

Isaiah 5:1-7

5:1 Let me sing for my beloved my love-song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill.

5:2 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.

5:3 And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard.

5:4 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?

5:5 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.

5:6 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.

5:7 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!

Matthew 21:33-46

21:33 "Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country.

21:34 When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce.

21:35 But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another.

21:36 Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way.

21:37 Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'

21:38 But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.'

21:39 So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

21:40 Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?"

21:41 They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time."

21:42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes'?"

21:43 Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom.

21:44 The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."

21:45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking

about them.

21:46 They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

Proclamation of the Word

Expectations- we all have them.

Some of you probably expected Clemson to win yesterday, but maybe you were shocked at what difference a week makes, like me.

Some of you expected less so you might be pleasantly surprised.

Expectations we all have them.

Pastors wrestle with expectations. There are as many expectations of the church as there are people. Some expectations are met. Others are not. Some of us expect church life to be much like it was in our childhoods or in a past time, but we know that the culture and times have drastically changed.

Those of us who are parents wrestle with setting expectations. If we set them too high, we heap stress and anxiety on our children. If we have low expectations, we are being irresponsible. But most of us do our best to create a great environment for our kids to grow in faith, in education, in concern for others.

Successful universities like Clemson set high expectations, like the goal of making the Top 20. Many worked together to create an environment in which vital mission of educating students and impacting our world can happen.

Business owners who have high expectations work hard to build the right environment, invest in good workers, buy the right equipment, and prepare for a successful business.

Today in our readings about God's Vineyard, we see that God has high expectations for his people, too. God creates a great environment so his vineyard might yield lots of healthy grapes. He enriches the soil, builds a watchtower and wine press, hires workers, and puts everything in place needed for healthy growth.

In the Isaiah text, the people of God have chosen bloodshed over justice. Instead of righteousness, God hears the cries of his people. God expects justice and righteousness from us. God expects good fruit of mercy, faithfulness, and right relationships.

Jesus takes the Hebrew Scriptures and puts a new spin on them. The vineyard would be known to be God's people, the Jewish people. Jesus puts a new twist on it saying it is the workers, the tenant farmers, not the fruit who are rotten. They are greedy, spoiled. They even kill the owner's son to take the vineyard and its profits for themselves.

These texts of judgment seem fitting when we look around us at the world God made. God's children around the world are suffering from war, greed, violence and diseases like Ebola. We cannot ignore the cries of those who have been captured, raped, and tortured by ISIL. We cannot ignore the injustice of the world's resources. Jimmy Carter is a Christ follower, first and foremost. He also happens to be a former president. As we walk for hunger today, we remember what he once said,



On this World Communion Sunday, we proclaim that God is the rightful owner of all that is. The earth is the Lord's and all that dwells in it. God in our parable, is the owner and Lord of the Vineyard. The prophet Isaiah and the prophetic Jesus is calling us to return to our rightful owner and live as God expects. God has high expectations. To return to our rightful owner is repentance- turning from the ways of violence, bloodshed, and injustice to a faithful witness to God who is righteous and just. But preacher, you may be thinking what can we do about those things? We have little influence and power. I disagree.

Jesus tells us that he is the vine and we are branches. When we are rooted in him, when we abide in the Vine, we will produce good fruit of justice and righteousness. God gives us what we need, creating the environment for us to grow in grace and love. God gives us Jesus Christ in this sacrament of cup and bread to show us that Jesus Christ poured out his life in self-giving love that we might know the richness of God's grace. God gives us the written Word, so we may seek together to understand who God is and what God expects of us. God gives us this community, the church, in which to be watered, nourished, and to help one another grow in faith. We have what we need to live out God's good news. We have Jesus, the living Word, the written Word, and the community of believers, the church.

So what if instead of taking on the whole world and every issue of justice and righteousness, we focus on what we can do. Justice and righteousness means loving our neighbor and God. Here are 3 things we can do:

1. Homelessness- we cannot end all homelessness, but we can support families in our county, by participating in Family Promise. Families will make their home here in our building for one week, four times a year. You and I will staff it. We will bring dinner, offer to set-up, clean up, be a friend and even sleep here as overnight hosts while a few of our classrooms become bedrooms for families. The week of November 2-9 will be our first venture. I am sleeping over one night- please join me in helping. The

first week, Holy Trinity church welcomed a mother and her newborn, just discharged from the hospital. Like Mary, Joseph, and a newborn Jesus, there was room in the inn, in God's house.

2. So what about those big issues that overwhelm us like Peace in the Middle East?

Never underestimate the power of prayer. Jesus said pray for your enemies. So pray for those caught up in the evil of IS, Al Qaeda, Hamas, even governments who commit bloodshed. Pray for the victims of violence by unjust leaders and terror groups. Pray for world leaders, civilian and military making decisions on how to address the problem. Pray for men and women in our military who serve there, for medical personnel, and aid workers.

2. CROP Walk- perhaps we will never end hunger, but we can share what we have with those who are hungry. Money raised today will serve to feed our neighbors through Clemson Community Care, our food bank. Another portion goes to assist Church World Service in feeding neighbors around the world who are hungry and desperate. Some members who are walking will be at the table to receive your donations which will be combined to support Fort Hill Church's efforts. We have been the lead church, help us continue to do so.

We do so because of what God has done in Jesus Christ. When Jesus invites us to his table for supper today, we recall his life, substance and blood that was given. He gave all for the sake of the world, so that we might have life and have it abundantly, but also so that we may bear good fruit for his sake. When we share what we have with the hungry, a light shines in the darkness (Isaiah 56). It is sacred and holy act of worship to share what we have with the hungry. The CROP walk is an extension of this wide, wide table filled with good things, provided by God's grace.

Perhaps the poet says it best. Please turn in your bulletin to the 2nd page side bar and read this blessing for World Communion Sunday.

And the Table Will Be Wide
A Blessing for World Communion Sunday

And the table
will be wide.
And the welcome
will be wide.
And the arms
will open wide
to gather us in.
And our hearts
will open wide
to receive.

And we will come
as children who trust
there is enough.

And we will come
unhindered and free.
And our aching
will be met
with bread.
And our sorrow
will be met
with wine.

And we will open our hands
to the feast
without shame.
And we will turn
toward each other
without fear.
And we will give up
our appetite
for despair.
And we will taste
and know
of delight.

And we will become bread
for a hungry world.
And we will become drink
for those who thirst.
And the blessed
will become the blessing.
And everywhere
will be the feast.

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Thanks be to God! Amen.