

Read: Isaiah 5:1-7

God's Own People Didn't Believe

Isaiah 5:4

What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad?

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I love fruit. Cherries, peaches, watermelon, pineapple, grapes—one of my favorite parts about summer is all the good fruit. Whether you buy it at the grocery store or pick it from your own garden, fruit is one of the best parts of summer.

Growing fruit isn't an easy process. It can take three years from when a grapevine is first planted to when it produces grapes, and there's a lot of work that needs to happen during that time. The prophet Isaiah describes that work in the beginning of today's reading: digging the vineyard, clearing it of stones, planting it with the best vines. Such a well-cared-for vineyard should produce good fruit—but it didn't.

Isaiah tells us that this vineyard represents Israel and Judah. God chose them as his people and gave them everything: deliverance from Egypt, safe travels to the Promised Land, the promise of the Messiah who would save them from their sins. But they produced bad fruit instead of good: they disobeyed God and turned away from him. So, God allowed them to be taken off into captivity.

On our own, we would be exactly like that rotten vineyard. On our own, we would produce nothing but bad fruit. And on our own, we would deserve exactly the same punishment that happened to the vineyard Isaiah described: being trampled and destroyed. The song that Isaiah sings about the vineyard ends sadly, and the song of our life should end sadly too.

But because of God's great love for us, our song *doesn't* end sadly. Jesus came to suffer and die in our place. He came to take the consequences for our sin upon himself. He came to live a perfect life and produce good fruit—perfect fruit—the kind of fruit we could never produce on our own. What would be a sad ending to the song of our life is replaced by the happy ending of heaven.

Jesus did something more than produce good fruit in our place. He also gave us the ability to produce our own good fruit by how we live. The fruit that we produce—our words and actions here on this earth—won't be perfect. Some days will be better than others; sometimes our fruit will be good and sometimes not-so-good. But when we stay close to Jesus, the perfect Vine, we

will grow in our ability to produce good fruit, fruit that God loves. And one day, we will be with Jesus in heaven where we can enjoy perfect fruit for all eternity.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for Younger Children

- What is something you say or do that shows you are producing good fruit?
- What can you do if you are having a hard day and producing bad fruit?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Isaiah tells us what the owner did for the vineyard to care for it and help it produce fruit (verses 1-2). What has God done for you in your life to care for you and help you produce good fruit?
- Even though the owner cared for the vineyard, it still produced bad fruit. Why? How can you avoid being a vineyard that produces bad fruit?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- The punishment described by Isaiah in verses 5-6 sounds very harsh. If God is a loving God, how can he carry out the punishment described here? (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34)
- In his letter to the Galatians, Paul talks about the fruit of the Spirit (cf. Galatians 6:23-24). Which are the easiest fruits from that list for you to produce? Which are the hardest?

Closing Prayer:

Almighty God, on our own we would only produce bad fruit. Thank you for sending Jesus, who produced good fruit in our place and gives us the ability to produce good fruit. Amen.

Hymn: CW 431:1,5 – I Walk in Danger All the Way

I walk in danger all the way;
The thought shall never leave me
That Satan, who has marked his prey,
Is plotting to deceive me.
This foe with hidden snares
May seize me unawares
If e'er I fail to watch and pray;
I walk in danger all the way.

I walk with Jesus all the way;
His guidance never fails me.
He takes my ev'ry fear away
When Satan's pow'r assails me,
And, by his footsteps led,
My path I safely tread.
In spite of ills that threaten may,
I walk with Jesus all the way.