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16th Sunday after Pentecost  
Sermons  
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Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Jesus said to His disciples, *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser...I am the vine; you are the branches"* (John 15:1,5). In the Gospel for this Sunday Jesus tells a parable of man who owned a vineyard; he planted it, he put a fence around it, he dug a winepress for it, he built a tower in it, he leased it out tenants, then went on to another country, and in the time of the harvest he sent his servants to collect his fruit.

Now I am not a wine maker. I don't own my own vineyard. I don't cultivate choice vines to produce excellent wines. I have never put the time, energy, and resources into producing good grapes for making good wine. However I am a home-brewer, and I think there are some similarities to making good beer and making good wine.

Why do brewers make beer? To enjoy the fruits of their labor and to share what they have crafted with others. Why do wine makers make wine? Again, to enjoy the fruits of their labor and to share what they have crafted with others. This is exactly what the owner of the vineyard in Jesus' parable wanted; he wanted the fruit of his labor. This too was my goal and purpose in brewing my own beer. I wanted to craft my own good beer and enjoy its wonderful full bodied flavor. I also wanted to share the fruits of my labor with others who would appreciate it.

Brewers and wine makers devote time, energy, resources and personal care throughout the beer and wine making processes. Brewers and wine makers depend upon the fruits of the earth in order to make good beer and good wine; barley, hops, yeast, and water in the case of beer; grapes, yeast, and water in the case of wine. Brewers and wine makers make sure that only the best ingredients are used and are meticulous about following brewing and wine making procedures because they want to produce the very best beer or the very best wine.

A buddy of mine share the same goal and passion for beer that I did, so together we made preparations to brew. We both bought the Home Brewers Bible to study the process of making beer. We decided the best location for us to brew. We purchased all our brewing equipment. We made recipes for the styles of beer that we wanted to create. We purchased all the necessary ingredients. We cleaned our equipment, made sure all our measurements were correct and then set about the task of brewing. Then finally after all this work and time we are able to taste the fruits of our labors. Then we waited eagerly through the fermentation process so that we could enjoy our beer.

Our beer tastes great! Thankfully my buddy and I have enjoyed drinking every beer we have made. Thankfully we have never had skunky beer. I couldn't imagine going through all our plans, preparations, labor, and eager waiting for the fruits of our labor only to have skunky beer. What a waste skunky beer would be; good for nothing, but dumping down the drain! We would be terrible disappointed and angry if that happened.

Jesus said to His disciples, *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser...I am the vine; you are the branches"* (John 15:1,5).

Throughout Holy Scripture God often refers to His people as vineyard or vine and Himself the vinedresser or owner of the vineyard. John 15 and Matthew 21 are two such places in the New Testament while Psalm 80 and Isaiah 5 are two such places in the Old Testament. This imagery of God as the vinedresser and His people as His vineyard gives us insights into God's will and purposes, His character; it communicates what God has done and continues to do for His people and what God desires and expects from His people in return.

With this in mind give ear to the Word of the Lord through the prophet Isaiah:

1 I will sing to my Beloved, the song of my Beloved to His vineyard.

There was a vineyard to my Beloved on a hill rich with oil.

2 And He hoed it and He cleared it of stones. And He planted it with a choice vine.

And He built a tower in the midst of it. And also a wine vat He hewed out in it.

And He waited eagerly for it to produce grapes but it produced rotten grapes.

3 And now inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah,

judge between Me and between My vineyard.

4 What is there yet to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it?

Why have I waited eagerly for it to produce grapes but it has produced rotten grapes?

5 And now I will make known to you what I am about to do to My vineyard.

Remove its hedge and it will become for burning; break down its wall and it will be for trampling.

6 And I will make it a waste; and it will not be pruned and it will not be hoed; and thorn bushes and weeds shall rise up.

And upon the clouds I will command them not to rain rain upon it.

7 For the vineyard of Yahweh of Hosts is the house of Israel,

and the men of Judah are the plant of His delight.

And He waited eagerly for justice and behold bloodshed; for righteousness and behold an outcry.

Isaiah sings a song to the people of Israel, a song from God his beloved; a song about God's vineyard. This song in Isaiah 5 is not only a song about what happened in the past in the history of Old Testament Israel, but it is a song for the present people of God. Jesus said to His disciples, *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser...I am the vine; you are the branches"* (John 15:1,5).

From the first two verses of the song we see how good and gracious God is toward His people. God has done all that is good and necessary for His people. God is personally involved with His people. Isaiah's poetic imagery calls to mind God's gracious acts in the Old Testament to settle His people in the Promised Land after saving them in the exodus. God selected the very best place for His people, a land flowing with milk and honey. God went before His people removing the pagan peoples that had inhabited the land. God went with the people into the promised land and planted them throughout. God remained in the very midst of His people in the Tabernacle and then the Temple; His glory dwelt there as a refuge to His people.

God looked forward to tasting the fruits of justice and righteousness in His people, but all He got in return for His good and gracious work was the stench of sin, rotten, stinky grapes, skunky beer. God looked for justice and righteousness in His people, but He got the opposite in return- bloodshed and an outcry. God's people, His choice vines did not love their neighbors as themselves nor did they love God above all else. To say that God was terribly disappointed and angry with His people is an understatement.

But surely this song of Isaiah is not for us? Surely this song of Isaiah does condemn you and me? But it is for us because Jesus said to His disciples, *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser...I am the vine; you are the branches"* (John 15:1,5). What is there that God has not graciously done for you? What is there that is good in your life that is not from God? God created you. God redeemed you through Christ. God has even planted you in Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit. But what does your life look like? What fruit can be seen in your life? Will the Lord find justice and righteousness in your life?

You know what God wants and expects; you decide, you judge yourselves. Are the fruits of the Spirit manifest in your life: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? Or do the works of the flesh seem to be more manifest: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these? Do you really love your neighbor? Do you do everything in your power to protect, defend, and provide for those who cannot do this for themselves? Or do you say, "Someone else will help them; as long as I am not actively hurting anyone I am ok?" Love doesn't just refrain from doing evil, but actively does good for the neighbor. Do you love the Lord God with all your heart, soul, and strength? You are hear in Worship after all. But when you are here, do you real pay attention to God's

Word? Do you gladly hear, learn, and meditate upon God's Word or is your attention elsewhere?

The truth is sad. We are not just and righteous as God wants and expects us to be. We are wild, rotten, stinky, and skunky grapes too. We are sinners and the Lord should just throw us out and trample us.

But God gave another song for Isaiah the prophet to sing. A song of a just and righteous root from the stump of Jesse. Isaiah 11:1-5 says:

*There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.  
And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,  
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and might,  
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.  
And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.  
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,  
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,  
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,  
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;  
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,  
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.  
Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,  
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.*

This just and righteous shoot is the Son of David, the coming King, the Christ, the Lord Jesus. Jesus is the choice vine, the true vine, that produced the good grapes that God the Father eagerly waited for. Jesus is the shoot from a dead stump raised up to fruitful life. Jesus is true vine that was trampled to death, but God raised Him up and His justice and righteousness gives new life and abundant fruit. Jesus said to His disciples, *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser...I am the vine; you are the branches"* (John 15:1,5).

You are the people of God engrafted into Christ Jesus through baptism. God has graciously planted you in Christ Jesus His Son and in Christ you bear fruit, all the fruit of the Spirit. *"I 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"* (John 1:5). Connected to Christ, engrafted to the just and righteous vine, you are just and righteous by faith. By faith in Christ the fruits of the Spirit are present. In Christ Jesus you now are delightful and pleasing God; your rottenness and slinkiness has been washed away; in Christ you are pleasing grapes to the Lord, Amen!