

August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Year C; Proper 15

Isaiah 5:1-7

Psalm 80: 1-2, 8-18

Luke 12: 49-56

## ***Isaiah 5:1-7***

*Let me sing for my beloved  
my love-song concerning his vineyard:*

*My beloved had a vineyard  
on a very fertile hill.*

*He 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;  
he expected it to yield grapes,  
but it yielded wild grapes.*

*And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem  
and people of Judah,  
judge between me  
and my vineyard.*

*What more was there to do for my vineyard  
that I have not done in it?*

*When I expected it to yield grapes,  
why did it yield wild grapes?*

*And 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.*

*I will make it a waste;  
it shall not be pruned or hoed,*

*and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns;  
I will also command the clouds  
that they rain no rain upon it.  
For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts  
is the house of Israel,  
and the people of Judah  
are his pleasant planting;  
he expected justice,  
but saw bloodshed;  
righteousness,  
but heard a cry!*

***“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”***

The first tomato of summer is such a treasure. Whether in your own garden or purchased, that first appearance of a local, fresh, so recently on the vine tomato is a moment to stop and offer thanks to God for living in a world with tomatoes.

Now, in mid-August, fresh, local so recently on the vine tomatoes are everywhere! And if you open your front door, likely someone has dropped off a load of tomatoes, desperate to find homes for all the garden is producing! Now as much as I do love tomatoes, my heart truly sings for a good sweet peach.

In my experience, an excellent peach is harder to find than an excellent tomato. A willingness to ripen, a deep sweetness, the flesh firm not mealy, the seed intact and not fragmented or moldy, a lot has to come together to experience a superb peach. I imagine a lot of conditions are needed to grow that perfect peach: the right amount of rain, no sudden late frosts, enough sunshine but not too much heat, and so much more.

Our reading from Isaiah, in this time of harvest, speaks of a vineyard, tended with love and care, all efforts made to assure that conditions are provided for a sweet harvest.

And yet, the harvest is awful: wild grapes, that would be bitter, with large seeds that allow for little fruit, deeply disappointing, like when I cut into a

beautiful peach and get mealy tasteless flesh!

Isaiah, writing approximately 700 years before the birth of Jesus, speaks of the conditions God has provided for God's people, specifically for the people of Judah, but words that still ring clear to us in 2022.

The image of the loving care provided for the grapes in the vineyard echo God's love for God's creation, for this earth and for all that inhabits it, and God's love for the creatures of land and water and sky, and for us humans. And though God has provided, the harvest is bitter, because God provided enough for all, and expected in God's creation to see justice but sees instead bloodshed. God expected a nurtured vineyard would produce sweet righteousness, but instead hears cry of pain from those left out, those discriminated against, those treated with contempt.

The prophet Isaiah speaks as loudly to us as he did thousands of years ago. God provides for us, but it is our responsibility to use all God has given us wisely. God provides this amazing earth, our island home as the prayer book calls it, and still so many go hungry on our planet, so many do not have clean drinking water.

God provides and in Jesus, teaches us that God chooses the table with the outcasts, those marginalized by society, and yet over and over and over again, we do not invite all to the table, we say about our church, our world, that all are equal and accepted and loved, except.....

We make the same mistakes over and over, judging each other all through time, as God has given us this glorious earth, provided for all, and yet we keep setting up us and them, in and out, powerful and downtrodden.

And in our gospel, Jesus comes with the same fierceness as the image of God in Isaiah, raging at a people ungrateful and wasteful of all provided, God expecting justice and finding bloodshed.

Jesus speaks with urgency of the need for us to see what is right in front of our eyes, the urgency of all in our world, for the bounty of the harvest to allow all to be fed, and yet so many are in need and starving. Jesus's fierceness tells us this is our responsibility; God provided for us, and what have we done with all we have been given? Have we accumulated and saved only for ourselves, or pushed ourselves to give and help and welcome? Jesus speaks of the divisions in households, a shocking thing for us to hear, but he does so to remind us that when our hearts hear God's call to share

and welcome and care, we may find ourselves at odds with others, even those we hold most dear.

I have said before: As Christians we are a peculiar people.

We are not meant to be the most powerful, the most popular, the most prosperous.

To walk with our brother Jesus is to choose the table where the outcasts sit, to eat with those on the margins and to welcome all.

Do we hear our foundational call:

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.”*

One wise writer said that with this commandment from Jesus, love of God is bond, is woven together with love of neighbor. If we disregard neighbor, we disregard God, if we have contempt for neighbor, we have contempt for God, if we are useless to neighbor, we are useless to God.

Tough words in our readings today, and on this Scholarship Sunday.

But when I feel overwhelmed by the world and how often the harvest is wild grapes, with little to share and feed, I find that my hope rests where we are today, with our teens and twenty-somethings.

For the past six years I have had the privilege of serving in the Diocese as a mentor to new clergy. Most of those in my group were young people, in their twenties and early thirties. These dear folks kept me slightly more with it and hip, patiently explaining the latest slang terms, and the newest technology to my fast-aging brain!

And every time we met, they restored my hope that the vineyard can still produce grapes, sweet and feeding and available to all.

Of course, young folks will make their own mistakes, but my hope was embedded in seeing that the things my generation wrung its hands about and debated, well, these young people have moved past, and are getting closer to the work of the gospel, focused on feeding, inviting and including.

For example each year I served as a mentor, an increasing number of the young people I worked with identified as LGBTQ+. Their comfort and courage in answering a call to serve in the church, fed my hope that the church just might be able to leave behind all of our us/them, in/out thinking and devote our energies to working in the vineyard to assure a sweet harvest for all God’s children.

These young folks I mentored, and often who mentored me, gave me hope, as do our scholarship recipients today, as they labor with God to harvest those sweet feeding grapes, to breakdown barriers in our world, to join Jesus in inviting all to sit at their table, and show us how, indeed, loving God and loving neighbor cannot be separated.

Amen.