? I would just say to him, “Brother, I studied it and I did my best and I know there are glorious details that I had to move through fast. It is all so rich. Thank you.”

But I think the man, Isaiah, would have delighted in the reading that was found earlier in the Scripture of the Messiah that he prophesied about repeatedly; about Christ speaking grace and power into the lives of His people, saying:

⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸By this my father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. (John Chapter 15 and Verses 5 -8)

The final answer to all of our failure in the end is the One who said, “I am the true vine and I am the One who has power to make you, even you wild vine, fruitful.” Isn’t that good news? That is good news!

We got to take heed, because even in that glorious teaching of Jesus being the vine and us the being the branches, there are words of warning related to the fact that there will be tares mixed in with the wheat. There is the reality of false conversion. We need to take heed and say, “Lord, bear fruit in my life that shows Your work in me being genuine.”

I want to finish like this:

⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸By this my father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

Now we see six clusters of nourishing grapes. What do the exact opposites look like? What do we want the Lord to do in our midst? Instead of:

1. The Fruit of: ~~Greed~~ Generosity

Instead of the fruit of greed, let the fruit of generosity be mass produced in our lives, in our church, by the power of Jesus, who is the life source of it all. You will find that God is faithful to put resources in your hands. He is a good Father and He loves you. He is providing for your needs and as a good Father, He is providing for some enjoyment too!

But guess what else? Through you, He is going to provide for others. So throughout the New Testament, we have the joy of generosity for the church of God. We are taught in II Corinthians Chapters 8 and 9, how God loves a cheerful giver. The poor Macedonians who said, “We are going to give sacrificially to the poor church in Jerusalem, because the love that God is prompting in our hearts, it is sweet and good nourishing fruit when we are generous with what God has given to us.”

So, this is a matter of not just saying, “I have these resources and I’m going to meet my needs and get what I need, then if there is anything left over, I will give that away.” No! Give sacrificially! Give so that it hurts a little bit. Give so that it hurts a lot, because this is the kind of love that is fruitful and pleasing in the sight of God.

It’s a holiday season, let’s be generous, because God loves a cheerful giver. That is sweet generosity. Then second,

2. The Fruit of: ~~Revelry~~ Rejoicing

Instead of the fruit of revelry, filled the Spirit let there be the fruit of rejoicing. Study Ephesians Chapter 5 and Verses 18 through 21 in contrast to the verses in Isaiah about the revelry that we read of, because it is amazing how there is such a sharp and beautiful connection and contrast.

There with all that drunken revelry, we are taught how such living dulls our spiritual perception. And in Ephesians Chapter 5 and Verses 18 through 21, it is the exact opposite, brothers and sisters. It says, “Do not be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit.” Don’t be drunk with wine, we don’t want that! “Be filled with the Spirit.” We want that!

Then Ephesians goes on to give four descriptive consequences of what happens in the life that is filled with the Spirit of the Living God. One of them are this: the first descriptive consequences will be that you will be singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord. You will be using those harps and lyres the way that they are supposed to be used. And you will be doing this because the Spirit-filled person is going to be giving thanks to God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ.

So in the same way that alcohol dulls our perception, being filled with the Spirit magnifies it; it sharpens it. When we are filled the Spirit of Jesus, we are able to see His works and be thankful people in view of what God is doing. So we go to the Lord and say, “God, I’m a wild vine redeemed by the grace of Jesus, now make me a fruitful vine that bears this kind of fruit.” Joy in the Lord, rejoicing, which is pure and holy, good and pleasing and life-giving.

Next:

3. The Fruit of: ~~Defiance~~ Reverence

Instead of defiance, there will be reverence. We will recognize that God is the Lord; He is the Holy One of Israel; He is not only the Holy One of Israel, but of all of heaven and earth. Apart from His provision of our next breath, we die! And He is the Lord who gives us breath, He is good to us—and there is reverence that is at the heart of worship that is so good.

Then next:

4. The Fruit of: ~~Perversity~~ Humility

Instead of perversity, there will be humility. The recognition that God made us and that we are His creation and that He is the only One who writes the moral code. And He has revealed it in the pages of the Bible.

And He will help us to see that in the Word of God, we have truth for life, and He will help us so that we will say, “You are God. I’m not. You made me. You govern me. And that is the best place for me to be. You govern my finances, the use of my speech, my sex life. You govern it all, because You are the One who created it all and Your way is good.” This is the fruit of the Spirit that Jesus is going to bring in us.

5. The Fruit of: ~~Conceit~~ Teachability

Instead of the fruit of conceit, there will be fruit of teachability. Filled with the Spirit of Jesus, there will be the attitude that says, “I most certainly don’t know everything that I need to know. There is so much that I have to learn. I stand so much to gain receiving guidance, so God, teach me Your Word and provide me with mentors who will help me to see what Your Word says and means. I need Spirit-filled people who are going to help me on this path.”

Then, finally:

6. The Fruit of: ~~Corruption~~ Compassion

Instead the fruit of corruption, there will be the fruit of compassion, helping us to see things as they are; helping us to use whatever position or voice God has given us to help the weak and downtrodden. God will help us to do this with eyes of compassion.

So, in all of this, brothers and sisters, let us praise God that Jesus has come into the world to save sinners. And Jesus does not only forgive His people as they come to Him, pleading the cross before the holiness of God, but He transforms us by the power of the empty grace of Jesus.

There is much, much hope for a bunch wild vines like us. Not only is there atonement, there is regeneration. Our God, the Living God, will give life to our mortal bodies, so that in them we will bear fruit—fruit will last.

Let's pray.