

- **The Tales of Two Vineyard**
(Isaiah 5:1-7; John 15:1-10)

INTRODUCTION:

1. Most everyone here has had some experience with a garden. They are a common part of life.
 - A. Gardens can bring joy and reward if they are productive, whether in beauty or in produce.
 - B. But successful gardens are generally not easy projects, requiring much preparation and constant maintenance to ensure their success.
 - C. Because of these two requirements, when I was young, I was not fond of our vegetable gardens.
 - i. I felt they required too much work for my liking and for what they were worth.
 - ii. But as I look back on them as a much older man, I see their **value** as both a **food source** for my big family at that time and for **what I learned** through my work in them.
2. Of course, in biblical times societies were agriculturally oriented and depended far more on their gardens than we did in Nashville in the 1970's and especially more than we do today.
 - A. People think, it seems, that fruits and vegetables come from the grocery store.
 - B. So, it might be difficult for some to relate to a garden and what it takes to produce one.
 - C. But in Bible times that would not have been the case. People knew about gardens and how they worked.
 - D. Therefore, it is not surprising that biblical prophets and teachers, including Jesus, used gardens, or gardening, as a means of illustrating their messages (Isa. 27:2-6; Jer. 2:21; 12:7-10; Psa. 80:8).
- 3. It is two such illustrations concerning gardens, or vineyards, one is given by Isaiah (Isa. 5:1-7) and other by Jesus (Jn. 15:1-10), that I want to focus on today. Thus, "The Tales of Two Vineyards."
4. I want to look at these because both help illustrate important things for us to learn concerning God's relationship with His people.

BODY:

- **I. Isaiah 5:1-7: A Vineyard Song (parable) of Hope and Loss**
 - A. Background:
 1. In **Isaiah 1:25–26**, against all deserving, the Lord promises to "turn my hand against" Israel and its faithless leaders to **remove their sin** and **bring restoration** and **righteousness**.
 2. In **Isaiah 3:13–4:6** we learn that Zion's greedy, selfish leaders and her prideful daughters will **receive their due**. Yet, God's wondrous **grace**, not judgment, would have the last word. For where **sin** was, **grace** abounded (4:4-6), providing **mercy** to the **totally undeserving**.
 3. What follows, however, in **Isaiah 5:1-7** is a song about a vineyard which presents the picture of **God's grace being exhausted, coming to an end!**
 4. So, as those who depend on God's grace for everything we truly hope to gain out of this life, what is sung here should be of interest!
 - B. A song is sung (5:1 – "Let me sing now for my well-beloved, A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill."").
 1. Intro: Isaiah sings this song **for his well-beloved**, about/from his **beloved** concerning **his vineyard** (5:1a)
 - a. Note Isaiah's emphasis on his **love** for the vineyard's owner.
 - b. This is likely intended to say that the owner of this vineyard is a *loving* owner, one *deserving of love*.
 - c. Yet, note that the *identity* of the owner and the vineyard are not disclosed!
 2. Then the song begins by stating its subject—that Isaiah's well-beloved *had/has* a vineyard located on a *fertile* (fat, rich) hill (5:1b).
 - a. So, the location is ideal, having nutrient-rich soil and ample sunlight (on a hill)!
 - C. The vineyard is the *work*, the *creation*, of the *well-beloved* (5:2).
 1. Its existence is owed to the *choice* and *actions* of the well-beloved (5:2a – "He dug it all around, removed its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. And He built a tower in the middle of it and also hewed out a wine vat in it")

- a. The decision to create this vineyard was followed by the owner doing all that should to be done for it to grow and prosper. *Nothing was left undone!*
- b. He prepared the soil, digging it and removing the stones (i.e., remember the peril of the seed that fell on rocky soil that sprang up but withered – Lk. 8:6).
- c. He planted the choicest, the very best, vine that would produce the best grapes.
- d. He provided long-term protection, building a tower in the middle of it (and a hedge 5:5).
- e. He made provisions to store its fruit, hewing a wine vat out of the rock.
2. And we learn that everything the well-beloved did was in *expectation* of a *good harvest* (1:2b – “Then He expected it to produce good grapes, but it produced only worthless ones.”).
 - a. Though every care had been lavished on it, its produce was *contrary*, *wild* in nature!
 - b. It was as though the **graceful hand** of the owner **had never touched it**.
- D. So, the beloved calls for judgement (5:3-4 – “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between Me and My vineyard. ⁴ “What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce worthless ones?”).
 1. The beloved, who is still **unnamed**, calls for the **inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah** to judge between him and his vineyard (5:3).
 2. He does so based on His *blamelessness* in His efforts for this vineyard—everything needed had been done (5:4).
 - a. So, the question is *why* (and/or *who is to blame*) for His vineyard producing worthless grapes when he had every right to expect otherwise?
 - b. I can picture certain Israelites possibly smirking as they quickly pass judgment on this nameless vineyard!
 - c. But, one should always take care when God asks for such things, for they usually provide opportunity for the ones asked to *hang themselves* (Rom. 2:1, 3 – “Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, **you condemn yourself**; for you who judge **practice the same things** ... ³ But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?”).
- E. Without delay, however, the beloved provides his own judgement on His vineyard (5:5-6 – “So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard: I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground. ⁶ “I will lay it waste; it will not be pruned or hoed, but briars and thorns will come up. I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it.”).
 1. It should not be missed in this judgment that the vineyard is *owned* by the beloved, which means it is *His to do with as He pleases!*
 2. So, to his vineyard the well-beloved will...
 - a. **Remove its protection**, its hedge and wall, so it will be *consumed* by others and become *trampled ground* (5:5).
 - b. **Lay it waste**, uprooting the vines and allowing weeds to take over, while also causing drought to consume it (5:6).
 3. Here again I can imagine certain Jews shaking their head in amazement at the utterly sad, but deserved, end coming to this *nameless* vineyard begun with such promise and hope!
- F. Identities revealed (5:7 – “For the vineyard of the **LORD of hosts** is the **house of Israel** and the **men of Judah** His **delightful plant**. Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress.”).
 1. The well-beloved owner is the **Lord**, and His vineyard **Israel** and delightful plant **Judah**!
 - a. So, here was a nation that unlike all the others was the specific creation of Yahweh with the intention that they be *His special possession* and the *subject of His graceful care!*
 - b. But, rather than rejoicing in Israel’s **harvest**, there would be **destruction** because their fruit, their hearts and actions, in no way reflected their Owner and His efforts for them!

2. So, the hope of the Lord for his vineyard ended in total **loss** due to Israel's **ingratitude** and **disobedience**!
 - a. What a **powerful warning** for us to be sure we **produce good fruit**—fruit that reflects the graceful hand of God that has touched our lives (Rom. 15:4 – “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”).
 - b. With that in mind I want to move to a garden, or vineyard, illustration of Jesus and the sobering thoughts it presents concerning our relationship with God through Him.

• **II. John 15:1-10: A Parable of God's Vine and Branches**

- A. The vine and the vinedresser (15:1 – “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.”).
 1. **Jesus is the true vine:**
 - a. This tells us that though Israel was God's vineyard of old and vital to His plan, **Jesus is the real one**, the one that would **produce the good fruit** Israel failed to produce!
 - b. Implied here in the **existence of the vine**, like in Isaiah's song, is **God's great love**! For, in sending Jesus God provided, even sacrificed, the **choicest of vines** for us!
 - i. Jn. 3:16 – “For God so **loved** the world, that He **gave His only begotten Son**, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”
 - ii. Rom. 5:8 – “But God **demonstrates His own love** toward us, in that **while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.**”
 2. The **Father** is the **vinedresser**: This is significant because, like the Beloved's vineyard in Isaiah, the *vine*, which is Jesus and His ministry, as well as the *branches*, who are Jesus' disciples, *come from the Father* and are *under His control*.
- B. The work of the vinedresser (15:2-3 – “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.”).
 1. Note how the vinedresser's work is directed specifically at **branches in Jesus**, which means the Father's attention is on me and you and on my and your fruit!
 2. **That is sobering** because of the **work** of the vinedresser:
 - a. Is **removing** from the vine the **unfruitful branches**, showing the great **peril** and loss facing any of us who fail to produce the proper fruit! (More on this shortly.)
 - b. Is **pruning** the branches that **bear fruit** so they can and will **bear more fruit**!
 - i. In 5:2 the word “prunes” (*kathairō*) literally means to **clean** or **cleans**, which here concerns cleaning a branch of unwanted sprigs that hinder it from bearing fruit!
 - ii. In 5:3 we learn that **cleansing** (*katharos*) comes through Jesus' words.
 - iii. What we see in this play on words is the continual process of **cleansing us** that comes through **Christ's word** and the Father work of **pruning**, or **cleansing** us, of the things that hinder us from producing good fruit.
 - c. So, here again, we see that God in His grace **has done**, and **continues to do, everything needed** to ensure our success in yielding the godly fruit resulting in eternal life!
 - i. Of course, pruning is rarely pleasurable, and often involves pain, hardship, and loss!
 - ii. So, we need to ask ourselves if we are responding favorably to the **Father's pruning**, if we are allowing Him to do His needed **work** on our lives.
- C. Branches must **abide in the vine** (15:4-6 – “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If 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.”).
 1. Here we have the definitive explanation of:
 - a. Who the branches are. And they are **disciples**, followers of Jesus!
 - b. The means by which the branches produce fruit, which is **abiding in the vine**, in Jesus!

2. Thus, the power to produce is not in me, but in my **connection** to Jesus described as **abiding in Him** and **He in me**.
 - a. **How do I abide in Jesus?** I must **love** God enough to **obey** (15:10 – “If you keep My commandments, you will **abide in My love**; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”).
 - b. **How does Jesus abide in me?** I must have **love** God enough to **obey** (Jn. 14:23 – “Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.”).
 - c. Though the world, even the religious world, downplays and rejects it, Jesus says that the wonderful lifegiving bond between the Vine and the branches is established and maintained by **love** that **obeys**!
3. So, faithful service is of paramount importance (15:6 – “If anyone does not abide in Me [by faith and love that obeys], he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.”).
 - a. That is not the end that any branch in Christ should ever want!
 - b. But, as Jesus said, whether that happens or is up to me—to you—based on whether we choose to continue in faith and obey Him.
- D. What **fruit** must I bear?
 1. The Lord does not specify the fruit, but two possibilities often come to mind (1) living in goodness and righteousness, and (2) preaching the word resulting in new converts.
 - a. God’s light through Jesus and gospel is to produce righteousness, goodness, etc. (Eph. 5:8-10 – “for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light”⁹ (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth),¹⁰ trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.”).
 - b. Preaching the gospel produces fruit (Rom. 1:13-15 – “I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some **fruit** among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles...”¹⁵ So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.”).
 2. What is expected of me? **All of the above!** Bearing proper fruit is committing my whole life—heart, will, and deed—to Christ and His cause (Gal. 2:20 – “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”).

CONCLUSION:

1. What have the vineyard song and parable said to you about your relationship with God?
 - A. Are connected to God’s vine, to Jesus, the only way by which the lifegiving grace of God can flow into your life? Those disconnected wither and in the end are burned!
 - B. Are you producing fruit and being **pruned** by the Father for greater fruit? Or, are you in danger of being removed for being unfruitful?
 - C. I encourage you to honestly evaluate your life right now, because the Father is doing so.
2. Will you choose today to connect to the Vine, to Jesus, through F-R-C-Bp?
3. Or, if you are failing to produce the proper fruit, will you choose today to repent and confess your sin, and return to Christ that you might again receive His lifegiving grace?
4. Please come right now as we stand and sing!