

Isaiah 5:1-7; 11:1-5
John 15:1-2, 5
What More Could God Do?
WRCOB 11.17.19

1

There is a song from the 1960s, off-Broadway musical
The Fantasticks
Entitled *Plant a Radish, Get a Radish.*

*Plant a radish. Get a radish.
Never any doubt.
That's why I love vegetables
You know what you're about!*

*Plant a turnip. Get a turnip.
Maybe you'll get two.
That's why I love vegetables
You know that they'll come through!*

*They're dependable! They're befrienable!
They're the best pal a parent's ever know!
While with "child-eren", It's "bewilderin".
You don't know until the seed is nearly grown
Just what you've sown!*

~~

From a parent's perspective
Having and raising children
Is a game of chance.

You don't know what you're going to get!

Before the advent of ultrasound

You didn't know the gender until he/she was born.

And then, toss in a few genetic traits

A little environment and circumstance

And shake in a few individual personality qualities

And you just never know how it's all going to turn out.

Plant a radish, get a radish

Doesn't compute in child-rearing!

God knows this!

Ever since God created humankind with free will

We've been a thorn in God's flesh ever since.

Ohhhh, but God loves us!!

~~

All three of our passages this morning

Use the metaphor of a vineyard

To describe the relationship

Between God and humanity.

It's rich imagery!

In Isaiah 5, God, carefully and lovingly

Clears land of stone and brush

And plants a vineyard

Using the very best rootstock.

He waits to see the results of his efforts.

But instead of a harvest of delicious fruit
God's vineyard produces a crop of wild grapes.

~

God did everything he knew to do
To produce the finest fruit.

And what he got was something altogether different!

God asks, "what more could I do that I haven't done?"

And so, heartbroken
God tears down the protective hedge

No longer willing to nurture and care for it
Leaving the vineyard defenseless
To any marauding adversary.

~~

Of course, he is speaking about the people of Israel.

He looked for justice and instead saw bloodshed.

He looked for virtuous living
And instead heard the cries of distress.

Isaiah's love song prophesied the eventual destruction
Of the southern kingdom of Judah
The sacking of Jerusalem
The razing of the Temple
And the forced exile to Babylonia.

All this, Isaiah says, because of Israel's disobedience.

~~

God expected one thing but got another.

Plant a radish, get a radish!

Nope!

This is the history of God's relationship with humankind.

Down through the generations
Over and over again

God nurtured and cared and guided humankind
Expecting the outcome to be one thing
Only to get another.

God set ethical standards, rules for moral living

He expected us to follow them
Out of our love for him and love for creation

God expected obedience
Out of fear of the consequences for disobedience

God expected us to obey
Out of a reasonable and rational construct
Of what is good and what is not good
For humanity and the planet.

Down through the ages
God expected one thing but got another.

The Bible and our history books
Are filled to the brim
With the stories of humanity's waywardness.

We, as individuals
And we, as people groups and nations
Have rebelled from the very thing
That can bring peace and harmony

We have decided that we can do it on our own.
We know better!

Throughout the ages God has tried
To work, cajole and even coerce us to live
Lives obedient to his will and way.

Until finally, God asks
“what more can I do that I haven't already done?”

~~

The vineyard lay in smoldering ruins.

Jerusalem is ransacked, raped, and razed.

The people are broken and in exile . . .

But there in the midst of all the destruction
God was about to do a new thing.

2

Isaiah 11:1 NRSV

**A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a
branch shall grow out of his roots.**

From one of the stumps from God's previous planting
New growth appears.

Isaiah prophecies again using the imagery of the vineyard.

The stump of Jesse is the rootstock
That goes back to David
The ancestry tracing down to Jesus.

3

Isaiah 11:2 NRSV

The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

~~

What more can God do that he hasn't done?

In an extreme fit of grace
God does something extraordinary.

4

John 3:16 NRSV

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.

5

John 3:17 NRSV

Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

~~

Jesus is the answer to God's question
"What more could I do that I haven't done?"

Using Isaiah's own words

6

Isaiah 9:6

**For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace.**

~~

God's greatest act of salvation and redemption
Is in Jesus, his life, his death, and his resurrection.

The shoot that grew from the Jesse's stump
Is the rootstock for a new vineyard
Nurtured and cared for by God.

In Christ, God did what he could do
To save the world from self-annihilation!

And if you think for a moment
That Jesus never thought of himself
As the long awaited Messiah

Think again!

Jesus directly connects Isaiah's prophecies to himself
Shown here by using the same metaphorical language

7

John 15:1-2 NRSV

**I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He
removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every
branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more
fruit.**

8

5 I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

~~

Plant a radish, get a radish!

And that's exactly what God did!

God planted the perfect man.

God created first man, Adam

And I might add, first woman, Eve

And because of their disobedience

Sin and death entered the human condition.

As a result of their sin and our sin

We now live a disconnected life apart from God.

And no matter how hard we try

We cannot rid ourselves from the curse of sin.

But then, through another man's grace, Jesus Christ

The perfect man

God makes us right, justified.

Paul says in his letter to the church in Corinth

9

1 Corinthians 5:19 NRSV

For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Through Christ, God gives us another chance.

In Christ, Paul says, God reconciles the world to himself
Not counting the sins against us
But entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.

10

2 Corinthians 5:17 NRSV

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; everything has become new.

~~

From out of the old vineyard
God creates a new vineyard
From the vine that grows from Jesse's stump.

A new order is established
A new day has dawned
A new kingdom has come.
A new beginning is ours

When we graft ourselves
Onto the vine of Jesus Christ
We experience new life free from sin
By the grace of God.

Doesn't mean we can't sin again
But it does mean we have been made right.

And through the Holy Spirit's presence
We can discover the strength to do right.

~~

Jesus is the vine
And we are the branches

If we live in him and we will never die.

Let us come to him and let the Spirit give us life.

What more could God do than what he has done
In Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior?