

Isaiah 5:1-7; 11:1-5
Plant a Radish, Get a Radish?
WRCOB 6.11.2023

There is a song from the 1960s
Entitled *Plant a Radish, Get a Radish*.

Meaning that when you plant a radish seed
What's going to come up?

A radish, right?

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But from a parent's perspective
Concerning the raising of children
That's not how it works.

Plant a radish and see what comes up!

Before the advent of ultrasound
One didn't even know the gender
Until the child was born.

And then, toss in the unique combination of genes
A few environmental experiences
Shake in a few individual personality traits

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!

Nor does it compute when God created humankind.
We've been a thorn in God's flesh ever since.

Which raises a theological question.

If God is omniscient

Meaning God knows everything
Past, present and future.

Did God know what he was getting into
When he created humanity with free will?

It's a valid question.

Whether God knew or didn't know
As with any parent raising children
You just will not know how they end up.

Plant a radish, get a carrot.

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Both of our passages this morning use metaphors
To convey the present circumstances
During the time of Isaiah.

Our first reading, God is the owner of a vineyard.

He carefully and lovingly
Clears the land of stone and brush

And plants a vineyard
Using the very best rootstock.

God waters, prunes and fertilizes the plants
With tender loving care.

He nurtures them to maturity
And then waits to see the results of his effort.

When the crop was ready to harvest
Instead of delicious fruit God hoped for

God found 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!

**Isaiah 5:4 NLT What more could I have done for my
vineyard that I have not already done?**

And so, heartbroken
God removes the protective hedge
Leaving the vineyard defenseless
To any marauding adversary.

~~

The metaphor points to the people of Israel.

God looked for justice and instead saw bloodshed.

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

Further on in chapter 5
God continues to grieve over his wayward children.

Isaiah 5:8 NIV Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field till no space is left and you live alone in the land.

Not only did Isaiah's prophecy hit home back then
How relevant are they for us today?

They describe very well the disparity
Between the very rich and the very poor
In the world today.

Isaiah 5:20-23 NIV

**²⁰ Woe to those who call evil good
and good evil,
who put darkness for light
and light for darkness,
who put bitter for sweet
and sweet for bitter.**

**²¹ Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes
and clever in their own sight.**

**²² Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine
and champions at mixing drinks,**

**²³ who acquit the guilty for a bribe,
but deny justice to the innocent.**

These words could have been written
In today's op/ed column in The Richmond Times/Dispatch

Isaiah prophesizes the eventual destruction
Of the Northern Kingdom of Israel
By the Assyrians

And the subsequent destruction
Of the Southern Kingdom of Judah
By the Babylonians

All this, because of the waywardness of God's children

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Today's society takes issue with the word judgment.

When we speak of judgment
Specifically, God's judgment
It carries a negative connotation.

People don't like the word.

However, we read in Isaiah last week
And in the passages this week
Of God's coming judgment.

That despite its potential destructiveness
God's coming judgment is redemptive.

As N T Wright writes

*We need to remind ourselves that throughout the Bible
God's coming judgment is a good thing, something to be
celebrated, longed for, yearned over. It causes people to
shout for joy and the trees of the field to clap their hands.*

*In a world of systematic injustice, bullying, violence,
arrogance, and oppression, the thought that there might
come a day when the wicked are firmly put in their place and*

the poor and weak are given their due is the best news there can be.

Faced with a world in rebellion, a world full of exploitation and wickedness, a good God must be a God of judgment.
—N. T. Wright, author and Bishop of Durham in the Church of England

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In all seriousness

I wonder what God thinks of us as a nation today?

I tremble!

I said last week

That whether it is 738 BC, 1961, or 2023

It seems we are always in a national crisis.

I can add the year 1863 as well.

It was in 1863 that President Lincoln

Designated April 30th

As a day of national humiliation.

President Lincoln writes

"It is the duty of nations, as well as of men, who owe their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon, and to recognize the sublime truth announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by a history that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.

The awful calamity of civil war which now desolates the land may be but a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole people.

Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us. We have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has grown, but we have forgotten God."

~~

The vineyard lay in smoldering ruins.

The homes are ransacked

The cities razed.

The people homeless, broken and in exile.

God nurtured us, carefully and lovingly

What more could God have done

Than what he already has done?

But there in the midst of their despair

Isaiah speaks now of something new.

I told you last week, remember the stump?

Isaiah 11:1 NIV A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

Following the destruction of Israel
All that's left of the beautiful, majestic
Cedars of Lebanon are stumps.

This is the metaphor for the conquered people of Israel.

But now, from out of one of these stumps
New growth appears.

It is the stump of Jesse
The rootstock of King David
And down to Jesus.

Isaiah predicts that there is a time coming
In an extreme fit of gracious love
God will do something extraordinary.

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

Using Isaiah's own words

**Isaiah 9:6 CEB A child is born to us, a son is given to us,
and authority will be on his shoulders. He will be named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father,
Prince of Peace.**

Isaiah 9:6 CEV

~~

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!

~~

Plant a radish, get a radish!

And that's exactly what God did!

God planted a Christ and we got a Christ.

- *Because in Jesus, we get in one man*
- *What God intended for all "men"*
- *When God created "first man."*

~~

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

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

~~

One Saturday morning Father woke up at around 5.
Everyone was asleep.

He couldn't get back to sleep
So he thought he'd slip down
Make some coffee and read the paper.

Not even quite finished with the first paragraph
Of the first article he was into
His daughter came down the stairs.

“Honey, go back to bed.”

“But Dad, I am not sleepy.”

Determined to enjoy his peace and quiet
He insisted she go back to bed.

But she insisted that if she'd go back upstairs
She'd accidently wake up mom
And then they'd both be in trouble.

He took the paper
And with a pair of scissors
He cut up, in teeny-weeny pieces
A picture of the world.

Handing the daughter some Scotch tape, he told her

“Go sit at the dining room table
And see if you can't put the world back together.”

She was happy with the puzzle project.

Dad went back to his paper and coffee.

However, in way too short a time
She came running in.

“Daddy, I’m finished.”

“Baby, how in the world did you put it together so fast?”

“It was easy, daddy”

“On the other side of the picture of the world
There was a picture of a man.”

“When you make the man right
You make the world right.”

In a similar way, Jesus can bring order to this world.

Plant a radish, get a radish!