

Sermon 9 – Song of the Vineyard Study Notes

Weekly Scripture Memory Verse

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5, NKJV)

Day 1: The Care of the Master

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 5:1-2

“Now let me sing to my Well-beloved a song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, and also made a winepress in it; so He expected it to bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes.”

Devotional Teaching and Application

The prophet Isaiah comes to the people with a song, a story drawn from real life that illustrates a profound spiritual truth. He sings of a well-beloved friend who has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. He does not just scatter seed and walk away; he painstakingly prepares the ground. He gathers out the stones, he builds a tower for protection against predators, and he hews out a solid stone winepress in anticipation of a magnificent harvest. He plants the very choicest vine. Every possible advantage is given to this vineyard. The labor and the care expended by the owner show that nothing has been spared.

What do we mean by this? In this parable, the vineyard is the nation of Israel, and the owner is the Lord. The fruitful hill is the promised land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey, perfectly suited for the covenant people. The gathering of the stones represents God driving out the Canaanites and their enemies. The tower and the wall represent the law of God and the city of Jerusalem, given to protect them and guide them. God lavished His love and His care upon His people. He gave them everything they needed to thrive and bear the fruit of righteousness.

This is a beautiful picture of God's grace, but it also carries a weighty application for us today. When God saves a people, He plants them carefully. He gives us His Spirit, His Word, and the fellowship of the body of Christ. We have been given every spiritual resource in the Lord Jesus Christ. As we look at the immense care God took with Israel, it ought to stir our hearts to profound gratitude. He is the ultimate Provider, and He carefully tends to the souls of His people.

Family Discussion and Reflection

Take a moment to consider the spiritual advantages God has placed in your own life and home. The owner of the vineyard did not leave the vines to fend for themselves; he actively cultivated them. As you discuss these questions together, think about how God has cultivated your family and what kind of fruit He is looking for.

1. How does recognizing God's careful preparation and provision in your life change the way you view your current circumstances and spiritual privileges?
2. Parents, ask your children: If you were planting a garden, what are some things you would do to make sure your plants grow strong and healthy?

It is a humbling reality to realize that we are not wild plants left to our own devices, but a divine culture planted by God Himself in human history. We are accountable for the care and the truth we have received.

Family Prayer Prompt

Lord, we thank You for the incredible care You have taken in our lives. You have placed us in a fruitful place by giving us Your Word, Your Spirit, and Your church. Help us never to take these spiritual blessings for granted, but to use them to grow deep roots and bring glory to Your name.

Day 2: The Tragedy of Wild Grapes

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 5:3-7

"And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes? ... For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold, a cry for help."

Devotional Teaching and Application

The tragedy of this story is that after all the investment of time, money, and effort, the owner looked for beautiful, sweet, large grapes in abundance. But what he got were wild grapes instead. These were bad grapes, worthless grapes, bitter and acrid, unfit for any sort of use. The bitter grapes express the bitterness of the soul of the owner. His love was unrequited. The owner then calls upon the people to judge the situation, asking a piercing question: "What more could I have done?" It is a question that removes all excuses from the people of God.

We have a tendency to blame God for our lack of spiritual production. We say, "Lord, if you would have just given me a better church, if my husband would be more faithful, if my wife would be more submissive, if my children would be more obedient, if my health was better, then you could have found some good grapes." Do we see the blasphemy in such thoughts? On the basis of the song of the vineyard, God has done all that is needed. In God's order, in God's way, those who are in authority and those who have been given grace are accountable to the God who gave it.

He looked for justice, but He found oppression. He looked for righteousness, but He found the cry of the oppressed. When there is little good fruit in our lives, we must stop rationalizing. We must abandon that approach to rationalizing the lack of spirituality in our homes. We need to get serious about depending daily on the Holy Spirit, consciously walking by His power, and deliberately searching the Scriptures. If the fruit is not there, the blame is not with God.

Family Discussion and Reflection

The temptation to shift blame is as old as the Garden of Eden. Yet, the Lord calls us to take personal responsibility for the spiritual fruit we are producing. Think about the ways we justify our own bitter attitudes or actions instead of repenting of them.

1. In what areas of your life are you tempted to blame your circumstances or other people for your own lack of patience, love, or obedience?
2. Parents, ask your children: If a fruit tree only grows sour, yucky fruit, is it the farmer's fault if he did everything right, or is there something wrong with the tree itself?

We must honestly examine our hearts and ask God to cultivate true righteousness within us. He has provided the means of grace; we must faithfully utilize them.

Family Prayer Prompt

Father, forgive us for the times we have produced the wild grapes of selfishness, anger, and disobedience. Forgive us for blaming our circumstances instead of taking responsibility for our own hearts. Work in us today to produce the sweet fruit of the Spirit, that we might honor You in all we do.

Day 3: The True Vine

Scripture Reading: John 15:1-5

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me,

and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”

Devotional Teaching and Application

The teaching of our Lord Jesus gives us the glorious fulfillment of Isaiah's song. Israel, the first vineyard, failed to produce the fruit God required. That vineyard was destroyed and taken into captivity. But God planted another vineyard. A type is something that was divinely intended to be a picture of Christ, and here we see that the "choicest vine" Isaiah spoke of ultimately points to the Son of God Himself. Jesus Christ is the true vine. He surpasses Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This vineyard will not fail because of the absolute perfection of the Vine Himself.

Through Christ comes all of the nourishment, all of the spiritual resources, and everything you and I need to bear fruit. It is through Christ that spiritual life comes to us. It is through Christ we receive the Holy Spirit. It is through Christ we have the completed Scriptures, the ordinances of the church, and the privilege of prayer. He has given us everything we need. What we are, as believers, are the branches that grow out from Him. And it is only as the branches abide in the vine that they will bear fruit.

This is the center of the gospel message. You cannot produce righteousness by trying harder in your own flesh. The flesh only produces wild grapes. You must abide in Christ. You must rest in His finished work, draw your strength from His Word, and commune with Him in prayer. If a man abides in Christ, he will bring forth much fruit. Without Him, we can do absolutely nothing.

Family Discussion and Reflection

Abiding in Christ is not a passive activity; it requires deliberate, daily communion with the Lord. Consider how your family draws strength from Jesus rather than relying on your own human effort to be good.

1. What are practical ways that you, as an adult or parent, consciously "abide in the vine" during the busyness of your daily life?
2. Parents, ask your children: A branch can't grow apples if it is broken off the tree. How do we stay closely connected to Jesus so we can grow good fruit?

When we stay closely connected to Christ through His Word and prayer, the life of the Vine flows into us, making true obedience possible.

Family Prayer Prompt

Lord Jesus, we acknowledge that You are the true Vine and we are merely the branches. We confess that apart from You, we can do nothing of eternal value. Draw us closer to Yourself. Teach our family what it means to abide in You daily, so that our lives might overflow with good fruit for Your glory.

Day 4: The Wild Grapes of Greed

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 5:8-10

“Woe to those who join house to house; they add field to field, till there is no place where they may dwell alone in the midst of the land! In my hearing the Lord of hosts said, ‘Truly, many houses shall be desolate, great and beautiful ones, without inhabitant. For ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield one ephah.’”

Devotional Teaching and Application

As Isaiah continues, he pronounces a series of woes against the specific sins of Judah. These woes are identifications of the different types of wild grapes God found in His vineyard. The word "woe" is an interjection expressing strong dissatisfaction and condemnation. To be under God's woe is to be doomed because of His great abhorrence of the sin. The very first woe is declared against those who covet and steal their neighbor's property. These were wealthy men, lying on their beds at night, devising ways to force their poor neighbors from their rightful land so they could build massive estates for themselves.

This ambition is a direct violation of the tenth commandment: "Thou shalt not covet." They were squeezing out the poor, leaving no place for anyone else. But God announces a strict judgment of an eye for an eye. Because they coveted houses, their great and fair houses will become desolate, empty without inhabitant. Because they coveted land, God would curse the land so that it would be utterly unproductive. Ten acres of vineyard—a massive plot of land—would yield only about eight gallons of juice.

Ill-gotten gain, profit that comes to us through fraud, theft, or ruthless ambition, will never bring true prosperity. The wicked do prosper for a time, but the gain of oppressors is always short-lived. The way to prosper is through honesty, respect for our neighbor, diligence, hard work, and most of all, through the fear of the Lord. We must put God and His kingdom first, not the acquisition of wealth. Covetousness is a bitter wild grape that destroys the soul.

Family Discussion and Reflection

The culture around us constantly tells us that we need more—more space, more things, more money—to be happy. God's Word warns us that covetousness leads to spiritual ruin. Evaluate how the desire for "more" might be affecting your household.

1. How can we actively cultivate contentment in our lives, protecting our hearts from the dangerous sin of coveting what others have?
2. Parents, ask your children: Why is it important to be thankful for the toys and things God has given us, instead of always being upset about what we don't have?

Contentment is a profound spiritual discipline. When we are satisfied with God's provision, we are freed from the tyranny of constantly wanting what belongs to someone else.

Family Prayer Prompt

Righteous God, guard our hearts against the sin of covetousness and greed. Forgive us for the times we have been ungrateful and have desired the things of this world more than we desire You. Teach us to be content with Your daily provision and to use what we have to bless our neighbors rather than oppressing them.

Day 5: The Folly of Dissipation and the Holiness of God

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 5:11-12, 16

“Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may follow intoxicating drink; who continue until night, till wine inflames them! The harp and the strings, the tambourine and flute, and wine are in their feasts; but they do not regard the work of the Lord, nor consider the operation of His hands. ... But the Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God who is holy shall be hallowed in righteousness.”

Devotional Teaching and Application

The second woe Isaiah pronounces is against those given over to drunkenness and a life of total dissipation. The whole land of Judah was given over to mindless revelry. They thought it was a way to escape their problems, a way to feel good and enjoy life. But their drunkenness and self-indulgence meant they had no time or interest in the works of God. They did not consider the operation of His hands. They were entirely insensitive to what God was doing, completely unaware that their culture and their world was crumbling around them, setting them up for impending judgment.

This condemnation applies equally to any type of mind-altering drug or addiction to mindless entertainment. When a society is given over to intoxication and distraction, it is a society in crisis. Proverbs warns us that wine is a mocker and strong drink is raging; whoever is deceived by it is not wise. These things promise joy but ultimately mock you, taking control of your life and bringing you to ruin. The people of Judah were fools for ignoring the spiritual reality around them.

Yet, in the midst of this dark prophecy, a glorious truth emerges in verse 16: "The Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness." God is shown to be a holy God in the exercise of judgment against sin. His judgments demonstrate His absolute purity and His unwavering justice. The humble man and the mighty man alike will be brought low, but the Lord alone will be exalted. We must not be asleep or distracted; we must live sober, vigilant lives that revere the holiness of our God.

Family Discussion and Reflection

Distraction is one of the enemy's most effective tools to keep us from noticing what God is doing. Whether it is substance abuse for the world, or constant digital entertainment for the church, we are prone to ignore the operation of God's hands.

1. What are the modern "feasts and distractions" in our culture that keep people from considering the works of the Lord and preparing their souls for eternity?
2. Parents, ask your children: If you were playing a video game so loudly that you didn't hear your parents calling you for dinner, you would miss out. How can we make sure we are listening to God and not getting too distracted by fun things?

Living soberly means living with our eyes wide open to the reality of God's holiness and His ongoing work in the world. We must prioritize Him above every earthly pleasure.

Family Prayer Prompt

Holy God, You are exalted in Your justice and righteous in all Your ways. Keep us from being lulled to sleep by the distractions, entertainments, and sins of this world. Give us sober minds and awake hearts, that we might carefully consider the work of Your hands and walk in holiness before You all our days.